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Risk Perception in an Era of Terrorism:
Strategic Questions, Issues and Implications

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RISK PERCEPTION IN AN ERA OF TERRORISM: STRATEGIC QUESTIONS, ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES IN A MULTIFACETED ENGAGEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THE DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY

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I. INTRODUCTION

History has demonstrated that in countries ruled by democratic forms of government, including the United States, public support is essential for the successful prosecution of a conflict, whether the adversary is another state or a non-state actor. The Bush administration's *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* states

> We must use the full influence of the United States to delegitimize terrorism and make clear that all acts of terrorism will be viewed [as] behavior that no responsible government can condone or support and all must oppose. In short, with our friends and allies, we aim to establish a new international norm regarding terrorism requiring non-support, non-tolerance, and active opposition to all terrorists.[1]

The administration has dubbed its "active opposition" the Global War on Terror (GWOT). One must assume that, if it is to be successful, just as with past conflicts, the GWOT requires public support. Does it exist? Can and will such support be sustained?

A recently completed study by a Study Group of the Atlantic Council of the United States notes public opinion polls showing that support for the Bush administration's efforts to address terrorism have fallen since their high point shortly after the tragedies of September 11, 2001. The public's confidence in the government's ability to prevent terrorism also has fallen since that time. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, public concern about terrorism has also diminished.[2]

Does this reporting tell the whole story about public support and the war on terror? And what does it tell us about the strategy necessary to both shape the U.S. approach to the terrorist challenge and sustain public support for that approach? This paper examines some of the key issues related to the GWOT, public attitudes toward and support for that "war," and the implications for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).

The point of departure for this examination is the cited Atlantic Council Policy Paper, *The War on Terrorism: Managing Risks and Sustaining Public Support* (March 2006).

While the report addresses or touches on many important issues, neither space nor the Council's Working Group format allow the report to assess many key questions in sufficient detail. The goal of this assessment, therefore, is to use the Atlantic Council report as a starting point to explore some of the critical challenges related to countering terrorism in an environment demanding public support. It also seeks to assess the impact of those issues on how DoD and DTRA perform their roles and responsibilities in prosecuting the GWOT.

In performing this assessment, this paper does not fully adopt the framework of the Atlantic Council nor does it make constant references to that report, although the report is cited when appropriate for its insights or shortcomings. Nor is this paper meant to be a comprehensive treatment of the nation's strategic response to the challenge of terrorism in the early 21st century. Rather, it uses the mandate of the Atlantic Council effort – the need to look at the prosecution of the conflict through the prism of the ongoing requirement for public support – as a guide. It is hoped that the paper bolsters the Atlantic Council report by adding to our understanding of how national policies in prosecuting the war on terror and public perspectives interact in a complex dynamic that will determine whether the nation will ultimately be successful in dealing with this preeminent issue on its security agenda.

II. THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

Despite the fact that most people recognize terrorism to be a major national security issue, the American public will not blindly follow any administration wherever it wants to go in meeting the challenge. Before going too far in any direction, the public must first understand what the real challenge is. As the Atlantic Council report makes clear, that is not an easy task for the administration because of the nature of both contemporary terrorism and the global environment within which it occurs. The report itself did not necessarily capture all of the complexity inherent in the threat posed by extremist violence. Nor does it fully elaborate what must be asked of the American people in terms of their understanding of that challenge.

An Unfamiliar Mindset

The Atlantic Council report usefully points out that the challenge should not be defined as terrorism *per se*. Rather, it is one of "extremist Islamist ideologues who use terrorism as a tactic to advance their cause of the expulsion of 'infidel' influences in the Islamic world." The principal goal of those who resort to terrorism is to create a "pure" Islamic state, the most radical expression of which is a restored Caliphate from Morocco to the Philippines.[3]

Terrorism, then, as Brian Jenkins points out, is a tactic on to which a novel mindset has been "grafted." "The two now flow together," he argues, "applying jihadist codes of operation to a terrorism repertoire. It is a powerful and dangerous combination."[4] Consider some of the key aspects of this mindset:

- *War as a perpetual condition.* Jenkins argues, for example, that Islamic extremists view the conflict with the West as a religious war starting centuries ago and lasting until Judgment Day.

- *Rejectionism*. Those resorting to terror in the name of Islam do not accept the traditional rules that continue to govern states' use of violence, including those governing the targeting of people usually considered noncombatants. If they are engaged in a Manichaean struggle of good against evil, then they have an open-ended set of human targets who do not believe correctly as they do. The exclusivity of their faith could also lead them to dehumanize their victims.[5] This argument, however, may simply be a rationale for actions really taken deliberately for their shock value and to provoke terror. Regardless, for the terrorists, the rules might apply to those they attack, but not to them. This exceptionalism is reinforced by a *transcendental dimension* deriving from religious extremism that results also in "perpetrators who are unconstrained by the political, moral, or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists."[6]

- *Maximalism.* The terrorists' demands are total; nothing short of the United States disappearing will meet them, because they "are not waging war on the United States but on the idea of the United States, on our existence or presence in the world."[7] As a result, no negotiation with them is possible. There appears to be nothing they want that we can give them other than total surrender.

- *Self-definition and self-realization through the deed.* For some analysts, the uncompromising, all-or-nothing mentality of jihadist terrorists is accentuated by the fact that for such people terrorism is not just a tactic but the means by which they define and express who they are. They do not or cannot divide who they are from what they do. Terrorism itself is not an ideology, but in this case, the ideologies of those responsible for the 9/11 and other attacks could not exist without advocacy of violence. These groups are defined by their methodology: "They are the technique."[8]

- *A premium on unpredictability*. The uncertainty attached to where, when, and how the terrorists attack is emphasized to promote the sense of helplessness among those they are trying to terrorize.

- *The desire to create mistrust of all things Muslim among those who are not Muslim and a radicalization of those who are.* Both objectives can be achieved by using dramatic instances of violence to stir up xenophobic sentiment among non-Muslims and by forcing governments to pursue policies that show little respect for human rights, especially religious freedom.[9] As Anthony Cordesman of CSIS points out, "The one real victory that such extremist movements have won is the tension, anger and mistrust that have followed 9/11 and terror attacks in Europe and Asia. The key fault line, the key vulnerability, is the tension between Jew, Christian, and Muslim compounded by the ability to exploit cultural and political differences."[10]

In order to shape a strategy to counter this mindset and to be clear about what it is that governments must ask of their publics in implementing that strategy, it is important to understand the reasons for the radicalization of those who now resort to terrorism. A number of alternative explanations have been offered. In an August 2005 article in the *Journal* of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Tori Munthe usefully and succinctly captures the three main hypotheses.[11] She describes them as follows:

- "Blame it on Islam."

  In this view 'jihadism' is simply the truthful expression of Islam, and an inevitable and perfectly natural conflict exists between Islam and the West. A variant of this view holds that Islam is incompatible with "modernity." For those who posit this approach, the battle is already joined.

- "Blame it on Culture"

  This argument, favored by the European left, contends that jihadism expresses a profound cultural malaise in the Muslim world, and symbolizes a massive identity breakdown. According to this view, today we are witnessing a grand battle between failed secularists and untried Islamists to determine who will give the Muslim world its identity.

- "Blame it on Politics"

  This category of explanations, most common in the Middle East and North Africa, contends that jihadism is only and exclusively about suffering and injustice, fostered primarily by the West and the United States in particular. In this view, the West is blamed for colonialism, exploiting others' natural resources for their own growth, the continued humiliation of the Palestinians, and sustained support for and protection of dictatorial and brutal regimes.

Munthe contends that none of these arguments on its own is sufficient to explain jihadist radicalism but that it is the product of the combination of the three. In her view, "Radicalization, Islamism and jihadism…are a response to three kinds of oppression/occupation": 1) occupation of the domestic political sphere (including despotism); 2) occupation of territory (including the violation of sovereign Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and, for some, Chechny and Bosnia); and 3) occupation of the global sphere (through exploitation of resources and cultural dominance). She concludes by arguing that "the 'clash of civilizations' is not between

the West and Middle East, but within the Middle East itself. Perhaps the reason that violence is now being directed at the West is because the West has long been implicated in this identity battle on one particular side."[12]

Innovative Dynamics

Whatever its origin – and Munthe is likely correct that it is some mix of the three factors (that could in turn be different for each individual involved) – the jihadist mindset has manifested itself in a world that is far different from that of even two decades ago. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the emergence of "badlands" and ungovernable spaces, the existence of governments in many parts of the world that are either unwilling or unable to perform the functions of government, globalization in all its forms and the increased availability of technology, especially information technology, are only some of the factors that have enabled today's terrorists. Not only do they provide terrorists with new capabilities and create new vulnerabilities in their targets, but they also have given modern terrorism novel forms, characteristics, and dynamics, including the following.

> *Changing geographic scope*. Rather than remaining locale-specific, modern terrorists have gone global. In twenty years, Osama bin Laden took his followers from confronting the Soviet Union in the very specific environment of Afghanistan's mountains to inspiring a way of thinking and a set of behaviors that can be found in almost any country in the world. Among the many other implications, this increased geographic scope allows the modern terrorist to conduct attacks far from his base.
>
> *Heightened impact*, at least insofar as the trend remarked by most terrorism analysts notes an increase in the average number of casualties associated with an attack.
>
> *Decentralization* made possible by networking that is facilitated by the exploitation of modern communications and other aspects of globalization. The

issue of networks is even more problematic than is often considered, however, because the issue tends to be presented in terms of terrorist operatives when, in fact, the networks are much more complex. In addition to those who actually plan and conduct attacks, terrorism networks also include nodes for other critical functions such as finance, transport and other infrastructure, and logistics. These networks also incorporate enablers and, in some cases, "passive supporters," which often include governments.[13]

Self-generation or self-sustainment. While many terrorists exploit passive support from or even enjoy active sponsorship by national governments, others are much more independent of government support. In the realm of finance, for example, it has become common for terrorists to fund their operations through illegal and sometimes legal means. The link between terrorism and the illegal trade in drugs, for example, has been widely reported.[14] This link is facilitated by the ability of terrorists to move money and other resources fluidly by exploiting the local fragmentation caused by globalization. [15]

Dispersed support throughout civil society. Obviously not all Muslims are radical jihadists or support their efforts. But it is also clear that those who today exploit violence in the service of religion have touched something among their co-religionists, at least to the extent that they are often not widely and vehemently condemned for the horrific acts they perpetrate. Something about them – their goals, their rhetoric, their challenge to their "oppressors" – appeals to others. As CRS analyst Audrey Kurth notes, "The jihad era is animated by widespread alienation combined with elements of religious identity and doctrine – a dangerous mix of forces that resonate deep in the human psyche."[16]

This combination of factors creates for the U.S. and other governments a challenge of major proportions: the complexity of the modern world fosters uncertainty regarding the terrorists; seemingly they could strike anywhere at any time. In turn, uncertainty breeds insecurity, especially among the public. As the Atlantic Council report concludes, this is

a "novel and unsettling state of affairs…[F]or the first time in many years, the nation must live in a state of permanent alert and preparedness to cope with a sudden man-made emergency of unpredictable proportions."[17]

An Alien Challenge

The combination of the adversary's unfamiliar mindset, a facilitative global environment, and innovative operational methods creates a difficult challenge with which both U.S policy and the American public must come to grips. In the literature, several points relating to this challenge are worth highlighting because they suggest how complicated understanding and meeting that challenge will be.

First, surprise is again the natural order of things. The 9/11 Commission argued that the tragedies in New York and Washington were, at least in part, the result of a failure of imagination. Too often policy makers tend to rely on traditional tried-and-true approaches and policy tools. But traditional strategies are unlikely to work. The Cold War emphasis on deterrence through retaliation, for example, is not likely to be successful because there is little the terrorists have that the United States and others can hold at risk. Moreover, retaliation could prove to be the very reaction the terrorists seek if it helps to validate their claims of Western hostility to Islam.[18] Such traditional thinking will not suffice in the face of the adversary's creativity. The focus of counter-terrorism efforts today must be on creating innovative options and promoting either the development of new policy tools, or the application of existing tools in new ways. A failure of imagination is as unacceptable as a failure of any other kind.

Second, the challenge is not just about defeating terrorist operatives. As CRS analyst Audrey Cronin argues, "if there is a trend in terrorism it is the existence of a two-level challenge: the hyper-religious motivation of small groups of terrorists and the much broader enabling environment of bad governance, non-existent social services, and poverty that punctuates much of the developing world."[19] Dealing with this two-tier problem is not just the usual job of addressing "the root causes of terrorism." It is a much more profound challenge requiring competitive engagement with a traditional social

structure in which the terrorists have the advantage because they have continually operated in that society as well as in the modern and post-modern worlds.[20]

Recognizing this two-tiered challenge is important because it suggests a reality with significant implications for the American public. In particular it highlights that the competition with the terrorists will not be managed successfully only by the application of force, whether that is through military or law enforcement agencies (although they too will have to play a significant role). Equally, if not more important will be ideas, money, and practical social-oriented measures. The need is as great for the American public to understand and support these kinds of measures as any military or classic counter-terrorism actions.

Third, the scene for this competition is the entire world. It has become a cliché to note that globalization and other factors in contemporary life have diminished the importance of national borders. But like most clichés, the statement is, at its core, true. The terrorists have frequently demonstrated that their targets are distributed across the globe. This is the case for at least two reasons. First, an attack against international targets is an attack against an international system of which, in the terrorists' eyes, the United States is the preeminent representative and defender. Second, the terrorists have no intention of playing to U.S. strengths but will attack its vulnerabilities. Targeting U.S. interests overseas is one way of doing so. Indeed, it may be smarter for terrorists not to try to attack an alerted American homeland directly, but to use an indirect strategy that frustrates America's ability to secure the cooperation from other countries that is essential for success. One assessment suggests, for example, that al Qaeda "is aware that European governments are unlikely to respond with military action in the event of an…attack on European citizens or interests. As a result, the terrorists carry out attacks in Europe with the aim of eroding European support for the U.S.A. and as a means of weakening the enemy."[21] This analysis goes on to argue, "the terrorist attacks are intended to do more than influence international policy using bombs instead of dialogue…[T]he terrorists are also making every effort to push Muslim immigrants in

Europe towards more radical positions…If the terrorists' actions find support in the legitimate claims of Europe's citizens, it will be impossible to eliminate this menace."[22]

The terrorist operatives and their supporters we must defeat, therefore, stretch from Europe to East Asia to sub-Saharan Africa, and the Bush administration has made clear that it intends to push its counter-terrorism operations as far from U.S. shores as possible while, at the same time, working to meet the need to protect the homeland. But U.S. "targets" are global also in the sense of the broader societies that must be engaged in the competition of ideas.

The Atlantic Council report focuses almost exclusively on the potential for attacks against the U.S. homeland and considers U.S. public opinion virtually from that perspective alone. While an attack against the United States – particularly one as dramatic as 9/11 – would undoubtedly have the greatest impact, the American public is not and cannot be immune from reactions to scenes of terrorist violence elsewhere, whether it is London, Madrid, or Bali. And while the U.S. government must speak primarily to its internal domestic audience, it also has an external audience whose support is also vital.

The U.S. public has been told repeatedly by government and non-government representatives that dealing successfully with terrorism requires an effective international response. Whether such a response is seen to exist will have some impact on the extent to which they support ongoing government measures to address the problem. Here then is a problem: As Sir David Omand, the former counter-terrorism coordinator for the United Kingdom has pointed out, it is striking and lamentable "how far short of best practices the international community is in taking a strategic approach…[T]he absence of an international agreement on a longer-term and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy is an increasing weakness in our collective efforts to match a developing threat."[23]

Fourth, among the capabilities that modern terrorists may seek to acquire are chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons. As the Atlantic Council report implies, there is significant debate in the analytical community regarding both the interest of terrorists in CBRN weapons and their ability to acquire and use them. A conundrum exists in explaining why terrorists have not used these capabilities more often, especially when at least crude forms of all but nuclear weapons are increasingly within the grasp of smaller and less scientifically sophisticated groups. Unfortunately, the report does little to shed light on the motivation of today's terrorists to choose or not choose this option (in contrast to reasonably clear reasons why terrorists of concern in the past such as the Irish Republic Army or the Basque separatists opted not to pursue CBRN). While the report does discuss some of the technical problems that inhibit development of CBRN weapons capable of producing mass casualties, it only notes in passing the changing scientific and technological landscape that could alter significantly the factors that will shape terrorists' choices in the future.

Fifth, because the current terror challenge is different in nature and method from what we encountered in the past, it has been difficult not only to "pin it down" and conceptualize it, but also to define success in countering it. The Atlantic Council report rightly argues that applying the conceptual framework of "war" and invoking "victory" against terrorism as the objective probably does more harm than good because it raises undue expectations and implies a goal that is unachievable, i.e., an unconditional surrender by the adversary that takes the form of the elimination of terrorism from contemporary international affairs.

Unfortunately, terrorism and extremist violence is a permanent feature of our lives. Does this mean that governments can do nothing about it? Of course not. But because it will always be possible, terrorism has to be viewed less as a threat to be eliminated and more as a risk to be managed. For that reason, the Atlantic Council report's title, *"Managing the Risks…"* represents a useful starting point, reinforced by the observation that "success will be measured more in reducing the level of attack and, in the long run, reducing the terrorists' base of support, than in dramatic successes or total elimination of Islamist

terrorism world wide, much less elimination of all forms of terrorism." But the report does little to develop the elements of a risk management strategy or discuss whether approaching the problem in this way has important implications for sustaining public support. The U.S. public lives with many risks every day, but they do so without dramatic effect on their daily lives because they and the government have devised means for limiting those risks to acceptable levels. Perhaps then the definition of success should be similar to the way the British have defined their goal, that is, "to reduce the risk of international terrorism so that our people can go about their normal business freely and with confidence."[24]

Finally, the multidimensional, complex, and alien nature of the challenge underlines the need for a response that is genuinely strategic. Strategy is the art of marshalling all available resources toward the achievement of well-specified objectives. It is necessary for relating ends to means. Strategy performs the critical functions of securing agreement on the goals and what is necessary to achieve them, elaborating the measures to give effect to that intent, identifying trade-offs among policy options as well as the costs and benefits of specific choices, and eliminating conflicting options by establishing critical priorities in an environment of constrained resources.

A truly strategic response to the challenge of today's terrorism also plays a vital role in relation to the public. It provides the foundation on which sustained public support for counter-terrorism efforts is built. It does so in two ways. First, as Sir David Omand reminds us, "good strategy, political as well as military, is needed to focus the national will."[25] It will do so in this case by providing a convincing "counter-narrative" to that of the terrorists that allows the various key publics – abroad as well as at home – to make sense of the developments they see around them. Second, strategic thinking allows for the creation of balances among the many concerns that are at play – and sometimes in conflict – in shaping the public's decisions to support a given national policy. These concerns include such issues as the tension between human rights and the need to provide security, balancing the right to privacy and the requirement to enhance intelligence effectiveness, and the difficulty of ensuring free speech while containing messages of

hate. Strategy must recognize the constant need to adjust these balances as the situation evolves – "but with the long-term strategy also firmly in mind, not least since in these areas the right answer has to be one for which long-term public acceptance can be secured. Without support for the strategy, public cooperation will not be wholehearted – and in the end only public support and information will isolate and identify the terrorists and their support networks."[26]

III. SUSTAINING PUBLIC SUPPORT: QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

The Atlantic Council report makes many important observations about the need for sustaining public support for counter-terrorism efforts and how to foster such sustained support, including the following:

- The public must continue to support costly (and at least mildly disruptive or inconvenient) measures, assist as possible in prevention and mitigation, and perhaps most important, absorb successful attacks without either over-reaction or massive loss in public morale.

- Since September 11, a substantial decline has occurred in public confidence in the government's ability/competence to deal with terrorism. As demonstrated by the reaction to the government's response to Hurricane Katrina, the public has serious concerns about the government's plans, organization, and procedures to cope.

- Paradoxically, a decline has occurred in the priority the public puts on the terrorism challenge. Hurricane Katrina also demonstrated that there are things other than terrorism to be afraid of. Should additional restrictive and costly counter-terrorism measures become necessary, public acceptance and tolerance could, as a consequence, decline.

- The real test with respect to public support will come if/when another attack occurs, and public reaction will depend on the quality of the government's response. If the public comes to believe that national priorities are established incorrectly and that measures to cope with terrorism are inadequate, it will hold the government accountable for both the act of terrorism (i.e., lack of prevention) and for consequence management and recovery after an attack.

- The private sector must be included much more, especially in vulnerability reduction.

- There must be a continuing campaign to inform the public about terrorism. That campaign must:

    - address the changing nature of terrorism;
    - convey that there is no such thing as absolute security and that it is impossible for the government to protect every target;
    - maintain focus on the fact that the problem is the resort to terrorism by extremists and not Islam itself; and
    - place greater emphasis on practical steps toward public readiness and less on impractical exhortations.

- Public discussion must also address the nature of U.S. defensive measures, including:

    - targets to be protected;
    - the appropriate level and types of investment to be made in counter-terrorism;
    - tradeoffs between counter-terrorism efforts and other important public concerns such as civil liberties.

As important as these observations are, they beg some questions whose answers are important if a successful strategy, which includes a public dimension, is to be developed and implemented.

If public confidence in the government's ability to deal with terrorism has diminished and the priority given to the terrorism challenge has also declined, why does the public believe that terrorist attacks such as those that occurred on September 11 have not occurred again? A report of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press released in November 2005 suggests three possible answers: good luck, the inherent difficulty of attacking the United States, or government policy. According to the report, 48% of the "influentials" in the country said it was the result of good luck, while 24% thought it was due to the inherent difficulty of attacking the United States, and 22% argued it was the consequence of government efforts. In terms of the general public, nearly half (45%) said the country had been lucky thus far, while almost a third (33%) gave credit to the government.

A second critical question: How does the public view the balance between counter-terrorism policies and other important interests such as civil liberties? Again, the Pew report provides some insight. It reports that opinion leaders and the public are split over the proper balance between protecting the nation against future terrorist attacks and maintaining basic civil liberties. When asked, 48% of Americans said they were more concerned that anti-terrorism policies have not gone far enough to protect the country adequately, while only 33% worried that they had gone too far in restricting the average person's civil liberties. Some influential groups reported similar results, but there were some important exceptions. Most notably, military leaders overwhelmingly (74%) said the bigger concern is inadequate protection. In contrast, more than half (51%) of scientists and engineers and almost half (48%) of academics worried that civil liberties were too severely restricted by recent policies, with only 29% and 36%, respectively, taking the opposing view.[27]

According to the Pew Report, more generally the public gives the government fairly good marks for its efforts to reduce the threat of terrorism, with two-thirds (67%) saying that the government is doing at least "fairly well" (17% very well plus 50% fairly well). At the same time, the public does not seem to believe that the ability of terrorists to conduct major attacks has been seriously eroded. Overall, 41% say the terrorists have the same ability to launch a major strike on the United States, with 26% arguing their capabilities to do so have increased and 29% believing that they have diminished.[28]

These results do not square completely, however, with other recent public opinion polling indicating the American public does not necessarily feel safer today from terrorism than it was in 2001. Does the American public blame the Bush administration for this situation? The answer to this question is not clear as the answer depends, to some extent, on what question is asked or how the question is posed. In September 2003, for example, 60% of the respondents told a CBS News/New York Times poll that the administration had made the United States safer from terrorism, while 18% said its policies had made them less safe. In October 2004, those responses were 52% and 29% respectively. A July 2005 Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll reported that only 23% of

Americans said they had a great deal of confidence in the Bush administration to protect U.S. citizens from future acts of terrorism, while 38% had a moderate amount of confidence, 24% had not much, and 14% had no confidence at all. A March 2006 ABC News/Washington Post survey found that 55% of those responding said the country was safer than before September 11.[29]

Asking the question a different way, however, yields conflicting results, particularly when the issue is expressed in terms of the administration's conduct of the war in Iraq. In June 2005, the *Washington Post* reported on its joint poll with ABC News, noting that 52% said the war in Iraq had not contributed to the long-term security of the United States, and 47% saying it had. According to the *Post*, it was "the first time a majority of Americans disagreed with the central notion Bush has offered to build support for war: that the fight there will make Americans safer from terrorists at home."[30] The Pew report cited earlier noted that most opinion leaders believe the war in Iraq has undermined the struggle against terrorism, while in contrast the general American public was almost equally split.

More recently, the BBC reported on a poll conducted by GlobeScan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. That poll showed that when asked whether the war in Iraq had increased, decreased, or had no effect on the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world, 55% of the U.S. respondents said the likelihood had increased, 21% indicated it had decreased, and 22% said it had stayed the same. For the world, the numbers were 60%, 12%, and 15%, respectively. According to the PIPA Director, Steve Kull, "Though the Bush administration has framed the intervention in Iraq as a means of fighting terrorism, all around the world – including in the United States – people view it as having increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks. The near unanimity of this assessment among countries is remarkable in public opinion polling."[31]

These findings suggest that several factors contribute to shaping public opinion on a particular issue, complicating the job of bolstering public support. Clearly the public's

view of government competence to deal with terrorism is shaped by more than the specifics of its anti-terrorism policies. The war in Iraq is not the only additional factor; the experience with Hurricane Katrina was also formative. The lasting view of the government's poor response to that crisis and the continuing debate as to how to restore the damage done has raised questions for everyone about the extent to which the major efforts to organize a better national response capability since September 11 – whether it is for naturally occurring or man-made catastrophes – have made any significant difference. The fact that those efforts have consumed billions of dollars has made the public even more resentful of the fact that when the crisis occurred, the government – at all levels – fell far short. What, they ask, was all that money spent on?

If the public's view of the government's competence is critical in this context, the Atlantic Council's report may, in fact, not be correct that the real test will come if/when there is another attack. Witnessing demonstrations of what it perceives to be governmental incompetence, the public's support for anti-terrorism efforts, including those directed at preparedness, consequence management, and mitigation, could well have eroded already. Further erosion need not be the result only of continued problems in Iraq or another catastrophic hurricane; less dramatic events, whether in the national security sphere or elsewhere, could have this effect. Examples include how the government deals with unresolved proliferation challenges in North Korea and Iran, and with the immigration problem.

Another important question related to sustaining public support in the fight against contemporary terrorism is whether, in fact, more will have to be asked than even the Atlantic Council report suggests. The point has already been made that public support is essential for all aspects of any anti-terrorism strategy, including measures to engage effectively in the competition of ideas. This includes political and ideological efforts based on the values for which the United States and its friends and allies truly stand. It therefore requires, as CSIS analyst Anthony Cordesman has argued,

> as much need for educational reform and religious tolerance in the West as in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Respect for different cultures and religions needs to be taught, and be the subject of dialogue at every level...Terrorism cannot be

> defeated without counterterrorism, but counterterrorism alone can never defeat ideas and the causes of terrorism. There is a political and ideological battle that must be fought as well.[32]

This battle is one that the United States government cannot win by itself; it will require the broader engagement of American society. But it is in this dimension of the competition that the public can be decisive if they are active. This also suggests that the role of the private sector must be much greater than working with the government to reduce vulnerabilities (although that too is important).

The need for public engagement in the competition of ideas reinforces the need for an effective narrative for both the American public and the world beyond. That narrative must be a stronger and more compelling explanation of what is happening in the world and the intent of U.S. and other Western policies. It must include a candid assessment of the impact of globalization, both good and bad. And it must incorporate a thorough and convincing assessment of the real dangers posed by extremist resort to violence. It is a difficult task to get this story right, and even assuming it could be articulated, it is not be an easy sell, either to the U.S. public or the world at large. It asks much of them. But it is in the force of those ideas that success in the competition lies.

IV. SHAPING A STRATEGIC RESPONSE

The point has been made that the risk of terrorism can never completely be eliminated and the goal of counter-terrorism efforts therefore should be to reduce the risk to a level at which the public can go about its normal business. If that is the goal, how can it be achieved? What are its implications in terms of operationalizing a strategy to achieve it? To answer this question, several points should be highlighted.

Success will require applying the full range of policy tools. These include measures directed at both prevention and preparedness. While it calls for balancing these goals, the Atlantic Council report focuses primarily on preparedness measures on the assumption that not all attacks can be prevented and therefore efforts must emphasize reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening consequence management capabilities. Yet, prevention

efforts must not be given short shrift. Prevention-related tools include measures in such critical areas as law enforcement, border security, export controls, cooperative threat reduction, and military options.

It is interesting to note that the British divide their efforts to reduce the risks of terrorism into "prevention" and "pursuit." Pursuit, in their view, involves the capability to uncover and disrupt terrorist networks, while prevention focuses on preventing the radicalization of the next generation, building legitimate and more effective counter-terrorism capabilities, and addressing future areas of instability.[33] Pursuit, then, is a more short-term oriented set of efforts while prevention takes a longer view. These long-term, largely non-military efforts to reshape the international environment – so that terrorist networks do not have the setting in which to breed and thrive – could ultimately be the most effective counter-terrorism measures.

Necessary preparedness capabilities also span a wide spectrum and include such elements as infrastructure protection, effective emergency services, a robust medical response capability, and effective communications, to name a few. Both prevention and preparedness capabilities must be supported by good intelligence and a strong research and development (R&D) agenda.

These tools may at times create conflicts; the need for all of them will certainly create competition for limited resources. The Atlantic Council argues that those resources should be allocated according to "a widely understood set of priorities." That is true, but it begs the question of what criteria will be used to determine those priorities. One that is widely recognized is "dual use," that is, the value of investing in policy tools that can be used outside the counter-terrorism realm to address other problems, such as disease surveillance capabilities. Beyond this one criterion, however, there has been little public discussion regarding what metrics should be used to determine national priorities. The Atlantic Council report and others have rightly argued that this is a debate in which the public should have a strong and active voice. But neither the report nor those other

advocates have offered particularly attractive ideas for engaging the public in the debate and channeling its voice effectively to policy makers.

The need for such a wide range of capabilities has a number of other important implications. It underscores that counter-terrorism is not a function reserved for specialist agencies but a challenge that is a responsibility of all government. It also points to the need for significant support from the non-governmental sector, including industry and academia.

The hallmarks of counter-terrorism strategy must be dynamism and flexibility. Agility is also a prerequisite at the tactical level. The need for flexibility and adaptability stems from the nature of the terrorist challenge. Strategy development must foster creativity comparable to that of the terrorists, in part to counter the dispersed, amorphous, and decentralized nature of the adversary. And because it is impossible to predict precisely what form a terrorist attack will take, it is essential to be prepared for as wide a range of contingencies as possible.

Brian Jenkins has argued that "today's threats do not align with how we have organized ourselves…to deal with national security." He contends, "we have reconfigured our institutions to better address the 'space in between,' but we have been far more reluctant to tamper with the basic institutions themselves. We have not fundamentally changed our habits of thought."[34] Moreover, powerful barriers to change remain.

The problem faced by governments has been bluntly stated: "traditional institutions are incapable of addressing the growing list of complex global issues."[35] It is now necessary to take a more unconventional approach. Some of the more innovative efforts could focus on exploiting what globalization makes possible. As Anne-Marie Slaughter points out, "Networked threats require a networked response."[36] Global networks that are greater in number, deeper in reach, and more rapid in response can take the raw material of "national action" and process it into a collaborative international effort that will have a

better chance of dealing effectively with the increasingly complex terrorist challenge. In a sense, the need is for less "institutionalizing" and more globalizing.[37]

The strategic response to terrorism must be international in scope and built on strong cooperation and coordination. The Atlantic Council report devotes virtually no attention to this dimension, yet, as argued above, international concerns do bear on public attitudes toward government efforts, and could do so significantly.

The United States must work with others if it is to foster a more secure society. The United Nations has established the foundation on which such cooperation can be constructed. For example, UN Security Council Resolution 1368, passed the day after 9/11, characterizes international terrorism as a "threat to international peace and security." Resolution 1377, passed two months later, declared that "acts of international terrorism constitute a challenge to all States and to all of humanity," and that "acts of terrorism endanger innocent lives and the dignity and security of human beings everywhere, threaten the social and economic development of all States and undermine global stability and prosperity."[38] Later, UNSC Resolution 1540 – invoking Chapter VII for only the second time in the UN's history – mandated all member states to legislate and enforce measures to prevent the spread of CBRN weapons to terrorists.

Unfortunately, for the United States and its friends and allies, there is neither a commonly accepted view of the problem nor a shared strategy or set of policies. Significant differences continue to exist about both the nature of the challenge and the appropriate set of policy responses. As Sir David Omand argues, "we still do not have the necessary consensus, beyond the level of rhetoric, on the fundamentals of the strategy to be followed in the longer term, and the limits that should be placed on the means that are acceptable and justifiable (over rendition, detention and the treatment of prisoners, for example) to deal with it. In that respect, the United States risks drifting apart from most of the rest of the world since the cooperative international actions immediately following September 11th."[39]

Combating the terrorist threat demands effective international cooperation for several reasons:

- International efforts to defeat terrorism represent the first line of defense of the U.S. homeland. An effective strategy extends outward to defeat threats and manage the risks as far away from U.S. shores as possible. This requires active cooperation with and from friends and allies.

- Efforts by other countries could have important implications for dealing with the domestic challenge. How other countries act in a crisis could influence the domestic U.S. situation in at least two ways. First, friends or allies may have resources or assets on which the United States might wish to draw. Knowing what other countries are doing and what resources they could bring to bear is an important planning factor in U.S. domestic preparedness and response efforts. Second, other countries' response capabilities – or lack of them – could shape U.S. homeland defense strategies and actions, e.g., the ability or inability to contain an infectious agent elsewhere. Moreover, differences in national preparedness and response efforts could influence terrorists' cost-benefit assessments. Some analysts, for example, argue that robust U.S. preparedness efforts are increasing the attractiveness of Europe as a target for attacks.

- The United States can learn lessons from others. Although efforts to confront the terrorist challenge are not as well developed in many countries as they are in the United States, some U.S. friends and allies have conducted valuable exercises and other activities. Washington could benefit from sustained exchanges with those who have engaged in these efforts.

- Building bridges and raising awareness among constituencies not traditionally engaged in security is critical. Much of the international cooperation so far has occurred on the basis of "like-with-like:" entities such as law enforcement officials or those with public health responsibilities have interacted with each other, but rarely with relevant practitioners across institutional or "professional" boundaries. Just as at the national level, international counter-terrorism efforts cannot be compartmentalized. They, too, must cut across institutional demarcations, and more cooperation is needed to facilitate essential integrative efforts. This includes, for example, close cooperation among law enforcement officials and emergency responders, and between intelligence professionals and public health officials. Enhanced cooperation between the government and the private sector on both a national and international basis is also crucial, but lacking.

If the need for international cooperation is clear, its promotion nonetheless remains challenging for a number of reasons. The absence of common perceptions of threats and

risks among the United States and its friends and allies in Europe and Asia results in an insufficient basis for developing shared priorities that can guide strategic planning efforts. No agreed criteria provide guidance for answering the core questions of what should be done and how much is enough.

Further, national security requirements in every country confront competing domestic priorities, especially in the social sector, and countries reconcile that competition differently. Similarly, both the United States and its friends and allies pursue wide-ranging non-security interests, especially in the economic and commercial sphere, that can bear heavily on decisions concerning national security investments. Examples include corporate competition in important developing countries, differing approaches to improving global health, and the priorities of science policy at the national level.

Finally, international institutional mechanisms unfortunately remain inadequate to promote cooperation. Although a number of forums exist, e.g., the G-8, Interpol, and the United Nations, including its subsidiary entities such as the World Health Organization, they either attend to narrow aspects of the problem or generally lack follow-through to match their rhetoric. Some potentially useful international actors, such as NATO, have played almost no role at all. Clearly, international institutions must be strengthened in order for them to be more effective. But this alone is not enough; they must also be made to work better together. Again, the notion of greater "networking" and more effective communication and liaison comes to the fore.

Effective counter-terrorism strategy requires a robust public communications effort. This must be directed both internally to the publics whose support is critical, and externally to those who are the targets in the competition of ideas. Internally, the messages must focus on identifying the necessary measures and justifying why they are both legitimate and proportionate for public protection. Only by making this case as strongly as possible will the public remain steadfast in its view of the government as a good steward of the instruments of state control, support the hard choices that must be made, and endure the sacrifices required. Externally, the Atlantic Council report calls for

a “long-term effort to combat the ideology and ameliorate the underlying causes that makes a seemingly repellent ideology attractive.” Honest and direct communications with both audiences is essential. In neither case is a compelling message particularly well served by martial terminology.

Addressing CBRN Weapons

A final component of strategy to which the Atlantic Council report directs attention is the issue of preventing terrorists from acquiring and using CBRN weapons. While the report discusses some of the issues related to this aspect of the terrorism challenge, it does little to outline how to respond to it or what the implications for public support might be of government efforts in this area. Substantial analysis has been presented in the open literature on various aspects of the terrorist CBRN challenge, and this is not the place to review that enormous body of material. But some important points are worth noting.

Undersecretary of State Robert Joseph has made the important observation that “while many of the tools are the same, preventing WMD terrorism requires different approaches from those we have followed against state WMD programs or against conventional or non-WMD-related terrorism.”[40] Again, creativity is required. Consider the utility of deterrence in countering CBRN terrorism. Conventional wisdom contends that terrorist acquisition of CBRN weapons is virtually equivalent to their use because deterring terrorists is not possible.[41] Lewis Dunn argues, however, that the analysis is not that simple. He suggests, for example, that there may be some potential deterrence leverage points that, through concerted action, will at least make acquisition and use more difficult, and that steps should be taken to enhance the possibilities for “self-deterrence” of the terrorists.[42]

Creativity is also needed in assessing and anticipating the implications of the rapid advance of the science on which CBRN weapons capabilities are based and the widespread global diffusion of the underlying knowledge and associated technologies. This challenge is perhaps most striking with respect to chemical and biological weapons,

given that the science and technology is already ubiquitous for perfectly legitimate reasons.

Innovative approaches must also encompass our international partners. Significant international cooperation is needed for preventing, detecting, and responding to CBRN terrorism, and for managing and mitigating the consequences of CBRN attacks. If anything, the reasons for international cooperation outlined above are even stronger in the CBRN realm, especially with respect to lessons learned and building bridges among a wide spectrum of communities who must be involved in implementing an effective strategy.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) AND THE DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY (DTRA)

What is the importance of the foregoing discussion for considering the roles and responsibilities of the DoD and DTRA in U.S. counter-terrorism efforts? The Atlantic Council report argues that casting the challenge in military terms – such as "the Global War on Terror" – is, on balance, less rather than more helpful to the overall effort. Other analysts agree.[43] A corollary of this view is that, although military capabilities are an essential component of counter-terrorism efforts, the military should not be considered the primary instrument by which the competition with terrorism is waged.

As an element of a broader strategy, however, the armed forces, as shaped and overseen by DoD, are subject to most if not all of the same considerations discussed above regarding the overall strategy and the tools used to implement it: DoD must work together with all of the relevant players, both governmental and non-governmental, at home and abroad; the Department – from its most senior leaders on down – must be as innovative and creative as possible; emphasis must be placed on flexibility and adaptability to be able to respond effectively to unforeseen developments; international cooperation is vital.

Perhaps most importantly for this study, the DoD and its subsidiary agencies, including DTRA, must be sensitive to and mindful of the importance of public support. That singular need should inform DoD's actions as much as it does those of any other government department or agency. It is especially important given the U.S. public's view of the war in Iraq. It is clear that perceptions of the success of the war in Iraq is a vital factor in the public's sense of how safe they feel from terrorism generally, how competent the U.S. government is to deal with the challenge terrorism presents, and the legitimacy of the means adopted by the government to counter the threat. What DoD does, then, and how it does it are very important in shaping U.S. public support for the government's counter-terrorism efforts.

In a speech introducing the new Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld noted that countering terrorism and defending the homeland, especially against 'catastrophic' CBRN attacks, were new areas toward which the Pentagon's emphasis had shifted.[44] In the Secretary's view, the United States is now engaged with terrorists and other extremists in a generational conflict, dubbed the "Long War," that might last decades.

The QDR has an "inside/outside" perspective in defining the role of the armed forces in dealing with terrorism. Beyond U.S. borders the task is defined as defeating terrorist networks, and the QDR demonstrates a good understanding of the changed nature of the challenge. It emphasizes, for example, that "the enemies we face are not traditional conventional military forces, but rather distributed multi-national and multi-ethnic networks of terrorists…[who] use intimidation, propaganda and indiscriminate violence…[and] seek ever deadlier means." While the terrorists oppose globalization, paradoxically they use the instruments of globalization such as the internet, cell phones, and text messaging to conduct their attacks. These networks encourage "startup franchises" around the world that conduct copy-cat attacks, and they depend on 24/7news cycles for the publicity they seek to attract new recruits. They exploit poorly governed areas of the world, taking sanctuary where states lack the capacity or the will to police

themselves. States sponsors such as Iran and Syria provide yet another form of safe haven.[45]

In his speech, the Secretary emphasized that in order to prevail against that kind of adversary, the United States needs a military that is more agile and capable of dealing with unconventional threats. In that spirit, the QDR identified several types of capabilities needed to defeat terror networks, including human intelligence, persistent surveillance, special operations forces, multipurpose forces to train, equip, and advise indigenous forces, fused intelligence and operations, language and cultural awareness, non-lethal capabilities, urban and riverine warfare capabilities, prompt global strike, and effective communications, among others.[46]

The "inside" aspect of the QDR relates to its emphasis on the need to defend the homeland in depth. In this regard, the Defense Department has gone to great lengths to demarcate its homeland defense role from its homeland security mission. It defines the former as conducting "operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests within the assigned area of responsibility." The DoD contribution to homeland security is more limited, defined as "defense support of civil authorities, including consequence management operations."[47]

The QDR also focuses on the armed forces' mission of combating the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, whether by states or non-state actors, including terrorists. The United States must be prepared to deter attacks, tag and track WMD materials, detect WMD, sustain operations even while under WMD attack, help mitigate the consequences of an attack either at home or overseas, and render safe WMD materials in peacetime, during combat, or after conflicts. Fulfilling this mission highlights the need for a number of capabilities, some of which are not dissimilar to those required for the counter-terrorism mission, including special operations forces, capabilities to detect fissile materials, interdiction capabilities, persistent surveillance, human intelligence, non-lethal weapons, capabilities and specialized teams to render CBRN weapons safe and secure, and joint command and control, among others.[48]

While the DoD approach as outlined in the QDR and other strategy documents suggests the new thinking that is necessary to address the challenges posed by contemporary terrorism, that approach is not without its problems.[49] Four issues in particular should be highlighted.

Matching Innovative Thinking with Innovative Measures.

Although the Pentagon's diagnosis of the problem is given high marks, some experts are concerned that, as presented in the QDR, efforts to implement the new thinking will fall short of the mark. In particular, they criticize DoD for making only marginal adjustments in force capabilities despite fundamental shifts in thinking. One former DoD official, for example, argues that "we're over-invested as a military, as the Department of Defense, in capabilities to deal with high-end warfighting, against very traditional military threats and we're under-invested in capabilities to deal with irregular warfare, like terrorism, like insurgency and stability operations…catastrophic threats like WMD terrorism, and so forth."[50] An "alternative" QDR prepared by the Center for American Progress argues for a more powerful, flexible, and agile military force."[51] In the view of that report's authors, what is needed is to "rebalance forces and weaponry in order to allow the United States to protect the homeland, fight one major regional conflict, engage simultaneously in two substantial post-conflict missions, and contain conflict in three regions."[52]

The Pentagon itself recognizes that it is not making dramatic changes despite the new thinking. Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for example, noted there are not "huge tectonic shifts" in the QDR.[53] The result is that only minor adjustments have been made in key weapons systems, with some of the most significant programs, such as the Joint Strike Fighter and the Army's Future Combat System, remaining largely as they had been. According to one analyst, "A lot of tough choices are kicked down the road."[54]

What is DoD's Homeland Mission?

DoD's "internal" mission related to homeland defense and homeland security remains problematic. In particular, how assertive will DoD be in implementing these roles?

Defense Department statements and publications, as noted above, have gone to great lengths to emphasize that the armed forces are confined to a support role in homeland security and will take the lead in homeland defense. In reality, apart from actual combat operations, these mission areas frequently overlap. As described by one former senior military officer deeply involved in the issue, "Often the difference between homeland security and homeland defense is driven less by operational than by resource issues, especially in planning the 'response' function for a particular homeland security or homeland defense mission."[55]

Some experts take the issue even further, however, arguing that the current approach is based on a distinction without a difference. Stephen Duncan, the Director of the National Defense University's Institute for Homeland Security Studies, argues, for example, that the "distinction between homeland defense and homeland security is no longer useful. We are now engaged in a war of a different kind… Terrorism today neither stops nor starts at our borders… The American homeland is now part of the battle space." The result of this view is the conclusion that successfully waging the war on terrorism may necessitate a reevaluation of some of the basic roles and missions of the armed forces, including the pre-assignment of military units exclusively to homeland security missions and the potential need to engage in operations regarded by some as law-enforcement missions.[56] This last issue is especially contentious given that the armed forces are legally prohibited from conducting law enforcement activities within the United States.

Another example of concerns over a more assertive military in homeland security – and possible implications for public support – relates to information collection and surveillance. As the combatant command responsible for homeland defense, Northern Command (NORTHCOM) coordinates intelligence from a number of sources, including domestic law enforcement agencies. According to critics, "very little is known about exactly what kind of information NORTHCOM is gathering and on whom…[T]he command's domestic intelligence ambitions are more far-reaching than anything the U.S. military has undertaken in the past…" – all of which is especially worrisome to civil liberties advocates.[57]

Additional questions about the role of the armed forces in the homeland defense/security missions were raised when it became public that NORTHCOM had developed a series of fifteen scenarios for responding to terrorist attacks in the United States. According to the reporting, the scenarios ranged from "low-end," relatively modest crowd control missions to "high-end," full scale disaster management following catastrophic attacks.[58] The story continued that while defense officials continued to stress the support role played by military forces in homeland security, the new plans suggested what several senior officers acknowledged was the "likelihood that the military will have to take charge in some situations, especially when dealing with mass casualty attacks that could quickly overwhelm civilian responses." This view was reinforced by the perspective of NORTHCOM's commander, Admiral Timothy Keating, who argued that "In my estimation, [in the event] of a biological, a chemical or nuclear attack in any of the fifty states, the Department of Defense is best positioned – of the various eight federal agencies that would be involved – to take the lead."[59]

There is no question that the U.S. armed forces have many assets that can and should be brought to bear in the event of a domestic crisis; it makes sense for these assets to be utilized in the planning and preparing for such an occurrence. But will the military play a lead or support role? This is an important issue with respect to public opinion. On one hand, the public recognizes the military as having the resources, organization, and discipline to be operationally effective. On the other hand, public fears and perceptions could impede DoD's leadership. Some civilians, for example, mistrust the military even more than they mistrust the government generally. Other concerns, such as those cited earlier relating to civil liberties, could also make the U.S. public uncomfortable in seeing the Defense Department assume leadership on these issues.

Given these concerns, it is not surprising that planners in both DoD and other federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remain uncertain as to the nature of their relationship. This uncertainty impedes the process of planning effective responses. A 2003-04 Defense Science Board study noted that DHS had very little understanding of NORTHCOM's role and that neither effective partnerships with civilian

agencies nor robust coordination with DoD existed.[60] While some progress has perhaps been made, command relationships appear to remain unclear, and little forward movement has been made in developing a common operating picture.

Even if these issues are resolved, and despite existing capabilities, the Defense Department must continue to bolster its homeland-related capacities. The Center for American Progress's alternative QDR argues that the Pentagon should budget at least $20 billion for homeland defense, double the current amount.[61] Lt. General Joseph Inge, NORTHCOM's Deputy Commander, has pointed out the need for the Command to grow and improve in several areas, including a more robust ability to counter CBRN threats, better intelligence sharing, enhanced training, stronger working relationships with other federal agencies such as the FBI and FEMA (as well as with international partners and the private sector), and a more proactive approach to determine what actions are possible under current law and whether and how legal frameworks might have to be reformed.[62]

One military asset about which discussion continues to be intense is the National Guard. The Guard plays both federal and state roles and is engaged in both civilian and defense activities. The Center for American Progress report argues that the Guard should be transformed from being a backup to the active force to being the primary protector of the homeland.[63] Other proposals are not so far-reaching but do suggest that the Guard's evolution must continue if only to resolve some of the strains that are now emerging as a result of its undertaking a wide range of functions – from overseas combat missions to supporting law enforcement domestically to facilitating emergency responses.

What about CBRN?

Two important conceptual shifts are essential if DoD is to approach the novel dimensions of the CBRN challenge with the necessary creative mindset. First, it is important to avoid the traditional tendency of trying to understand the CBRN problem through the nuclear prism. That nuclear weapons are a primary concern because of the scale of destruction they can inflict is obvious and appropriate. But in many ways, nuclear weapons are the "odd man out" with respect to current global trends and the emerging

challenges of the global security environment. What might be effective in addressing nuclear challenges, therefore, has little carryover to how success can be achieved with respect to other types of WMD. The cliché that "nuke is not chem is not bio" is acknowledged virtually universally. But when it comes to understanding issues, devising policy options, and developing appropriate capabilities, the nuclear perspective often reasserts itself and becomes dominant (and sometimes exclusive). The first innovation therefore should be a fundamental change in mindset that no longer gives the nuclear perspective pride of place.

Second, the CBRN challenge – as with the terrorism problem more generally – is not a problem to be solved, but a risk to be managed. The sources of concern cannot be eliminated. Work in the life sciences, for example, will continue and should do so for important legitimate reasons. This means, however, that the potential for the misuse of that science and associated technologies to produce biological weapons remains a permanent reality. The challenge in confronting the potential catastrophes inherent in the misuse of the life sciences – whether by states or non-state actors – is not to prevent international actors from acquiring the capabilities to exploit biology for malign purposes. That is not possible. Rather, the challenge is, as UK Ministry of Defence official Paul Schulte put it, "to keep it out of their behavioral repertoires." Nuclear weapons are of course an exception in this regard. Access to appropriate nuclear materials and technologies remains perhaps the critical requirement in acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Yet, the same issues exist in the nuclear realm as for other WMD, that is, relevant and legitimate scientific work continues and, so long as it does, the international community will have to manage the risks associated with it.

The process of successfully managing the CBRN challenge, therefore, must include a conceptual shift from threat and vulnerability assessments to risk management approaches. Uncertainty is the hallmark of the CBRN challenge in a globalized world. That uncertainty exists because the risk – especially from terrorists – is a product of a complex interaction among several categories of factors – actors, agents, targets, and operational considerations – each of which includes many variables. Taken together,

these variables produce a matrix that offers a large set of possible combinations and permutations, each of which produces a pathway to a particular outcome. Some of these pathways could yield catastrophic consequences; others could result in lesser but still significant casualties (e.g., the Aum Shinrikyo sarin attacks); while still others may result in diverse consequences (e.g., the anthrax letters in the United States killed only five people but their psychological impact was far more significant than the casualty rates might have suggested). Finally, some pathways result in no consequences at all (Aum Shinrikyo's attempts to use anthrax and botulinum toxin).

Another problem with traditional vulnerability assessments is that they often ignore the probability of potential outcomes. They emphasize what could happen but not its likelihood. Risk assessment introduces the necessary concept of probability. An analysis of the various pathways mentioned above suggests that if the goal of someone using biological weapons is catastrophic casualties or widespread disruption, fewer pathways are available and those that do exist are more difficult than those producing less significant results. A risk assessment approach would conclude that the degree of risk declines as the level of desired casualties or disruption increases, insofar as this outcome becomes less likely. Such a finding could have important implications for planning and resource allocation decisions.

One might argue that current threat assessments also tend to emphasize the adversary's technological capacity to conduct an attack. How capably terrorists will exploit existing or future science and technology is the subject of intense debate. Excessive consideration of a terrorist's technological capabilities, however, diverts attention from his creativity. One should approach planning efforts to meet the WMD terror challenge with the same caution as the military planner who noted that battle plans rarely survive contact with the enemy. Events are almost certain to proceed in ways quite different from those anticipated and planned for.

Our objective must be preparedness for as wide a range of plausible contingencies as possible. That can only be accomplished if there exists a robust set of critical capabilities

integrated into a genuinely strategic approach stressing flexibility and adaptability. But developing those capabilities is not easy. It entails identifying requirements, establishing criteria to determine the appropriate level of capabilities to meet those requirements, balancing a wide set of competing interests, and involving the right set of players. Risk reduction is a multifaceted, complex challenge that includes norm-building, prevention, deterrence, defense, preparedness, and consequence management, mitigation, and amelioration.

DoD and the Competition of Ideas

The Department of Defense is not a public affairs agency. But the centrality of the U.S. armed forces in countering contemporary terrorism means that the Pentagon cannot escape the need to extend its vision beyond a narrow focus on "performing the mission" and engage in the competition for public support, both at home and abroad, that is a core feature of the struggle against terrorism now underway.

As the embodiment of the nation's "hard power" in its rawest form, American armed forces begin at a disadvantage because most publics perceive the use of military force in negative terms. That the armed forces are the "face" of a U.S. engagement in Iraq that is unpopular with both foreign and domestic publics makes it hard for them to be the conveyors of positive and credible messages that make a strong case for public support.

This has been exacerbated by developments associated with the U.S. military that have played exceedingly poorly with both domestic and foreign publics, not least of which have been the scandal at Abu Graib prison and the detention of suspected terrorists at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo. Whether justifiable or not, in the publics' perceptions these kinds of incidents, together with those mentioned earlier relating to civil liberties, have made developing and promulgating the necessary counter-narrative much more difficult. It especially raises the question of whether the United States is genuinely committed to the values its leaders espouse. In polls in most of the Arab world, for example, majorities now say their opinion of the United States has grown worse, and the primary reason cited for this change is U.S. treatment of Arabs and Muslims.[64] These

kinds of incidents also serve to undermine any positive image the military itself has achieved through its fine work in such areas as providing humanitarian assistance to people experiencing extreme suffering in conflict-torn regions or devastated by natural catastrophes.

The U.S. military is of course aware that it must consider how its actions can affect the debate between extremists resorting to terrorism and their competitors.[65] And it is sensitive to the need for strategic communications that "align coalition and partner nations against violent extremism, provide support for moderate voices, dissuade enablers and supporters of extremists, deter and disrupt terrorist acts, and counter ideological support for terrorism." It also recognizes that achieving such goals can only be the product of a sustained and proactive effort, and that the armed forces are only part of a much broader program involving a wide range of government agencies.[66] At the same time, some commentators suggest that U.S. military forces are insufficiently prepared to meet these goals, largely because they lack the specialists who can provide expertise on the dynamics of the foreign audiences that are the core targets in the competition of ideas in the struggle against terrorism.[67]

Domestically, the Pentagon's role in determining the extent to which the public sustains its support for the government's counter-terrorism efforts could emerge as decisive. How DoD deals with the public on the conflict in Iraq in particular will be critical. Clearly, the public perceives a link between that conflict and their general sense of whether they are becoming more or less secure in the face of the threat of extremist terrorism. It is not the Pentagon's job alone to characterize "how the war in Iraq is going." Moreover, there is certainly a challenge in working with a media that is often single-minded in covering the more dramatic events as "news" – which often tend to be attacks, bombings, and other incidents that cause human suffering rather than what they might consider to be banal, less news-worthy developments that suggest positive trends. In trying to assess the situation in Iraq, what the American public wants most is honesty. Without the credibility that flows from honest and direct communications, no message – however accurate – will be deemed reliable.

VI. CONCLUSION

Countering contemporary terrorism is a challenge that must be pursued at many levels, and success (or failure) on each of these levels will have an impact on sustaining public support. At the tactical and operational levels the job is complicated by many of the characteristics of the modern terrorist – his global reach, networked and decentralized structure, increasing "firepower," and absolutist belief system, among others. Yet although the terrorists have enjoyed some notable successes in terms of dramatic attacks – in New York and Washington, Bali, Madrid, London, and elsewhere – they have also suffered some significant setbacks.

It is hard to assess the long-term impact of those attacks on public attitudes. Certainly they have increased the public's perception of its vulnerability. But that very perception of vulnerability has spurred public support for a wide range of government measures to prevent the terrorists from acting, reducing that vulnerability, and deal effectively with the consequences of an attack should it occur.

The government's job in meeting these needs is far from complete, and it is a complicated business. It demands a creativity uncharacteristic of most governments and it involves many players, governmental and non-governmental, national and international. Tough choices must still be made, and the pubic will want to be – and should be – part of the decision-making process. The strategic debate about just how prepared we want to be must be conducted with the public who, ultimately, will be asked to make the necessary sacrifices, whether by paying for the measures or, if they are extreme, redefining the meaning of their "normal" daily business.

Even more than at the tactical and operational level, however, the terrorists have achieved success at the ideological level. Ideology has become their most effective weapon. The major "victory" they have won is the reshaping of perspectives that has occurred in many places around the world and the tensions that have emerged as a result. Sir David Omand likens that ideological success to a malicious organism: "The international terrorist

ideology now has a life of its own beyond the lives of the men in the cave that spawned it. Like a biological parasite, it can only live off the energy of its hosts, mutating as it spreads, into forms that can infect previously untouched groups, particularly if their natural immunity is low. Even if the original source is destroyed we are left with the spread of the ideological virus as a continuing danger."

If martial language is to be invoked, it should stress the importance of the battle of ideas in countering today's terrorist challenge. This is a competition, however, that must be grounded in tolerance and respect. That too will be asked of the American public as much as it is asked of others. Public support for meeting this dimension of the challenge must be sought as avidly as support for new regulations, operations, or countermeasures.

The Department of Defense obviously has an important part to play in the competition with terrorism at all the levels at which it is conducted. DoD has demonstrated that its thinking is moving in the creative and innovative directions that are necessary to prevail in that competition. It must still convince the public, however – both at home and abroad – that while it can "talk the talk," it can also "walk the walk."

ENDNOTES

[1] *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, pp. 23-24.

[2] Walt Slocombe, Chairperson, and John Sandrock, Author-Rapporteur, *The War on Terrorism: Managing Risks and Sustaining Public Support*, Atlantic Council of the United States, Policy Paper, March 2006, pp. 1-3.

[3] Ibid., p. vii.

[4] Brian Michael Jenkins, "Redefining the Enemy: The World Has Changed, But Our Mindset Has Not," RAND Review, Spring 2004, Part 4.
http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/spring2004/enemy

[5] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism," *International Security,* vol. 27, no. 3 (Winter 2002/03), p. 41.

[6] Bruce Hoffman, cited in Joseph McMillan, "Apocalyptic Terrorism: The Case for Preventive Action," *Strategic Forum,* Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University Number 212, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, November 2004, p. 1.

[7] William J. Olson, "War Without a Center of Gravity: Reflections on Terrorism and Post-Modern War," unpublished manuscript.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "How Can Europe Respond to Terrorism?" Oxford Analytica Global Strategic Analysis, September 24, 2004. www.oxan.com/about/news/2004-09-24EuropeTerrorismEssayPrize…

[10] Anthony Cordesman, "The Lessons of International Cooperation in Counterterrorism," Address to the RUSI Conference on Transnational Terrorism: A Global Approach, January 18, 2006, pp. 2-3.

[11] Tori Munthe, "Terrorism: Not Who But Why?" *RUSI Journal,* August 2004, pp. 8-12.

[12] Ibid., p. 12.

[13] The concept of passive sponsors of terrorism is explored in Daniel Bynam, "Passive Sponsors of Terrorism," *Survival*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Winter 2005-06), pp. 117-144.

[14] See, for example, Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Caracan, *The Nexus Among Terrorists, Narcotics Traffickers, Weapons Proliferators, and Organized Crime Networks in Western Europe,* Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, December 2002.

[15] Cronin, "Behind the Curve," pp. 49-50.

[16] Ibid., p. 38.

[17] Atlantic Council, *The War on Terrorism: Managing Risks and Sustaining Public Support,* p. vii.

[18] Steven Simon, "The New Terrorism: Securing the Nation Against a Messianic Foe," *The Brookings Review,* vol. 21, no. 1 (Winter 2003), p. 18. www.brookings.edu/press/review/winter2003/simon.htm.

[19] Cronin, "Behind the Curve."

[20] For more on the terrorists' advantages in such an environment, see David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats," *Strategic Forum* Number 219, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, January 2006, p.2.

[21] Oxford Analytica, "How Can Europe Respond to Terrorism,?" September 24, 2004.

[22] Ibid.

[23] David Omand, "Countering International Terrorism: The Use of Strategy," *Survival*, vol. 47, no. 4 (Winter 2005-06), p. 108.

[24] Ibid., p. 112.

[25] Ibid., p. 108.

[26] Ibid., p. 111.

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Opinion Leaders Turn Cautious, Public Looks Homeward: America's Place in the World," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, November 17, 2005. http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=1019.

[29] Karlyn H. Bowman, *America and the War on Terrorism*, AEI Studies on Public Opinion, American Enterprise Institute, March 24, 2006, p. 32.

[30] Dana Millbank and Claudia Deane, "Poll Finds Dimmer View of Iraq War," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2005.

[31] "US Faces Skeptical World Over Iraq," BBC News, February 28, 2006.

[32] Cordesman, p. 10.

[33] Omand, pp. 113-114.

[34] Jenkins, "Redefining the Enemy," part 1.

[35] Jean-Francois Rischard, "Global Issues Networks: Desperate Times Deserve Innovative Measures," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2002-03, p. 117.

[36] Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Government Networks, World Order, and the G20," prepared for the meeting on *The G20 at Leader's Level*, Ottawa, February 29, 2004, p. 2.

[37] Robert Keohane has argued, for example, that "institutions themselves are potentially oppressive." Quoted in Ibid., p. 18.

[38] McMillan, p. 2.

[39] Omand, p. 110.

[40] Robert G. Joseph, "U.S. Strategy to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," Statement to the Sub-Committee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Senate Armed Services Committee, March 29, 2006.

[41] See, for example, Stephen G. Rademaker, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation, "Countering WMD and Terrorism Through Cooperation," Remarks to Security Cooperation Strategy Conference, National Defense University, April 6-7, 2006. Press Release, U.S. Department of State, April 10, 2006. Assistant Secretary Rademaker began his remarks noting that "it will be very difficult to deter terrorists from using WMD if they can lay their hands on such weapons. Therefore, if terrorists acquire weapons of mass destruction, we have to assume they will employ them, with potentially catastrophic effects."

[42] Lewis A. Dunn, *Can al Qaeda Be Deterred from Using Nuclear Weapons?,* Occasional Paper No. 3, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, National Defense University, July 2005, p. 22.

[43] Sir David Omand says, for example, "We are in the habit of using words with military connotations, like 'campaign,' or 'strategic objective.' Such metaphors, and not least the description 'war on terror,' which is best avoided, run the risk of being seriously misleading." "The Use of Strategy," p. 108. Similarly, Richard Falkenrath contends, "National security experts need to develop a case for shifting the object from "terror" to "Islamist radicalism" and for de-emphasizing martial terminology and images…" Richard Falkenrath, "Grading the War on Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs,* January 2006, cited at http://www.brook.edu/printme.wbs?pag=/pagedefs/cab74584a254ff3

[44] Two additional focus areas for the QDR were preventing the acquisition and use of WMD and influencing the choices of countries at strategic crossroads. Josh White and Ann Alcott Tyson, "Rumsfeld Offers Strategies for Current War," *The Washington Post*, February 3, 2006, p. A8. Combating terrorism was included in the broader category of dealing with "irregular" conflicts, which

the QDR describes as "the dominant form of warfare confronting the United States, its allies, and its partners…" U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 6, 2006, p. 36. Brian Jenkins has described the panoply of new kinds of conflicts confronting the U.S. military as "a bloody resistance movement in Iraq, a combination of the Taliban, al Qaeda, and warlords in Afghanistan, a worldwide manhunt for the leaders of al Qaeda. Then there are those conflicts that do not directly threaten our national security but require military force to rescue or protect American citizens, restore leadership, apprehend an accused war criminal or an indicted head of state, prevent ethnic cleansing, retaliate for acts of terrorism or hunt for terrorist leaders." Jenkins, "Redefining the Enemy," Part 2.

[45] QDR, pp. 20-21.

[46] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[47] Northern Command Mission Statement, quoted in Donald F. Thompson, "Terrorism and Domestic Response: Can DOD Get It Right?," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 40, 1st Quarter, 2006, p. 17.

[48] QDR, pp. 33-35.

[49] See, for example, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism,* Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC, February 1, 2006, and *National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction,* Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC, February 13, 2006.

[50] David Ruppe, "Alternative Defense Review Calls for U.S. Nuclear Cuts, Higher Focus on Homeland Defense," *Global Security Newswire*, January 25, 2006.

[51] Lawrence J. Korb, Caroline P. Wadhams, and Andrew J. Grotto, *Restoring American Military Power: A Progressive Quadrennial Defense Review*, Center for American Progress, 2006, p. 1.

[52] Ibid.

[53] "Rumsfeld Offers Strategies for Current War," p. A8.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Presentation by Lt. Gen. Edward G. Anderson III, former Deputy Commander, U.S. Northern Command, summarized in *Planning for and Responding to Threats to the U.S. Homeland: Final Report*, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Cambridge, MA, 2005.

[56] Presentation by Stephen Duncan summarized in *Planning for and Responding to Threats to the U.S. Homeland: Final Report*, pp. 40-41.

[57] Peter Byrne, "Battlespace America," *Mother Jones*, May/June 2005. http://www.motherjones.com/cgi-bin/print_article.pl?url=http//www

[58] Bradley Graham, "War Plans Drafted to Counter Terror Attacks in U.S.: Domestic Effort is Big Shift for Military," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 2005.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Cited in Duncan presentation, p. 41.

[61] *Restoring American Military Power*, p. 9.

[62] Lt Gen. Joseph Inge, presentation to the conference summarized in *Planning for and Responding to Threats to the U.S. Homeland: Final Report*, p. 50.

[63] *Restoring American Military Power*, p. 9

[64] Cordesman, p. 7.

[65] See, for example, *The National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*, Annex H: Strategic Communications, p. 30.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Tucker and Lamb, p.3.