



Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism

The “Battle of Ideas” Dimension in the Struggle Against
Global Terrorism

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"What we are confronting here is an evil ideology. It is not a clash of civilizations - all civilized people, Muslim or other, feel revulsion at it. But it is a global struggle and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds, both within Islam and outside it. This is the battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods, but their views. Not just about their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas. Not only what they do, but what they think and the thinking they would impose on others."

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, United Kingdom

Overview



- *US Policy on CIST*
- *Sources of Terrorism/Challenges in Crafting CIST Strategy*
- *Marshall Center / Academic/Policy Initiatives on CIST (Conferences, Courses, Research)/ Some Preliminary Working Conclusions*
- *Some Concluding Concerns/Issues*
- *Global Coalition/Concerted Efforts to Combat the Ideology Supporting Violent Terrorism*

*“Four hostile newspapers are more
to be feared than a thousand
bayonets.”*



Napoleon Bonaparte

United States Policy/CIST

- The United States Government (including the President, State Department and Department of Defense) assign a high priority to the importance of the ideological or “hearts and minds” dimension in the long term global struggle against terrorism
- US officials typically acknowledge that the ideological dimension may be “most important over time...”

Core US CIST Response

- Promote *Alternative Vision of Democracy, Democratic Values*
- Discredit the *Validity and Appeal of the Message of the Terrorists*

Instruments/Perceptions

- Not simply restricted to public diplomacy
- Rather, CIST must be all-encompassing to embrace every aspect that might contribute to shape

PERCEPTIONS

- Instruments of Communication or Strategic Communication: public diplomacy, public affairs, information technology, media, internet, psyops
- Importance of Trusting the Messenger: contact with American/Western society on every level; government, military, private citizens

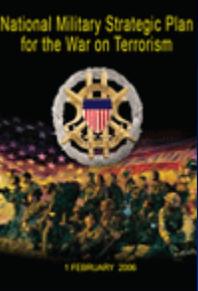
Pillars of United States Middle East Strategy

- Promotion of Democracy
- Political Reform via Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)

MEPI's Four Reform Areas:

- Political Pillar*: Expand the Democratic Process
- Economic Pillar*: Encourage Economic Growth and Development
- Education*: Developing Knowledge/Skills
- Women*: Develop Full and Equal Opportunity for Women

Source: Professor Nick Pratt, May 2006



US National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism

- The document is clear that “this is not a religious war or cultural clash between Islam and the West, although our extremist enemies find it useful to characterize the war this way...”
- Defines ideology as a “systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture. It can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, as a way of looking at things... There are many different kinds of ideology: political, social, spiritual, epistemological, ethical, and so on.”
- “All instruments of national power play a role in undermining ideological support and propaganda operations that defends and promotes the use of terrorism.”

National Military Strategic Framework 2005 NMSP-WOT

Ends

Strategic Goal: *Preserve and promote the way of life of free and open societies based on the rule of law, defeat terrorist extremism as a threat to that way of life, and create a global environment inhospitable to terrorists extremists.*

Ways

Military Strategic Objectives

Protect the Homeland, Allies, and Interests

Disrupt and Attack Terrorist Networks

Counter Ideological Support for Terrorism

Deny terrorists the resources they need to operate and survive.

(resources, leadership, fuel, soldiers, safe havens, weapons, funds, cover and movement, access to targets, and ideological support)

Enable partner nations to counter terrorism.

Deny WMD/E proliferation, recover and eliminate uncontrolled materials, and maintain capability for consequence mitigation.

Defeat terrorists and their organizations.

Persuade, coerce, and when necessary, compel states and non-states to cease support of terrorists.

Establish conditions that counter ideological support of terrorism.

Means

Combatant Commands, Services, and Combat Support Agencies

US Secretary of Defense

Donald Rumsfeld

recently assigned the United States a

near failing grade of

“a D or D+ in

the battle of ideas taking place.”

US Army War College, March 2006



Al Qaeda's Message/Objectives:

- “We are seeking to incite the Islamic Nation to rise up to liberate its land and to conduct Jihad for the sake of God.” UBL
- “Acquiring chemical and nuclear weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty.” UBL
- Goals/ideology: Global Jihad against the United States and its Allies; expel American influence from Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula; remove secular governments in the region; eliminate Israel; expand the Muslim empire to historical significance; inflict mass casualties; absolutist perspective (good vs. evil); use Palestine and Iraq as rallying points for new recruits

Means for Disseminating Information/Recruitment

- Internet
- Publications
- Media
- Rumors/Disinformation
- Attempts to Establish Religious Legitimacy

Sources of Contemporary Islamist Terrorism

Several Explanations :

- Terrorism product of “strategic calculation”; religion is not a motivating factor for group terrorism
- Group cohesion; ethnic food gatherings
- Combination of both emotional and rational motives for female suicide terrorists
- Religious motivations based on alternative versions of the Koran

Two Major Problems / Scientific or Academic Literature on Terrorism

- *Terrorism neglected for years in the academic community in the United States*
- *Methodological challenges*
- We can consider the range of potential structural/individual factors that might prompt terrorist acts; Still considerable uncertainty regarding the interplay of these variables; need for additional rigorous scientific research

George C. Marshall Center Research/Academic/Policy Initiatives Devoted to CIST



■ **September 2005:** CIST Conference/Case Studies

-Invited Regional Specialists from US PME Regional Centers and other Academic/Policy Research Institutions throughout the world to examine CIST in various regional/case study contexts

-Conference generated "Working Policy Recommendations" to be evaluated in the coming months among GCMC international audiences

■ **Spring 2006:** Senior Executive CIST Seminar

-Largest number of countries represented among SES courses held at the GCMC

Working Policy Recommendations (September 2005 CIST Conference)



- Provide credible alternative ideologies to those promoting violence
- Understand the cultural context in which violence is taking place to craft an appropriate response
- Strategy appropriate for one case may not be universally applicable; need for additional expertise/studies among different regional contexts
- Undercut the legitimacy of those who advocate terrorism; vital that higher authorities challenge the misuse of religious doctrine

Policy summary prepared by Dean John Reppert and Dr. Sharyl Cross



- Work to eliminate those activities or behaviors that can be used to fuel the appeal of extremists and incite violence (recent cases of prisoner abuse etc.)
- Packaging/presentation of CIST message may be as important as the message
- Reliable intelligence is as important to CIST as it is to other (military, financial..) CT operations
- National CIST programs that are not coordinated and integrated with those of friends and allies can be both inefficient and ineffective

Senior Executive Seminar

Spring 2006



Some Summary Conclusions:

- Need to counter Al Qaeda's narrative; demonstrate that the story lacks validity
- Discussion about Religion Must Come From Within the Muslim Religious Leadership, Not From the West
- US Must Demonstrate "Purity of Intention" in the Muslim World; Importance of the Credibility of the Messenger Can't be Underestimated
- CIST Message Cannot be Divorced from Policy/Priority on Palestinian Issue
- Key to Change in the Middle East will be Education and Economic/ Development/Political Development at the grass roots level

GCMC Upcoming CIST Efforts



- July 2006 Alumni Leadership CIST Conference
- September 2006 CIST Conference

Three Areas of Emphasis to Expand Understanding & Validate/Develop Actionable Policy Recommendations:

- Interdisciplinary Focused Research
- Substantial Participation of Islamic Scholars and Clerics from Muslim Societies
- International Partner: Academic and Policy Participation

Some Concluding Concerns/Additional Recommendations

- MUST avoid a “Clash of Cultures” Mind Set; Expose Al Qaeda’s Agenda and Global Totalitarian Vision

- Relevance of the Stresses of Globalization
(education, social services/support)
- Promoting Democracy
- Concerning the Credibility of the Messenger/Trust
- US Educational / Research Efforts; Exchanges;
Enhancing Cultural/Religious Understanding

- Communication/Dialogue Vital
- Inter-religious Dialogue/Public Statements Rejecting Terrorism
- Creating Global “Norms” Stigmatizing Terrorist Acts



- “This is a war of ideas, fought on a cultural frontier. We need to provide people with a better vision, with better hopes and chances than the insurgents do. We need to give people a way to earn a living so they are not vulnerable to the ideologists. *Winning the hearts and minds is far more important than killing or capturing people.*”

Gen. (Ret.) Wallace C. Gregson, USMC, 2005