

sations were consolidated by religious zealots to condemn a perceived crusade against Islam and to justify a counterattack in its defense.²

Solutions still elude the West because there is no consensus on causality. Poverty and inequality may play a role but they are not necessarily determinant or even salient factors. Likewise, a lack of education contributes to alienation, but falls far short of explaining terrorism. In the short term we should also be wary of automatically assuming (and loudly touting, in the case of Washington) the ability of the wonder drug of democratization to attack the roots of terrorism in the Middle East. Little attention is being paid to the critical need for an examination and reassessment of Western—especially US—policies in the region. Their modification at this point seems remote, but not doing so will leave a principal cause of Middle Eastern terrorism in place. The report is guided by the notion that, in the interests of fighting terrorism effectively, we should attempt to understand it in all its complexity. This is not a brief for tolerating terrorism in any way, but a suggestion that only a recognition of the diverse nature of the phenomenon and its manifold aspects will lead to an effective antiterrorist long-term strategy.

Our report is divided into two main sections: Section I is an introduction to the theme of terrorism today and the policies and practices of counterterrorism by the West. The section includes general considerations regarding definitions of terrorism and its conceptualization, as well as perspectives on its nature. Potential solutions as well as the risks of overresponding to terrorism are also addressed; Section II constitutes the bulk of the report and includes US definitions and analysis of terrorism, a brief comparison with Europe, the Bush administration's "politicization" and "geopoliticization" of antiterrorism, an exploration of the current liberty-security matrix, the risks to democracy of US approaches to antiterrorism, and a critical look at the efficacy of the policy of democratization as a solution to terrorism. The report will argue that, however electorally successful the politicization of the issue has been for the Republican Party, political considerations have detracted from efforts to provide adequate

national security; and that privileging geopolitical goals—specifically the decision to invade Iraq—over a focused war on terrorism has increased terrorism's range and incidence.

General considerations regarding terrorism

Definitions and Nature of Terrorism

First, some questions to ponder rather than answer: Is too much subsumed under the rubric of terrorism? Are we overusing or misusing the word? If it were an issue in 1945, how many aspects of World War II, including aerial firebombings of German and Japanese cities and the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would fit into a broad category of terrorism? How many aspects of the cold war constituted a variety of terrorism?

Terrorism, of course, is generally considered a means to an end, a weapon in the service of a political agenda, and not an end in itself. Terrorism is the dramatic and terrible expression of the power of violence unleashed against non-combatants in order to intimidate and pressure an antagonist, weaken or cause the capitulation of an enemy, promote a political agenda, and attract allies and recruits to the cause of its perpetrators. Unlike communism during the cold war, terrorism cannot be regarded as an ideological adversary; it exhibits no fixed set of beliefs, although a particular ideology can give primacy to terrorist strategies and its practitioners nearly always possess an ideology, no matter how rudimentary or visceral. To maintain, as some leaders do, that terrorism is a kind of spontaneous act of evil, devoid of serious political objectives, is to consign terrorism to the category of aberrant, irrational behavior—its practitioners nothing more than sociopathic mass murderers. But this emotionally satisfying distortion is a dangerous oversimplification, underestimating the terrorist adversary and weakening efforts to combat terrorism effectively. If true, it would be better dealt with by local police and psychiatrists than inter-

² For more on the notion of "defensive jihad" see Anonymous (Michael Scheuer), *Imperial Hubris. Why We are Losing the War on Terror*. Dulles, Va.: Brassey's Inc., 2004, pp. 7-17.

UNLIKE COMMUNISM
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national intelligence and security networks and military operations.

The phenomenon of terrorism does share one aspect with criminal behavior and malevolent violence: it is an evil with which we are going to coexist for some time. Everyone recognizes that it is still nearly impossible adequately to guard against suicide bombers. The persistence of structural factors means that terrorism will continue to haunt society. Terrorist groups have demonstrated a marked ability to recruit and replace losses; and violence has been transformed into a way of life for a number of groups who practice terrorism. (In addition to Al Qaeda, consider, for example, the evolution of the paramilitaries and the FARC in Colombia). Al Qaeda's strategy appears to take the long view; the group bides its time, and often strikes after long quiescent periods. There were eight years between the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993 and the attacks of 9/11 that destroyed them. So far, terrorism displays an endemic quality, the incidence of terrorism continuing year after year—and in the last three years, notably increasing—as long as the conditions that spawn it exist. As retired artillery General Alberto Piris writes, "It must be assumed that terrorist actions in today's world have to be considered as serious disturbances inherent in human activity, like airline catastrophes, traffic accidents, or natural disasters. Terrorism, like crime, will never disappear completely, although both should be fought with intensity and without surcease".³

The world will therefore continue to need astute and effective policies designed to neutralize terrorist groups, minimize their potential damage in the short term, and limit their appeal in the

long run. These must be implemented taking into account the degree of terrorism's uniqueness, differentiation, and its variegated nature.

There have been cases where terrorism has become an end in itself, converted into a radical deed, a self-contained act of revolutionary ideological purity, which therefore transcends an obvious socio-political analysis. Examples include aspects of nineteenth century anarchism, and, for a period of time in the 1980's, the phenomenon of Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path) of Peru. The latter, an indigenous-agrarian Communist movement, has been compared to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, rejecting the primacy of politics in favor of the transformative power of violence as a reification of Sendero ideology. Terrorism, wrapped in a reductionist fundamentalism, was raised from a tactical necessity to an intrinsic principle.⁴ Al Qaeda contains elements of this apocalyptic amalgam of means and ends in the group's jihadist project and its interpretation by rank and file cadres. At an abstract level, suicide attacks against civilians by this group and its extended network of sympathizers embody a belief in terrorist violence as an act of personal religious redemption. Islam is thus both avenged by an "act of war" and glorified in selfless individual sacrifice—the essence of the "holy war." And yet an exclusive, or even primary, focus on this dimension of Al Qaeda would fall far short of understanding its nature.

For the most part, today's terrorism, to update Karl von Clausewitz on war, may be more usefully cast as politics by other and very bloody means. The United Nations defined terrorism as "any act, besides those specified and in force in the conventions and agreements on particular aspects of ter-

³ "¿Existe todavía Al Qaeda?" *La Estrella Digital*, April 12, 2005.

⁴ The insurgents maximized and lionized violence as a revolutionary cleansing and ritual act of truth-seeking. Senderistas were Manichean absolutists who never doubted that they had cornered the market on truth and who felt an obligation to spread it through "overwhelming acts." See Carlos Ivan Degregori, "A Dwarf Star", *NACLA Report on the Americas* (Fatal Attraction. Peru's Shining Path. Sendero Luminoso) XXIV, 4, December-January, 1990-1991.

rorism, the Geneva accords, and Resolution 1566 (December 1, 2004) of the National Security Council of the UN, which is aimed at causing death or grave physical harm to a civilian non-combatant, when the purpose of said act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population or oblige a government or an international organization to take an action or refrain from one.” We should add that another objective of terrorism is to advertise its power, damage the credibility of and thus weaken an adversary, and inspire potential recruits through the image of a mighty Goliath brought to its knees. Terrorism’s terrible toll has provided a sense of power to the otherwise relatively powerless. Rooted in frustrations and resentments against an often indifferent world and in the attempt to balance the scales for even a single day terrorism serves the purpose of raising awareness of, if not sympathy with, the perpetrators’ charges against its more powerful foe.

Terrorism, by definition, is NOT an attack on an enemy military target, even by suicide bombers. Armies are trained precisely not to be terrorized by violence. We recall that Japanese Kamikaze pilots were not considered terrorists, but rather fanatical members of the enemy’s airforce. US soldiers who disregarded their own lives to attack the enemy in virtually suicidal missions were considered heroes, not terrorists. Yet the US military and the media still refer to many attacks on US and Iraqi soldiers as acts of terrorism. George Bush, for example, continually praises those Iraqis engaged in defeating terrorists, casting all armed Iraqi opposition into the same antisocial and criminal category.⁵ The US is occupying Iraq and, for any armed resistance to the occupation, it is a legitimate military target, along with local forces viewed as collaborators. A surreptitious attack by any means –ambushers, snipers, roadside bombs, or suicide bombers– against an occupying army is part of a time-tested guerrilla strategy of low-intensity war designed to wear down and exhaust a militarily superior enemy –but it cannot be regarded as terrorism.

A caveat, however: we should not accept as axiomatic the idea that terrorism can only be clas-

sified as such if the attacks are against civilian targets. The Basque terrorist group, ETA, killed Spanish police and military who were not invading, occupying, or even simply present in, the Basque Country. Such operations should not be considered military engagements, acts of war, or a defense against a hostile enemy: they qualify as acts of terrorism. In the absence of a defined *military* conflict, those who practice violence against an antagonist’s enforcement symbols may not claim legitimate combatant status.⁶

If terrorism is generally a bloody political instrument, then one must next ask: to what end is it a means? That question implies a need to examine what motivated terrorists, their political goals or demands, the purpose of this awful killing of innocents. The inquiry leads logically to an attempt to understand the antecedents of the groups or individuals responsible, their religious and political convictions, and the nature of the social alienation and frustration that may have informed their ideas. It is this exercise which has been most wanting in at least official discussions of the issue over the past four years. Since 9/11, Washington, for example, has preserved a virtual taboo on discussions of root causes of terrorism in favor of seeking out terrorists.

The results have not been encouraging. Despite killing thousands of Al Qaeda and Taliban members, as well as insurgents in Iraq, Western counterterrorism has not managed to deal a decisive blow to terrorist organizations in the past four years. In fact, there is much evidence of their expansion and diffusion (see below p. 21). On the other hand, terrorists cannot claim much success either in forcing political change or realizing much of their political agenda beyond publicity. The victimized states and their people are far from surrendering to the goals of terrorists and the goals of terrorists still appear vague and indeterminate, their acts are only remotely capable of bringing about the kind of transformation they seek. At this juncture, international terrorism and the West’s counterterrorist response seems likely to remain in a deadly competition that is sure to create more victims.

⁵ See for example *El Pais*, “Los Estadounidenses critican la guerra...”, 17 march 2005, p. 3.

⁶ I am grateful to Antonio Sanz Trillo, a researcher/analyst at CIP, for this clarification.

State-military terrorism

War, as the pacifist slogan would have it, is not simply terrorism with a larger budget. Nevertheless, since the creation of civilian fear and uncertainty in the pursuit of political or military objectives is the principal characteristic of terrorism, it is empirically obvious that states and their armed forces may at times engage in a form of terrorism. Any definition of terrorism should therefore include the use of tactics by armies and states which intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, terrorize a civilian population. The saturation bombing of German and Japanese cities in World War II, as well as the use of the atomic bomb against a civilian population in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had the objective of undermining the resistance of these governments by terrorizing their populations. Some incursions by the Israeli security forces in the occupied Palestinian territories would qualify as terrorism. Other nations like Russia in combating Chechnyan terrorism, and Algeria in repressing domestic Muslim extremists, have not hesitated to employ their militaries and police forces to sow fear among populations deemed threatening to the state. Similarly, it could be said that the US air assault on Baghdad in March and April of 2003, was a military campaign designed to spread terror and therefore discourage the Iraqi people –military and civilian– from resisting. Code-naming it “Shock and Awe” (Comoción y Terror) perhaps unintentionally captured its terrorizing intent. Not surprisingly, in the discussions surrounding United Nations reforms, the US opposes the UN adopting a definition of terrorism that includes states and formal militaries.⁷

Roots of contemporary terrorism

Analyzing the roots of terrorism is a tricky business. One must be careful with some of the overly apparent causes, found in facile phrases like poverty, social dislocation, political alienation, and a lack of democracy. In the Middle East, terrorism does not emerge from fragile, impoverished

nations, but from strong states. Poverty is not a significant factor in the rise of Al Qaeda (nor does it account for the persistence of the Basque separatist ETA in Spain), and democracy has been no sure bulwark against terrorism. Home-grown terrorism is not unknown to democratic nations like the US, Spain and Great Britain, as well as newly minted democracies in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

In addition to social, economic, and political alienation, other causal factors –both structural and circumstantial– include ideological-religious radicalism and the alienated, marginal status of young Muslims in European countries. There is a question of how much weight to give Israel’s policy in the West Bank and its treatment of Palestinians as contributing factors to terrorism. What receives much less attention in the discourse on terrorists’ motives is US foreign policy in the Islamic world –both pre 9/11 and now with the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It should be remembered that Osama Bin Laden offered three reasons for the attacks of September 11, none of which had anything to do with a “clash of civilizations” or the frustrated cry of a failed culture– deeply hostile to democracy, capitalism and modernity. First, was the US military presence in Saudi Arabia, the historic holy land of Mecca; second was the US collaboration with, what fundamentalist Muslims perceive as politically and religiously corrupt, “apostate” regimes in the Middle East; and third was Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians and Washington’s unconditional support for Israel and its policies. The invasion, occupation, and military campaigns in the Islamic countries of Iraq and Afghanistan have only fueled this criticism.

Proposals to Address the Threat of Terrorism

As their analyses of terrorism’s causes differ, so too do the solutions pursued by the US and Europe also reflect differing emphases. (See below, pp. 16-17) Despite this, however, there is agreement that terrorists cannot act with impunity and that governments must protect society from immediate

⁷ *The Washington Post*, September 1, 2005.

IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO DEVISE STRATEGIES TO EXAMINE AND REDUCE THE GRIEVANCES THAT SPAWN TERRORISTS THAN SIMPLY TO KILL SOME OF THEM

security threats by all means necessary, including the option of armed force.

It should be obvious that it is more important to devise strategies to examine and reduce the grievances that spawn terrorists than simply to kill some of them. Beyond the need to take measures to provide immediate security, and the rather vain hope that the Bush administration will re-examine its foreign policy in the Middle East, it is crucial for governments to address the long-term threat of terrorism. Governments and the national and international agencies responsible for counterterrorism must develop an integrated vision of the problem and a coordinated response designed to isolate and delegitimize terrorists. In general, this means concentrating on remedies for structural causes that expand the ranks of potential terrorists. These should focus on working with Islamic states in order to open up the socio-political environment that frustrates and disenfranchises young Muslims. Improving and expanding education would have long-term benefits. At the same time, Islamic nations (in particular, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) should also be pressured to clamp down on religious schools (madrassas) and other locales where violence is presented as an integral aspect of religious fundamentalism. Western influence should be applied in a way that is not counterproductive—producing more resentment and thus fueling more terrorist activity among religious zealots. As foreign minister of Germany Joschka Fischer said in 2003, “While we have to fight terrorism, we must be very careful to avoid making terrorists out of ordinary citizens”.⁸

Unlike the attitudes displayed towards Communism and leftist insurgencies during the cold war, Western countries generally reject the

idea of negotiations with radical groups like Al Qaeda. The rationale always offered is that these groups have no political agenda, engage in these attacks out of a kind of blind rage and therefore negotiations would legitimize violence. Nevertheless, negotiations with internal terrorist groups like the IRA and ETA are often an option. For example, while the conservative Partido Popular of Spain, for example has consistently opposed negotiations with ETA, the Socialist Party, now in power, has not ruled out talks and currently is pursuing some form of dialogue.

The pitfalls of counterterrorism

In the space where liberty and security meet, there exists the real possibility that nations threatened by terrorism will experience a politics of fear. (See discussion of the US case, p. 17-20). For democracies, there is always the danger that not only will national security concerns take precedence over the protection of civil liberties, but that in pursuit of the first, constitutional guarantees and the rule of law may suffer long-term damage. In the words of Alberto Piris, “what we should consider in the first place is that democracy itself is as vulnerable to terrorist attacks as may be refineries, airports or nuclear substations.” Revelations of the US practice of the torturing, abuse and degradation of suspects and prisoners, as well as a number of legal and intellectual defenses of torture, are distressing signs. So too is the suppression of dissent in the name of security. Such a willing abandonment of democratic virtues in effect forfeits the struggle and grants an unexpected and unwarranted victory to the terrorist

⁸ Quoted by Jose Félix Tezanos during the second session of the course “Peace and International Solidarity” (La Paz la Solidaridad Internacional), Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Curso de Verano, El Escorial, July 18-22, 2005.

enemy. Regardless of how many terrorists are captured or killed, or how many sleeper cells are broken up, such a development constitutes the genuine triumph of terrorism and a defeat of the democratic system we claim to defend. As Anna Quindlen wrote in April: "It occurs to me... that the terrorists did win. Since September 11, we have become more like them. The essence of the way zealots think about the world is polar: good and evil, holy and profane, them and us... America has become a country that sets its young people the terrible example of closed minds. The terrorists wanted to kill infidels. We only aim to silence them."⁹

US perspective and responses

The US international and domestic security agenda changed dramatically after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. From an almost neo-isolationist reluctance to involve the US in conflicts around the globe, terrorism, viewed as a world-wide threat, came to dominate Washington's strategic thinking and it still obsessively pervades and influences virtually all aspects of US foreign policy and, as we now know, even natural calamities. George Bush, speaking of the devastation of hurricane Katrina in September, suddenly and bizarrely veered into denouncing terrorists and linking the hurricane to the war on terror. The terrorists, he said, were "the kind of people who look at Katrina and wish they had caused it"; the president, on the other hand, motivated himself to cope with natural disasters by thinking, "What if this had been done by terrorists?"¹⁰

It now seems all but forgotten that George Bush pointedly rejected the international involvement and interventionist policies of his predecessor Bill Clinton; he campaigned for president in 2000 on the slogan of the need for a "humble foreign policy." After September 11, the Bush administration not only embraced a global interventionist agenda in the name of fighting the "faceless enemy" of terrorism, but had no qualms about pursuing its objectives unilaterally. Foreign policy to a large

extent resurrected the cold war assumptions of the previous forty years, as the link was broken with the post-cold war period (1989-2000) of his father's administration and that of Clinton. In a reprise of these prejudices, terrorism was considered part of a hostile ideology— an omnipresent enemy, with a global reach and constituting an ever-present preoccupation. Its eerie shadow haunted even the dreary abstractions of international trade and finance. It was said that, for the next year after 9-11, the first question Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill would ask counterparts from other countries was not about the US economic agenda, but what that minister's government was doing about terrorism.

Defining terrorists

The administration of George W. Bush, as well as that of England's Tony Blair at times considers terrorism to be a means to a political end and, at times, a bloody end in and of itself; but they also assert that terrorism may be at base an irrational pathology. The US and British governments tend to dismiss the politics of Islamic terrorism as illegitimate and not worthy of serious analysis. They contend that terrorism expresses only a primitive ideology of hate, a desire to destroy the West, as well as a hatred of freedom and democracy ("This was aimed at our existence... they despise us for who we are; "was often heard after 9/11). Other times, one hears that these terrorists have no ideology, and the summary assertion that they are just "evil people." After the horrific London bombings, Tony Blair characterized those responsible as "people with evil in their hearts." Of course, denying a real political agenda and explaining terrorism as a blind lashing out against "what we are" by warped individuals allows Western governments to avoid confronting "how we act" internationally as a contributory factor; i.e., what foreign policies may have been pursued to provoke such violent and suicidal attacks.

In July of 2005, the US Secretary of State (Foreign Minister) Condoleezza Rice still echoed

⁹ Alberto Piris, ¿Existe todavía Al Qaeda?" *La Estrella Digital*, April 12, 2005. Anna Quindlen "Life of the Closed Mind," *Newsweek* May 30, 2005, p. 82.

¹⁰ Maureen Dowd, "Stormy Spins in a Vortex," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2005.

administrational language from September 2001. Speaking of Muslim terrorists in Europe, the former international relations scholar declared enigmatically that “this is not about grievances but an effort to destroy; they want to create chaos and undermine our way of life... these are simply evil people who want to kill.”¹¹ One might ask if they had only wanted to kill or if they had just hated Western values like freedom, why didn’t they attack Sweden? To argue as Blair and Rice have is to suggest that terrorist violence is a perverted end in itself. If anything, this kind of thinking argues for an approach similar to that of treating sociopaths: police them and contain them, and perhaps later, investigate what has made them as individuals what they are. It is certainly inconsistent to decry terrorists as simply “the bad guys”, devoid of any serious ideology, politics, or purpose and then justify a large-scale military invasion of two countries to topple governments perceived as politically hostile to Western or US interests.

The inclusion of a broad array of armed groups and social movements in the category of terrorism

To confuse terrorism with an end in itself and then declare, as the Bush administration has, that this end somehow unites all groups, socio-political movements, and insurgencies who attack civilians as part of a political strategy, constitutes a serious analytical error. Yet the White House has placed under the rubric of terrorism a host of disparate conflicts with different antecedents, and various armed groups that use violence as weapon, regardless of whether or not they directly threaten the US. Such complex and politically distinct movements as the ETA in Spain, the anti-British and anti-Protestant IRA in Northern Ireland, the Marxist-oriented FARC in Colombia, and Al Qaeda have all been tossed in the same terrorist basket, regardless of the security threat they pose to the US. This lack of discrimination conforms to the White House’s vision of a Manichean world divided into black and white, good and evil, them and us. To admit of a middle ground, a gray area of differ-

entiated violence, a hierarchy of danger to the US and the West— or even to entertain for the purpose of framing the debate the principles of Realpolitik and select containment— is to engage in unmanly equivocation. The current US administration fears appearing to parse a problem and, heaven forbid, to embrace Frenchified intellection rather than action. As George Bush once confidently declared to journalist Bob Woodward: “I don’t do nuance.”

Of course, this attitude willfully ignores that these conflicts, most often in the developing world, are sometimes decades old and have roots in complex socio-political situations and struggles for social justice. As Mabel González Bustelo has written: “From the Philippines to Colombia, including Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur in the Sudan or even the indigenous rights movements in Latin America, many countries and regions of the world have become, especially in official or unofficial documents of the US, potential focal points for so-called “global terrorism.” In this way, the deep-seated problems of states or para-states like Chechnya and Kosovo, that have had or are currently involved in armed conflicts or a high level of social violence, disappear behind the war against terrorism.”¹²

A one-size-fits-all categorization again leads to an unproductive monochromatic image of terrorism, and distorts the response to it accordingly. The demonizing of an undifferentiated, global enemy essentially frees Washington from the exacting obligation of investigating and treating terrorism’s complex faces and deeper causes. Succumbing to the inexorable tug of the familiar, terrorism has been cast as a threat to the world at large in much the same way Germany and Japan were in World War II, or international communism was during the Cold War. To believe that terrorism and terrorists are similar to fascism and fascist states, can only undermine and prolong efforts to confront adroitly and ultimately contain or eliminate terrorism. On the other hand, such thinking facilitates Washington’s conversion of what should be a multinational, multifaceted, and effectively calibrated approach to counterterrorism into a unilateral WAR against terrorism

¹¹ The Jim Lehrer Newshour, Public Broadcasting System, July 28, 2005.

¹² “¿Conflictos o terrorismo?”, *El Mundo*, February 14, 2005.

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led by the Pentagon. A global military response as a first resort against a shadowy and amorphous global has become the centerpiece of US policy. And war in this case provides a false dynamic, an illusory sense of taking strong, decisive action even when the battle can never be won definitively.

This broad-brush classification also advances the Bush administration's neoconservative hegemonic agenda as budgetary resources can be marshaled to oppose left-wing movements confronting neoliberalism or threatening US interests, as a part of the war on terrorism. Defining terrorism broadly to include insurgencies and other armed struggles, as well as social protest movements has allowed Washington to consider Ecuadorian indigenous movements and Bolivian anti-government protests as threats to regional stability security. The Bush administration has supported a coup against the democratically elected but fiercely nationalist leader of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez and then tied protest leader and Bolivian presidential candidate Evo Morales to Chávez, hinting at a kind of international anti-American conspiracy.¹³

Casting Terrorism in Military Terms

Shortly after the tragic events of 9/11, the Bush administration issued a clarion call for the world to join it in an all-out, total war: a "global war on

terrorism." The US would take the lead in confronting a military enemy subject to military defeat. The world now was seen in starkly Manichean and apocalyptic terms: "You are either with us or with the terrorists." But in contrast to Europe, which tends to view the concept of total war as a complex array of instruments and measures, the US version relies heavily on a military vision of the problem and its solution—a strategy proving as credible as unleashing the 82nd Airborne Division as the principal weapon in a "war on violence." The war on terror, however, was soon transmogrified with almost surreal logic into a war in Iraq. Terrorism allowed the Bush administration systematically to exploit the public fear generated by Al Qaeda's attacks and establish a specious link between Iraq and 9-11. Presenting the case for war with what now appears as clearly tortured reasoning, calculated misrepresentations and transparent tendentiousness, Washington set about to win the approval of the public and the media for an unnecessary war as the centerpiece of US counterterrorism. To the surprise and dismay of Washington's critics, the government's notable lack of imagination in adopting a conventional, if initially overpowering, military response to September 11th was enthusiastically seconded by a citizenry eager for revenge and all too willing to transform the singular threat of terrorism into comfortably familiar paradigms.

A "war" against terrorism, however, was an unfortunate choice of words, because "Islamic" is

¹³ Gustavo González writes that "the "war on terror", is threatening to expand to Latin America, targeting indigenous movements that are demanding autonomy and protesting free-market policies and "neo-liberal" globalization. He cites lawyer José Aylwin with the Institute of Indigenous Studies at the University of the Border in Temuco, Chile, as saying that in the United States "there is a perception of indigenous activists as destabilizing elements and terrorists," and their demands and activism have begun to be cast in a criminal light. "Latin America: 'War on Terror' Has Indigenous People in its Sights", Inter Press Service News Agency (<http://ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=28962>), Santiago, Chile, June 6, 2005. For Washington's perception of the threat from Venezuela see Jane Bussey, "Washington and Venezuela Trade Barbs Over Bolivia at OAS conference in Fort Lauderdale", *The Miami Herald*, June 7, 2005. (<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/11836342.htm>)

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understood as implicitly preceding “terrorism” in the phrase. With its allusion to a crusade against Islam, the term fuels the propaganda of Muslim extremists already convinced that they are at war with the infidel West. It is also inaccurate and misleading because war has its own rules, and a beginning and end. If we agree that terrorism is a means to an end, one cannot declare war against a means. Yet the administration sees terrorism as a force in itself, personified by the terrorist. The National Security Strategy document of 2002 declared that “the enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology... the enemy is terrorism... politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents.”¹⁴ But what is being fought on the foreign battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan is a war of ideas—a war the US is arguably losing. The result so far is that the US has become very good at combating and at times killing terrorists, but not at eradicating terrorism. Speaking at a recent congressional hearing on an exit strategy in Iraq, retired General Joseph Hoar, who headed US Central Command from 1991 to 1994, said, “Success as defined by our civilian leadership three years ago is out of reach. This counterinsurgency campaign, this budding civil war, is all about politics, ideas and religion. It cannot be won by killing Iraqis. Were this possible, the over 25,000 Iraqis killed already might have been enough.”¹⁵ The Bush administration’s recent encouragement of democratization in the Middle East (see discussion, pp. 23-25) does not subtract from the primacy still given a military confrontation with a violent, faceless enemy.

If the concept of war contradicts the reality of

terrorism and the logical response to it, the war metaphor fits nicely with the domestic and foreign policy goals of Washington. The mere utterance of a declared war signals a tough, all-out response— an image of resoluteness that the administration has successfully projected and exploited since September of 2001. War responds to terrorism’s bloody message with its own bloody propaganda—a rough military justice that is the US’ own version of redemptive violence (with its historic roots in the US concept of Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century). War evinces a species of triumphalism—the emphatic notion that a campaign against terrorism can be won completely and definitively. The phrase has helped seduce public opinion into supporting a military campaign in Iraq in the name of changing a regime linked—falsely the world now knows—to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The US easily captured the Iraqi capital of Baghdad in the name of fighting terrorism, just as the allies took Berlin in 1945 to defeat fascism. Yet unlike the allied victory in World War II, the fall of Baghdad and the military occupation of Iraq did not strike any blow against terrorism; it didn’t even establish the security necessary for a new government in Iraq. The tragic reality displayed in the media almost daily is that the war in Iraq has catalyzed terrorist violence in that country beyond anyone’s imagination.

The reason for the large dependence on the Pentagon to take the fight to the terrorists is partly ideological. US foreign policy under George W. Bush is in the hands of a political sector which has had as its motto since the cold war: “peace

¹⁴ *The New York Times*’s reprint of the NSS, September 20, 2002.

¹⁵ Hoar called for a high-level international envoy to help straighten out the fragile Iraqi political process. Cited by Ari Berman, “Prelude to an Exit Strategy”, *The Nation Online*, (<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20051003/berman>). Posted September 16, 2005.

through strength.” A powerful military projection in defense of hegemonic goals was a cornerstone of neoconservative thinking for over a decade. Military control and basing rights were touted as the most effective way to advance US security and economic interests. An invasion and military occupation of Iraq was also crucial to the neoconservative plan to reconfigure the Middle East in the interests of the US and its regional ally, Israel.

The military is seen as the country’s strong suit. No matter how powerful the economy, US military power is several orders of magnitude greater than its nearest competitors. But there are also strong pressures from what Dwight D. Eisenhower referred to in 1961 as the “military-industrial complex,” which benefits handsomely from increased military spending for war, military maneuvers, and basing arrangements. There is also political pressure from Republican hawks. Not infrequently, these two constituencies overlap. To cite just one prominent example, Republican Vice-President Dick Cheney is a former CEO of the defense-connected Halliburton Co., currently reaping billions of dollars in non-bid contracts in Iraq. This “revolving door” policy between the government and the private sector, in which high-ranking officials move seamlessly between jobs in the Pentagon and executive positions in the military procurement business, reinforces the military’s importance in foreign policy.¹⁶

The US emphasis on a response from US armed forces also flows from the original, and lingering, assumption among top officials in the Bush administration that terrorism must ultimately be linked to governments which can be subjected to military pressure. According to this thinking, the true enemies are countries supporting or harboring terrorist groups; even the stateless al-Qaeda network supposedly could not exist without support of political regimes and their populations. The US view exists as an anachronistic holdover from the Cold War, and was in part responsible for the policy blunders and omissions which increased US vulnerability to the attacks of September 11th, and

for the popular support of a war of choice against Iraq. To the degree that states are in fact linked to terrorism, and that there is indeed validity in targeting them for military reprisals, the conceptual terrain is muddied by the circumstance that these regimes include allies like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

The war on terror declared in 2001 triggered a reversal of the cutbacks seen in the 1990s in the Pentagon’s budget and a surge in spending to record levels. Spending is skewed towards military operations and counterterrorism; foreign economic aid is scanty—relative to other developed nations—for poor countries whose misfortune it is to not to be fighting terrorism. The current military budget of \$450 billion is ten times that of the country in second place, Great Britain, and more than that of the next twenty-two countries combined. A large portion of the allocation is dedicated to creating and sustaining a vast global network of military and intelligence bases—more than seven hundred in all. Iraq is slated for up to sixteen permanent US bases—what the Pentagon quaintly calls “enduring camps”—to allow the US military to scale back its presence in Saudi Arabia.¹⁷

The collateral damage from Washington’s military unilateralism and high-handed diplomacy are reflected in an historic spread of anti-Americanism across the globe and a perceptible rise in antagonism towards the US from foreign leaders and the international mass media. The damage to international cooperation undoubtedly has an adverse effect on administrative efforts to eradicate terrorism; the actual costs for the US in blood and resources, are still to be calculated.

A Critique of the US’s Military emphasis in the GWOT

While the deployment of thousands of troops and a high-tech air force to conduct a “shock and awe” campaign sends a dramatic and intimidating message to evil-doers everywhere, counterterrorism

¹⁶ See, for example, Griff Witte, “Halliburton Contract Critic Loses Her Job”, *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2005; Page A-11. The US military response also dovetails with the agenda of the Rumsfeld-led Pentagon for increasing its share of the budget.

¹⁷ Robert Matthews, “The Military and Militarism in US Foreign Policy,” *Agenda Latinoamericana*, Panama: 2004 and “Agendas en conflicto: Las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y América Latina en el Período Bush, 2001-2003,” in *Pulso de América Latina*. Zaragoza (Spain): Fundación Seminario de Investigación para la Paz, Gobierno de Aragón, Depto. de Educación y Cultura y Deporte, 2004, pp. 366-370.

THE US EMPHASIS ON A RESPONSE FROM US ARMED FORCES ALSO FLOWS FROM THE ORIGINAL ASSUMPTION AMONG TOP OFFICIALS IN THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION THAT TERRORISM MUST ULTIMATELY BE LINKED TO GOVERNMENTS WHICH CAN BE SUBJECTED TO MILITARY PRESSURE

experts in the US and elsewhere time and again stress the importance of plodding and mundane police work, domestic security measures and vigilance in the prevention of terrorism. Congress, while giving the president a green light on the war against Saddam Hussein in 2002, has not endorsed the administration's emphasis on a military approach. It is noteworthy that, among the recommendations of the bipartisan 9-11 commission last year and congressional discussions of what might have been done to prevent the attacks, conclusions revolved around what intelligence or processing of intelligence might have made a difference, rather than the military action the US could have taken to eliminate or reduce the threat.

It was notable that, at the Summit on Terrorism in Madrid in March of 2005, none of the experts studying terrorism or officials involved in counterterrorism mentioned the central pillar of the US response to terrorism: war—especially preventive war—except to critique it. Moreover, there was no mention of the need for military action such as targeted strikes against states which might have links with terrorists groups or unilateral military retaliation as critical to the effort to prevent terrorist attacks. This is not to say that the panelists gave no weight to a military response under some circumstances, but no one advanced the notion promoted by the Bush administration—even as a debating point—that preventive wars of choice, or the war and current military occupation in Iraq, were adequate or suitable responses to terrorism. The experts instead discussed intelligence, police work, international cooperation, and the need for an understanding of the underlying contributory

factors, such as poverty, political and social fragmentation, psychological and psycho-cultural indicators. The war in Iraq, as the prime example of the US response to terrorism and the attacks of 9-11, was never defended or mentioned in the context of terrorism prevention and the exchanges represented an implicit refutation of Washington's approach to terrorism.¹⁸

As historians sometimes have said of the late eighteenth century Bourbons in Spain, the Bush administration seems to have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. Its approach to antiterrorism is founded on the cold war assumptions of a frozen tableau of enemies sworn to destroy the west, of counter-strategies built on military confrontation, and defended with patriotic jingoism—approaches seemingly on auto-pilot from the 1980s. To be certain, the Bush foreign policy team rejects the Reagan Doctrine precepts of engaging a perceived enemy militarily through proxy armies and paramilitary groups in favor of direct, large-scale military adventures by US forces. It has, however, embraced the doctrine's central tenet: the primacy given to the "rollback" of undesirable regimes, and emphatically rejects containment's acceptance of the international status quo. In casting aside Reagan's caution in deploying US troops, the Bush administration has elaborated a new security doctrine based on the radical justification of preventive war against a hypothetical threat—a war that, if necessary, must be unilaterally decided upon and waged.¹⁹

The willingness to overthrow nasty governments without much hesitation is of a piece with the administration's international saber-rattling,

¹⁸ Washington continues to fight a war in Iraq on the grounds that it is taking the fight to the terrorists, so that they "don't attack us at home." Robert Matthews, "Some Random Reflections Regarding the Madrid "Summit on Terrorism and Democracy", March 2005" on CIP-Fuhem's webpage: [www.cipresearch.fuhem.es/international security](http://www.cipresearch.fuhem.es/international%20security)

¹⁹ Robert Matthews, "La doctrina Bush: proyección del poder de Estados Unidos, palabra y hecho," *Anuario CIP 2003: Tiempos difíciles: guerra y poder en el sistema internacional*. Madrid: Centro de Investigación Para la Paz, 2003, pp. 45-70.

its calculated projection of steely resolve, its intolerance toward dissenters, and its exhortations to support tough counterterrorist measures at home and abroad. Yet Washington's discussion of the issue has often degenerated into an aggressive sales pitch for decisions taken in secret and buttressed by reductionist national security biases carried over from the cold war. As the administration's arguments for its military campaign in Iraq wither, bereft of evidence and logic, its discourse increasingly appears to be, at best, artless cant and, at worst, unscrupulous sophistry: "We are fighting them there so we don't have to fight them here... we must stay the course because we have to honor and vindicate those who have fallen so far in this war..." Both of these sentiments, of course, are not new. The first was voiced memorably during the Reagan years when the administration justified the war against the Nicaraguan Sandinista government as protecting Harlingen, Texas, only a two-hour flight from Nicaragua. The Vietnam war saw both trundled out as the pro-war lobby shrilly warned "If we don't stop them in South Vietnam, they [the Viet Cong] will be marching down Pennsylvania Avenue"; Johnson asked: "how can we tell the mothers of the 10,000 dead in Vietnam that it was all a mistake"; and, of course, later how much more difficult to admit that 20,000 had died in vain and so on.

Human Rights Gets Short Shift in the GWOT

The Bush administration asserts that US interests must be defended everywhere, without compunction, and when necessary, alone—a position officials argue, somewhat disingenuously, is to the world's advantage. This attitude includes the subordination of traditional notions of collective security and international law to the US right to unilateral action. It has led to a manifest disdain for international law and other conventions on the treatment of prisoners, a corresponding militarization of the civilian justice system, and a new way of thinking outside legal parameters. After September of 2001, the US systematically denied basic rights, including habeas corpus, to prisoners taken in the war on terrorism—whether domestic

or in foreign lands such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military prisoners in Guantanamo are still held indefinitely and without charges, many suffering serious abuses which have come to light recently, and all contributing to the image of a US-style Gulag. Most serious, however, is the fact that the abuse of prisoners at the hands of the US military has fallen into the internationally-defined category of torture and has become a scandal. Particularly hypocritical and disgraceful is the practice of "outsourcing" human rights abuses, by transferring terrorism suspects to countries which have no qualms about using torture and by placing the program under the bureaucratic euphemism, "extraordinary rendition."

Article ninety-three of the Unified Code of Military Justice prohibits the mistreatment of a detainee. Yet, in late September of 2005, Human Rights Watch described how US Army troops have routinely subjected Iraqi detainees to severe beatings and other torture at a base in central Iraq from 2003 through 2004; at the same time, investigations of torture at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison were underway. The abuses occurred sometimes merely as a diversion to relieve frustrations or boredom. Although the Bush administration has continued to claim that no military or civilian leaders have been involved in abuses, the HRW account claims that soldiers were often under orders or acted with the knowing approval of higher-ups. Bush's 2002 executive order determined that the Taliban—and by extension terrorists in general—were not to be considered as combatants under the Geneva Conventions and that, in effect, the conventions could be ignored. Soldiers recently testified that this confused their obligations under US army regulations and served as a license to ignore international law in the treatment of prisoners.

The government, nevertheless, defends these practices as necessary for obtaining critical information, and sympathetic intellectuals like Michael Ignatieff develop tendentious arguments justifying it. It will be remembered that Alberto González, then a White House lawyer drafting legal justifications for treatment of detainees, referred to the Geneva Convention's strictures on torture and abuse of prisoners as "quaint." It is obvious that both terrorism and the US-led responses to it are contributing to the current

marginalization of human rights in the world. It is also very likely that the US abuse of human rights is spreading anti-Americanism, helping to recruit terrorists, and increasing the possibility of terrorist violence against the US and those perceived as its allies. Finally, the US's disregard for human rights is undermining the moral authority of the US to advocate for democracy in the region, a principal goal in US antiterrorist policy. (See below pp. 23-26)²⁰

European Perspectives

For Europe the concept of a total war against terrorism implies a more nuanced, variegated response. Except for deemphasizing the military, this is in keeping with earlier definitions of total war. Up to 2001, Europe tended to consider terrorism as a mostly internal threat tied to domestic groups (IRA and ETA) and to their own Muslim populations; for the US it is more of an international phenomenon. Governments in Western Europe place more emphasis on analyzing the root causes of terrorism than does the US, where there is a tendency to consider any mention of root causes as justifying or legitimating terrorism. Europeans trust the benefits of diplomacy, economic incentives, peaceful political change and public awareness efforts. There is general agreement that effective counterterrorism does not include a blank check to abandon international law or the accepted conventions protecting human rights. The vast majority of Europeans are opposed to torture and support laws against transferring suspects to countries that practice torture as the US is currently doing.

Governments and experts in counterterrorism in Europe are more likely to think in terms of long-term solutions that address negative structural factors. Leaders like Spanish President José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero stress that poverty, political disenfranchisement, and social despair must be understood as long-term contributory factors in the rise of modern terrorist activity. In these sen-

timents, he is generally seconded by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Europeans believe there is a need to study seriously why such groups as Al Qaeda exist in order to understand the ways to reduce its attraction for young Muslims and its capacity recruit so many of them. While Washington's urge is to wade purposefully into the swamp to kill terrorists, Europeans speak of a need to dry up the swamp. In Europe, people are willing to give considerable thought to socio-economic factors, the perception of injustice at the hands of governments in the Middle East (and their western allies) or societies in Europe, and understanding religious motivations. In Europe as well, some consideration is given to the Muslim belief that Islamism is under attack from the West, directly through the US military and indirectly through western—but particularly US—foreign policies. By comparison, the Republican right and the Bush administration view the effort to examine and remedy root causes as akin to coddling mass murderers. (See Karl Rove's attack on Democrats below, p. 19). The focus on religious motivation is also limited to pressuring Muslim countries to crackdown on their madrassas, although with a notable lack of success in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

While Europe and the US do not approach the problem of terrorism in exactly the same way, there are areas of convergence within individual European countries. For example, in the security vs. civil liberties argument, the government of Tony Blair has recently proposed laws that hew more to the US line that security concerns come first. The British government of Tony Blair—although not mainstream thinking in the United Kingdom—generally shares Washington's views. After the July 7, 2005 terrorist attacks in London, Blair, echoing Bush ("They hate our freedoms"), declared that "the terrorists attack the West because they are democratic and free... They will never succeed in destroying what we hold dear." This commentary denies the existence of real grievances, emphasizing that the West is simply confronted with "an evil ideology... not a clash of

²⁰ Michael Ignatieff, "Who Are Americans to Think That Freedom Is Theirs to Spread?" *The New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 2005; also Mariano Aguirre, "Exporting Democracy, Revising Torture: The Complex Mission of Michael Ignatieff", *OpenDemocracy* [www.opendemocracy.net] July 15, 2005 and "¿Apoya EE.UU. los derechos humanos?", *La Vanguardia*, June 11, 2005; and Robert Matthews, letter to the editor in response: *La Vanguardia*, June 16, 2005. For a summary of the Human Rights Report see "New Accounts of Torture by US troops", *The New York Times*, September 25, 2005.

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT BOTH TERRORISM
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civilizations.”²¹ He also ascribed the London bombings to people who “act in the name of Islam.” Though Blair hastened to add that the vast majority of Muslims in Britain and elsewhere are “decent and law-abiding,” his attribution of religious motivation can only leave non-Muslims wondering what in Islam justifies such acts. There was a unanimous disavowal by Muslim clerics in Britain of any connection between Islam and terrorist violence.

Blair’s attitude coincides with that of the Bush administration after 9/11, when Americans who spoke of understanding any background motivations of the terrorists were held in contempt—their remarks considered nearly treasonous—by many officials and commentators. Then, speaking in late July after the London attacks, Condoleezza Rice reinforced the Bush administration’s notion that causality could be ignored. She denied that US foreign policy had anything to do with terrorism and implied we had nothing to ponder in terms of our international objectives. We should “stop making excuses for terrorism” she said, “we didn’t make them do it, we weren’t in Iraq or Afghanistan on 9-11.”²² However, she did not mention that we were doing other things in the Middle East that Bin Laden pointed to as the reasons for the attack. (See above, p. 6)

Like Bush, Blair contends that “it is a global struggle and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds, both within Islam and outside of it”—without mentioning how this explains his enthusiasm for an antiterrorist war against Iraq as a first recourse. He elaborated after July 7th, saying that

“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... Their cause is not founded on an injustice... it is founded on a belief, one whose fanaticism is such that it can’t be moderated. It can’t be remedied. It has to be stood up to.”²³ Thus, the Bush-Blair take on terrorism departs from the more common European point of view and avoids any responsibility for understanding the sense of embattlement and frustration Muslims feel because of western foreign policies, the war in Iraq, the Israel-Palestine question, social alienation within European immigrant communities, and the general sense that Islam is being besieged by the West.

The Politics of Counterterrorism

Just as terrorism can be politics by other—and particularly bloodthirsty—means, so too, can antiterrorism can be politics by other means. Immediately after the attacks of 2001, the twin goals of an enhanced military and domestic security apparatus on the one hand, and ensuring the political fortunes of the Republican Party, on the other, neatly converged and subsequently reinforced each other. Republicans were keenly aware of the political advantages of a tough stance on terrorism for a party known to be strong on defense and military preparation. Thus, while the

²¹ Alan Cowell, “Blair Says ‘Evil Ideology’ Must Be Faced Directly”, *The New York Times*, July 17, 2005, p. A8. Robert Fisk in *The Independent* of London quotes an Iraqi friend as asking, “What is this ‘evil ideology’ that Blair keeps talking about?” What will be your next invention? When will you wake up?” (“Sometimes I Wonder If There Will Be A Moment When Reality And Myth, Truth And Lies, Will Collide”, August 20, 2005).

²² The Jim Lehrer Newshour, Public Broadcasting System, July 28, 2005.

²³ Alan Cowell, “Blair Says ‘Evil Ideology’ Must Be Faced Directly”, *The New York Times*, July 17, 2005, p. A8.

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administration appeared obsessed with the issues of terrorism and national security, the attitude did not simply reflect an abiding commitment to protecting US citizens. Political calculations were never far removed from the government's rhetoric on the domestic dangers of terrorism and the vigorous reply needed to combat it.

Cynically, but adeptly, mining antiterrorism, better than even the Reagan administration had exploited anticommunism, in order to enhance the electoral appeal of the Republican Party, the White House set about convincing the US public that the Republicans were the best option to guarantee that "you, your family and the country are more secure with us." With ongoing color-coded terrorism alerts broadcast over the airwaves, and the theme of potential national danger a political and media fixture, the administration masterfully orchestrated a "politics of dread." At times, this playing on public apprehension was so obvious that it seemed almost as if Franklin D. Roosevelt's calming counsel in the midst of the Great Depression and financial panic of 1933 that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" had been inverted for the Republican Party to "the only thing we have to fear is the ABSENCE of fear itself".

In the name of national security, the Bush administration moved swiftly to enact new security measures at the expense of civil liberties. The Patriot Act redefined privacy rights, gave various agencies, including the FBI, new powers of surveil-

lance, and created a broad category of dissent as subversion. In general, the administration mounted an assault on many of the provisions of the Constitution's Bill of Rights. The government defined domestic terrorism so broadly that it could be used to chill legitimate protest and empower authorities to place political opponents under surveillance. The administration declared its authority to imprison citizens indefinitely, without legal counsel and without trial if deemed "enemy combatants". The Department of Homeland Security was given cabinet status and broad powers to use computer data to spy on citizens and withhold information now available to the press and public under the Freedom of Information Act. (FOIA). The 2001 act also expanded government powers in such matters as electronic surveillance, search warrants, and detention.²⁴

At least for the first three years, the government constantly intimidated its domestic critics as it did its foreign detractors, engaged in unprecedented secrecy and withheld information owed to the public. In this political environment, the White House was able to shore up its religious and secular right-wing base by successfully promoting a radically conservative program and federal appointments agenda. Referring to his then stalled domestic program shortly after the attacks of 9/11, Bush reportedly gloated to budget director Mitch Daniels: "Lucky me —I hit the trifecta (lottery)." ²⁵ Bush's right-wing agenda also provided a

²⁴ "The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights wrote in a 2003, report, *Imbalance of Powers: How Changes to US Law and Policy Since 9/11 Erode Human Rights and Civil Liberties*", March 2003: "A mantle of secrecy continues to envelop the executive branch, largely with the acquiescence of Congress and the courts. [This] makes effective oversight impossible, upsetting the Constitutional system of checks and balances". Cited in Nat Hentoff, "Vanishing Liberties. Where's the Press?", *The Village Voice*, April 11, 2003. See also "Bush: A Civil Liberties Scorecard", ACLU 2002; and the press release from "Save Our Civil Liberties "Documents Obtained by ACLU Expose FBI and Police Targeting of Political Groups, May 20, 2005. ([Groupshttp://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree](http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree)); and the recent book by Marcus Raskin and A. Carl LeVan documenting how secrecy, an unaccountable bureaucracy, executive authoritarianism were accentuated in the wake of 9-11, undermining US democracy: *In Democracy's Shadow*, New York: Nation Books, 2005.

²⁵ Brad Carlton, "How Bush Hit the Trifecta on 9/11 and the Public Lost Big-Time", *The Baltimore Chronicle and Sentinel*, June 2, 2003. (www.baltimorechronicle.com/trifecta_jun02.shtml)

number of benefits to a wide variety of businesses—many with strong ties to the government or individuals in the Bush administration—on issues that included trade union demands, corporate taxes, environmental regulation and other clashes affecting profitability. In foreign policy it was key to the success of the administration in convincing the country to support an elective war in Iraq on the basis of incomplete, inaccurate and distorted evidence.

To be fair, the Republicans played this card with considerable help from Democrats who failed to develop a convincing critique of the administration or stand firmly on their own principles. The results were uncommonly large Republican gains in the Congressional elections of 2002, giving the party commanding majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and a solid win in the presidential election of 2004. Their real success lies in the fact that they managed to make people forget—or at least not take into account—administration failures in foreign policy and in the declared GWOT.

Waving the “bloody shirt” of 9/11, the Republicans have remained relentless in their attacks on the Democrats as the party of conciliation and weakness. Six months after Bush’s decisive reelection, his chief political adviser Karl Rove declared that conservatives reacted to September 11th by wanting to “unleash the might and power” of the military against the Taliban in Afghanistan, while liberals called for submitting petitions. He cited a petition backed by the progressive internet movement, MoveOn.org, that called for “moderation and restraint” in responding to the attacks: “I don’t know about you, but moderation and restraint is not what I felt as I watched the twin towers crumble to the earth, a side of the Pentagon destroyed and almost 3,000 of our fellow citizens perish in flames and rubble,” Rove said. “Moderation and restraint is not what I felt—and moderation and restraint is not what was called for. It was a moment to summon our national will—and to brandish steel”.

Rove singled out liberal Democratic Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois, Governor Howard Dean,

a 2004 candidate for the Democratic nomination and now chairman of the Democratic National Committee, as well as filmmaker Michael Moore for special contempt. “[They] may not have agreed with this [mail-fisted Republican approach], but the American people did.” Of course, what Durbin, Dean, and Moore did not agree with was attacking a country, Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9-11. But the administration seems to feel, as the Nazi Goebbels did, that if the regime can just suggest a link between Iraq and 9/11 often enough, subliminally it will become fact in the public mind. And indeed an astonishing 35% of Americans still believe the connection to be true.²⁶

Domestic Security

For some time, critics have cited the inadequacies of the homeland security program: the protection of trains, subways, public transportation, and ports all come in for regular censure. In 2004, Reuters disclosed a “steady exodus” of counterterrorism officials, who concluded that Iraq had trumped a serious effort at counterterrorism.²⁷ But it took the disaster from hurricane Katrina in September of this year to underscore US vulnerabilities at home and raise the question of whether the administration’s domestic security program is more political rhetoric than reality. The worst natural disaster in US history was compounded by the perhaps the largest failure of government in preparing for it and responding in a timely and efficient way to minimize loss of life. Investigations are now underway, which one hopes will be more productive than other recent investigations into the Bush administration’s malfeasance or dereliction. But one thing is clear: the administration’s incessant harping on the danger of international terrorism had left the country woefully unprepared for a natural disaster like a category 4 hurricane.

Under the Bush administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had been stripped of personnel and resources—“systemati-

²⁶ Dan Balz, “Democrats Call for Rove To Apologize”, *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2005. p. A-1.

²⁷ See Paul Krugman, “All the President’s Friends”, *The New York Times*, September 12, 2005, p. A-21.

cally dismantled,” in the words of one twenty-five year veteran of the agency— in favor of antiterrorist allocations granted the Department of Homeland Security. Even at FEMA 75% of every dollar went to preparation for a terrorist attack; natural disaster preparation received short shrift. The redeployment of the army reserves and national guard (state militias) to Iraq, together with the staggering incompetence and irresponsible cronyism of the federal government, underscored US vulnerability at home —and opened the eyes of many Americans to the administration’s skewed priorities.²⁸ With the administration’s political trump card, national security, suffering considerable water damage after the Gulf Coast hurricanes, there is a good chance that the administration will suffer a political backlash in the November 2006 congressional elections —a negative reaction that Iraq and the ineffective war on terrorism have taken too long to produce.²⁹

The Geopolitics of Counterterrorism

After September 11th, 2001, terrorism became an organizing principle for US foreign policy to the point where one might speak of the US “geopoliticization” of antiterrorism abroad. The war in Iraq is the most egregious example of this. A day after the attacks, Richard Clarke, counterterrorism czar under both Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush, recounted how Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was already talking about attacking Iraq because it “had better targets” than Afghanistan. In the evening of the 12th, he encountered the President in the White House Situation Room, who said, “See if Saddam did this. See if he is linked in any way.” Clarke protested that Al Qaeda was behind the attacks and that there were no real linkages to Iraq. The president cut him off, “I want

to know any shred... Look into Iraq, Saddam” and left. An aide turned to Clarke and said simply, “[Undersecretary of Defense and leading neoconservative intellectual Paul] Wolfowitz got to him.”³⁰

Linking the government of Saddam Hussein to terrorism and 9/11 allowed neoconservatives inside the administration or advising it to test their project of remodeling the Middle East, beginning with the overthrow of the Iraqi regime. They had in fact been peddling the idea to officials in the US and Israel for over a decade. The Iraq war, then, is the maximum expression of the neocons’ geopoliticization of antiterrorism. It is the most vivid image of Bush’s concept of the GWOT, in all its military distortion. Iraq today represents the culmination of the Bush administration’s authoritarian and unilateralist approaches to foreign policy. The war which the neocons expected to win in three weeks, is not only continuing two and a half years later, but it is becoming more and more destructive in terms of lives, infrastructure, resources and, in the end, for Washington’s own political goals. In the fall of 2004, the ex director of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), George Tenet, who had helped promote unreliable intelligence on Saddam’s WMD, admitted that the war in Iraq had been an error. With poor planning as a major factor, things had deteriorated so badly that *The New York Times* reported then that a reserve unit of the United States military had refused to deliver a shipment of fuel to Taji, north of Baghdad, because the soldiers considered it a “suicide mission.”³¹

The subordination of the campaign against terror to political and geopolitical considerations has proved remarkably unproductive in achieving US security aims and harmful to world efforts to contain terrorism. No matter what one believed about the rightness or wrongness of invading Iraq in 2003,

²⁸ The Jim Lehrer Newshour, Public Broadcasting System, September 8, 2005. Even the right-wing network Fox News became openly critical of administration efforts; and Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and stalwart of the Republican right, declared “As a test of the homeland security system, this was a failure.” *The New York Times*, September 3, 2005, p. A-14. The title of liberal columnist Maureen Dowd’ column in *New York Times*, on September 3 summed up the mood of many from the Mississippi Gulf area and around the nation: “United States of Shame” (p. A-21).

²⁹ For those looking ahead to political fallout in 2006, there was an interesting study done by two Princeton political scientists, Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels and cited by Louis Menand in *The New Yorker* magazine, August 30, 2004. They “estimate that ‘2.8 million people voted against Al Gore in 2000, because their states were too dry or too wet’ as a consequence of that year’s weather patterns...cost[ing] Gore seven states.” (p. 94).

³⁰ Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies. Inside America’s War on Terror*. New York: Free Press, 2004, pp. 30-32.

³¹ Banerjee, Neela and Ariel Hart, “Inquiry Opens after Reservists Balk in Baghdad”, *The New York Times*, October 16, 2004, p. A1.

there is a consensus that the situation there is worse now for the Iraqis and for US national security. The US has converted a police state into a fragile state on the way to becoming a failed state. Incredibly, after two and a half years, we confront the stark realization that the majority of terrorist acts occur in Iraq. The war there has caused much more death and destruction than terrorism independent of Iraq has, and since there was no terrorism inside Iraq before 2003, the war has thus had a major impact on global violence and on the increase and geographic expansion of terrorism.

Though US military action has diminished Al Qaeda's direct military/terrorist threat, most experts also believe that Al Qaeda has grown and mutated into an international political movement whose links to cadres in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Europe, North Africa and Asia are mainly through the internet. Global electronic communication and use of the media, together with the example of Al Qaeda's presence in the Iraqi insurgency has increased the organization's ability to inspire Muslims and motivate adherents. They have mastered the virtual world of cyberspace to propagandize and indoctrinate, to recruit foot soldiers, to fund-raise, and to plan operations... and form a haven in Iraq. General John Abizaid, in September of 2005, identified Al Qaeda as the "main threat we face" in that country. However, some experts believe that jihadi groups in different countries are more likely to be drawn to each other rather than to a far-off, more formal organization like Al Qaeda because of their sense of a common persecution. They stress that these movements would lose much steam if the US ceased its attacks on Muslim populations. US military policies and its links to allied governments in the Middle East and South Asia, rather than the strength of Al Qaeda, provide the critical impetus to Islamic terrorism.³²

As for the general incidence of terrorism since the US declared its antiterrorist war, Richard Clarke, the former US counterterrorism czar, recently announced that there have been twice as many terrorist attacks in the first three years since

9-11 than in the three years before. In 2004, there were 651 "significant terrorist attacks," triple the previous year and the highest since the US State Department began gathering these statistics twenty years ago. One hundred ninety eight occurred in Iraq, nine times the year before; over 5,000 have died in Baghdad alone since April.³³

Iraq is looking increasingly like a train wreck for US foreign policy. The neoconservatives who devised the project are still holding tight to their less publicized geopolitical rationale behind the otherwise inexplicable rush towards war: to use Iraq as a platform for democratizing Iraq and with Iraq as a model, creating a chain reaction of democratization (and pro Western sympathy) in the region. Today, all George W. Bush's public justifications for the war in Iraq have vanished like conjurers' eggs: WMD, connections between Baghdad and Al Qaeda (and by extension, September 11th), and the Saddam government's imminent threat to US national security. As of yet there has been a lack of real accountability for what are at best the administration's scandalous miscalculations and at worst, devious untruths and a conscious effort to mislead. Eventually, they must be judged not for just their beliefs, but for the way they arrived at them and how they have presented them to the American people.

The ever-changing rationales have now been reduced to having liberated the Iraqis from the shackles of tyranny and set the country on the road to democracy. However, the increasing sectarian violence and appalling casualty toll- attacks in Iraq are still producing an average of 800 deaths a month- along with the stalemated constitutional process, renders these claims doubtful. As to the unstated goal of restoring the damaged credibility of the US after 9/11, the Bush administration bet the farm on the invasion of a country that had nothing to do with 9-11 and, not too surprisingly, lost it. The "shock and awe" campaign to strike the fear of Bush's old-time religion in the enemy has become a stalemated and bloody miasma. Shattering the image of an invincible superpower was a central

³² It is reported that Al Qaeda now has its own weekly broadcast on the internet, "The Voice of the Caliphate", with an anchorman wearing a ski mask and sporting an ammunition belt. A Koran and a rifle are aimed at the camera. Maureen Dowd, "A Wolfie in Sheep's Clothing", *The New York Times*, October 1, 2005, p. A15. For the emphasis on informal and local jihadis see the comments of Juan Cole, professor of history at the University of Michigan also see his weblog: "Informed Comment" and Nir Rosen, a fellow at the New America Foundation, in "Unintended Consequences: A Forum on Iraq and the Mid East", *The Nation*, August 15, 2005.

³³ Frank Rich, "Falluja Floods the Superdome", *The New York Times*, September 4, 2005, IV, p. 10.

objective of Al Qaeda and currently seems much closer to being realized. As Mark Danner wrote in the September New York Times Magazine, "Four years after we watched the towers fall, Americans have not succeeded in 'ridding the world of evil.' We have managed to show ourselves, our friends, and most of our enemies the limits of American power."³⁴ With the US pumping over two million barrels of Iraqi oil a day, the never-mentioned objective of controlling a good portion of Mid-East oil is the only purpose that has withstood the realities of the past three years. Yet oil production is 300,000 barrels a day less than pre-invasion production and electricity output is still under that produced before 2003. Finally, more than 50% of the population is unemployed, crime and corruption are ubiquitous, and the vast majority of Iraqis now say they oppose the US occupation.³⁵

The ill —conceived and unjustified war in Iraq has had serious negatives for US foreign policy in the region and elsewhere— including the loss of US prestige throughout the Muslim world. The obsession with the false danger of Iraq and the subsequent draining of resources and energy away from Afghanistan to wage war there has hurt US antiterrorist efforts. The US War College published a report in 2003 that concluded that the war in Iraq is not only failing to resolve the problem of terrorism; but that it also constitutes an obstacle to addressing that threat effectively. Iran, which was helping the US in 2001-2 in Afghanistan and providing intelligence on Al Qaeda, has ended such collaboration. With its regional foe, Saddam, gone and its arch-enemy, the US, bogged down in Iraq, Iran has been empowered and Washington's goal of containing that nation's ambitions now looks nearly unattainable.

Syria had been an important source of information on regional terrorism, but the CIA reported in

2003 that its sources had dried up after the war in Iraq and the administration's corresponding hard line on Damascus. Administration warmongers in effect subordinated practical antiterrorist measures to their *idée fixe* regarding an Iraq-centered hegemonic project in the Middle East. The issued flared into bureaucratic conflict and became a serious bone of contention between officials in the State Department and CIA who felt US anti-terrorism was being compromised, and those in the Pentagon, who were almost exclusively focused on Iraq. Syria and Iran remain problematic for US regional policy; with violence from the insurgency escalating in Iraq there are accusations that both countries are turning a blind eye to foreign combatants using their national territories as staging grounds and crossing their borders into Iraq to reinforce the insurgency.³⁶

The US Push for Middle East Democracy

The antiterrorism strategy of the US consists of two principal elements. First is the use of military power, often overwhelming and as a first resort, to attack terrorism or terrorist-linked states directly. Second, is the promotion of democracy and, when necessary, the imposition of democratic regime change by force, as a way of making terrorism a less attractive option. As an antidote to terrorism, democracy is a sincerely, if sometimes tendentially, argued ideal, subscribed to across the political spectrum from right to left. There is also a certain convergence among critics and supporters of US foreign policy regarding the positive value of democracy in the fight against terrorism.³⁷ Advocates maintain that by promoting elections in the Arab world, we can modernize the

³⁴ "Taking Stock of the Forever War", *The New York Times Magazine*, September 11, 2005, p. 46.

³⁵ "Our Two Gulf Crises", (The Editors) *The Nation*, October 3, 2005, p. 3.

³⁶ Seymour Hersh, "The Syrian Bet: Did the Bush Administration burn a useful source on Al Qaeda?", *The New Yorker*, July 28, 2003; and Robert Matthews "Juegos nucleares: Iran y Corea del Norte", *CIP Anuario 2004: Escenarios de conflicto. Irak y el desorden mundial*. Madrid: Centro de Investigación Para la Paz, 2004, pp. 81-104. (English version on Ciprosearch.fuhem.es). Washington has also deferred to its regional ally Saudi Arabia in not pursuing too vigorously that state's links to Al Qaeda and other Muslim extremists. See Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil. How Washington Sold our Soul for Saudi Crude*, NY: Crown Books, 2003. On the recent denunciations of incursions from neighbors see Joel Brinkley, "American Envoy Says Syria Assists Training of Terrorist", *The New York Times*, September 13, 2005, p. A-6.

³⁷ Discussing solutions to terrorism, voices on the left note the potentially salubrious effects of democratization on the culture of terrorism in the region, although rejecting the US notion of imposing democracy by force. Laurence Thieux of CIP has written: "Thus, the lack of democracy and of civil liberties appears as one of the principle causes of terrorism." "El Discurso global sobre las causas del terrorismo" paper for the CIP conference "Combatir el terrorismo y asegurar la democracia: El Rol de la Sociedad Civil", May 19-20, 2005, p. 9. See also Thieux's *El Terrorismo Transnacional. Definición, Causas, Implicaciones Estratégicas*, Informe, CIP June 2005.

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"medieval" mind-set of our enemies; the values of the Enlightenment will triumph over those of religious obscurantism. Without escape valves for their frustrations, young Muslims are more susceptible to the siren call of religious extremism which gives form and substance to their grievances, goes the thinking. George W. Bush has said that the reason we should support democratization in the Middle East is that "democratic societies do not produce terrorists"; if we can help end authoritarian regimes we can eliminate "the conditions that feed radicalism and ideologies of murder."³⁸

The hypothesis that democracy will stem terrorism has a seductive credibility: it is based on a simple truth: that democracies grant political space for dissent and tolerance for an opposition. The role of political reform in halting the spread of terrorism seems to be a reasonable enough assumption. If not exactly an antidote to terrorism, democratic politics plays a modernizing role which, in the long run, should have a salubrious effect on violence. As President Rodríguez Zapatero proclaimed in his major address at the March Summit on Terrorism and Democracy in Madrid, "democracy is the defeat of terrorism."

It therefore follows that democracies are less likely to foster a level of frustration that finds an outlet only in radical violence; conversely authoritarian regimes (as are found predominately in the Middle East and Asia) have ruled societies which have spawned terrorists and terrorism. Indeed, over

the long term, democracy may reduce the incidence of violence and terrorism by providing a legitimate outlet for political, social and religious grievances. Waleed Ziad goes further, making the case for democracy's short-term value, noting the recent cases in northern India, Sri Lanka, Kurdish Turkey. He believes these illustrate that "grassroots democracy and allowing the aggrieved group a public voice can be effective weapons against terrorism".³⁹

A few caveats are nonetheless in order. Notwithstanding the apparent sensibleness of supporting democracy, dissenters see a danger in overestimating democracy's power to dissuade terrorists or in treating its achievement as a kind of "magic bullet." Democracy is certainly not a sufficient condition for preventing terrorism and may not even be a necessary one. Non-democratic societies have indeed produced terrorists, but this is not exclusively the case. There is no homegrown terrorism in the authoritarian one-party states of Singapore and Cuba, to name just two cases. In fact, the only significant terrorism Cuba experienced was sponsored or winked at by a democracy—the US.⁴⁰ Democracies, on the other hand, have produced domestic terrorists and are not immune to terrorist attacks from their own citizens. Countries such as Spain, England, Germany, Italy and the US—all modern democracies—have experienced terrorism generated by national groups in the last 40 years. In addition, authoritarian regimes in transition to democracy may open

³⁸ David Fromkin, "A Wall of Faith and History", *The New York Times*, March 24, 2005.

³⁹ *The New York Times*, op -ed, "Jihad's Fresh Face", September 16, 2005. Ziad is an economic consultant and a principal in the Truman National Security Project. He adds that a good strategy would be to support groups across the Muslim world, both secular and religious, that provide social services where the government falls short; they range from women's rights organizations like the Union for Feminine Action in Morocco to trade groups like the Lebanese Businessmen Association."

⁴⁰ Robert Matthews, "El terrorismo antes y ahora: EEUU, Cuba y el caso Posada Carriles", *Papeles de Cuestiones Internacionales*, N° 92, winter 2005/06, pp. 27-40.

SHATTERING THE IMAGE OF AN INVINCIBLE SUPERPOWER WAS A CENTRAL OBJECTIVE OF AL QAEDA AND CURRENTLY SEEMS MUCH CLOSER TO BEING REALIZED

up a Pandora's box of violence— for example, in Russia and the states of the former Yugoslavia after 1989.

There is no guarantee that democratizing authoritarian Islamic governments would reduce radical religious appeal—a potent source of terrorism— or its influence in society, as Algeria proved in the 1990s. In fact, Iraq today is a stark refutation of the short-term benefits of democratization. Future elections in Iraq could conceivably establish a fundamentalist Islamic republic and one that ignores such democratic values as tolerance for minority opinion. In Pakistan, there is no evidence that the establishment of democracy would eliminate or curtail the teaching of radical Islamic doctrines in the madrassas, an important source of Islamic radicalism. At any rate, the US, displaying its double standards for Islamic regimes, is not visibly pressing President Pervez Musharraf on the issue. Samina Ahmed, International Crisis Group's South Asia project director, wrote recently in the *Financial Times*, "The mullahs have never been as strong as they are today. They are in power in two out of the four federating units in Pakistan, they have the strongest voice in the national assembly and hold the post of leader of the opposition. It's the mullahs who are a bulwark against the return of a real multi-party democracy."⁴¹

At the Madrid Terrorism Summit, former National Security Council member Robert Malley declared that it was an error to think that the exist-

tence of democracy means terrorism is on the wane. "Democracy and terrorism can progress hand in hand... If the US wants to be effective in fighting terrorism and promoting democracy, it needs to overcome its image of being a self-interested hegemon focused on protecting Israel's interests." Shlomo Ben Ami agreed that "... democracy is no panacea... in the case of Israel, for example, it didn't ensure that the negotiating process with the Palestinians would be any easier."⁴² Finally, politically engineering democracy at the point of a bayonet, as the US is trying to do in Iraq, carries the considerable risk that failure could create a negative demonstration effect. Instead of Iraq acting as a model and catalyst for democratizing the region, it could end up exporting chaos to its neighbors and creating a more conducive climate for terrorism than previously existed.⁴³

We should therefore be careful not to lull ourselves into a false complacency that democracy is a sure cure and alone can address the complex sources of terrorism. There is ample evidence for the proposition that democratic openings may increase instability and the possibility of violence and terrorism, at least for the immediate future. Fernando Reinares, a Spanish academic and expert on counterterrorism, admits the probable benefits of democratization over time but is skeptical of any certain short-term advantage.⁴⁴ And as for the long-run, we might recall John Maynard Keynes' observation that "in the long run we are all dead". Finally, there is a proven risk that democracies

⁴¹ *Financial Times* (August 23, 2005). At least one of the bombers in the London attacks of July 7 was a Briton who studied in radical madrassas in Pakistan. Victoria Burnett writes that "extremist madrassahs continue to thrive despite [the Pakistani] government's vows to reform them." "Unwanted Export...", *Financial Times*, July 18, 2005, p. 2.

⁴² International Summit on Terrorism and Democracy, Madrid, Session 1, March 9, 2005.

⁴³ Such an analysis of Stephen D. Biddle of the US Army War College, last April, was cited in Mark Danner, "Taking Stock of the Forever War", *The New York Times Magazine*, September 11, 2005, p. 68.

⁴⁴ Fernando Reinares is principal researcher on international terrorism at the Real Instituto Elcano and professor of political science at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. He made his remarks at the CIP conference, "Combating Terrorism and Protecting Democracy", Madrid, May 19-20, 2005 in the session "Spain and the Bombings of March-11."

engaged in counterterrorism may become less attentive to civil rights and the principles upon which a democracy is nourished.

The foregoing should not be interpreted as depreciating democratization efforts in the Middle East. Democracy should be pursued as a good in itself; along with education, it may indeed be an important long term factor in reducing global terrorism. But if democracy is to be more than window dressing to blunt criticism of Middle Eastern regimes, these governments need to incorporate Muslims in a new and truly participatory political order. Genuinely representative societies do not and cannot content themselves with periodic elections, whether or not they are fully open. In order to act as effective deterrents to terrorism, such polities must deepen democracy by supporting a "democratic institutional infrastructure" which necessarily includes a representative government of checks and balances with serious, legitimate opposition parties and diverse sectoral and constituent lobbies. The socio-political environment must also provide ethnic and religious pluralism, a free press, grass roots organizations, independent courts, and respect for both civil rights and minority opinion.

Conclusion

For many governments in the twenty-first century, terrorism constitutes the greatest perceived threat to national security. While absolute security is an unattainable objective and a dangerous illusion, the first obligation of any nation is to protect its citizens to the extent possible. Thus, vigorous and effective measures, including the option of force, must be taken to prevent imminent or probable terrorist violence and to limit its damage to societies. At the same time it is imperative to address the question of long-term solutions. We must begin by recognizing the diversity and complexity of terrorism's origin, composition and organization. It follows that countries involved in this struggle need to devise and implement a variety of measures to confront the problem. These include addressing poverty and political alienation in the Muslim world with social and economic programs supported by the West. There is a need also to promote democracy within closed political sys-

tems and address religious fanaticism by pressuring governments to crack down on radical religious schools, but more important to encourage the expansion and improvement of educational opportunities.

But it is our view that these approaches will fall short if they are not accompanied by a serious examination and revision of Western relations with the Islamic world, in particular US foreign policy in the Middle East. The continued US military presence in the region provokes religious zealots; Washington's ties to authoritarian regimes perceived as morally corrupt by many of their citizens and whose destruction is a principal goal of Al Qaeda, is another potent source of anti-Americanism. Finally, Washington's unconditional support for Israel and its hardline policies toward Palestinians not only preclude its acting as an honest broker in the conflict, but raise its profile as a terrorist target. At this juncture neoconservatives still pull considerable weight in US foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, and there is little optimism for a reexamination of policies.

The two strands of US counterterrorism policy, militarization and democratization, as short and long-term solutions respectively, need to be critically examined –regarding the logic and efficacy of the first and the easy acceptance of the antiterrorist properties of the second. There is a stunning lack of evidence that war, military operations, and armed occupation can effectively reduce terrorism; moreover, it appears, at least in its Iraq version, to be counterproductive, breeding terrorists by the thousands where none existed heretofore. A CIA report recently underscored this point, asserting that present US policy may be creating more terrorists than it is eliminating.

The US -led global war on terrorism after September 11th, 2001 has most visibly and dramatically only produced more war and more terrorism. On the other hand, intelligence-gathering and sharing across borders, undramatic but meticulous police work, and security procedures that limit terrorism's possibilities have proven to be more successful deterrents. It is important to assure that these things are be done in way that does not create resentment, encourage terrorist reprisals or undermine the democracy we are defending from the terrorist enemy. It is not surrendering to terrorism to believe that both terror-

THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT DEMOCRATIZING AUTHORITARIAN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENTS WOULD REDUCE RADICAL RELIGIOUS APPEAL —A POTENT SOURCE OF TERRORISM— OR ITS INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY

ism and unbridled antiterrorism need to be restrained if we are to avoid corroding the thin veneer of contemporary civilization and providing an environment conducive to violence.

US counterterrorism policy is hindered by several stumbling blocks, chief of which are its obsessive reliance on US military power as a first recourse and its willingness to “geopoliticize” counterterrorism—using the “global war on terrorism” as a pretext for securing US hegemonic goals. This subordination of the threat of terrorism to a broader political and economic agenda has its most egregious expression in the senseless war of choice in Iraq. The war there may already be lost, as it increasingly takes on the aspect of a vicious and protracted civil war. The training of Iraqi security forces, the main precondition for US withdrawal, has been painfully slow and recent reports warn that the Iraqi forces are now infiltrated by insurgents.

It is evident that the invasion and military occupation of Iraq, more than merely irrelevant to the antiterrorist campaign, has in fact served to foster and embolden terrorists inside and out of Iraq. Where there were no enemies of the US, there are now perhaps hundreds of thousands, or even millions, in the Islamic world and one day they may make good on their characterization by US soldiers as being “the bad guys.”

Ironically and tragically, the contrived pre-2003 connection between Iraq and international terrorism, the weakest of the administration’s rationales for war, has, thanks to that war, become a harrowing reality. The vaunted military might of the U.S. is tied down like a modern day Gulliver by Iraqis making roadside bombs in their basements. The much diminished credibility of the US, now at an all-time low in the Arab world, is undermining the very projection of US power that the war was intended to achieve after 9-11. This increases the vulnerability of the US to terrorism and may

already constitute a signal victory for Al Qaeda—one of whose goals was precisely to show that the US was not beyond humiliating.

The dreadful, blundering diversion of the war on terror to Iraq has also hindered Washington in its goals of containing nuclear proliferation. It is crucial that the US focus again on that aspect of the war on terror that concerns nuclear weapons, specifically in countries violating the treaties on non-proliferation like Iran, Pakistan and North Korea or non-signatories like India. In the last year this threat has become more dangerous than Al Qaeda, first, because US policy created a sense of urgency among non-allied countries like Iran. Second, it gave opportunities to these regimes, owing to the shift in US attention and resources to Iraq. Both Iran and North Korea see the US bogged down in a costly war in that country, unable to find sufficient recruits to keep its army going (unlike Al Qaeda) and deep in debt. Its current weakness limits its ability to apply the kind of military and diplomatic pressure it so boldly flaunted before the world in 2003. Today, it is not far-fetched to imagine Pakistan’s nuclear weapons linked to Saudi Arabia’s energy resources through an Al Qaeda-inspired government in Riyadh—a scenario made more real by the faltering and misguided US war on terror.

Domestic political manipulation of the threat of terrorism for electoral purposes has also affected the ability of the government to protect the nation adequately from terrorist attacks—including natural disasters, as hurricane Katrina demonstrated. At the same time it has damaged the efficacy of the second element in US antiterrorist strategy: democratization. A tarnished US image as a model democracy can only weaken the nation’s authority in pressing the Muslim world to open its political systems. Democracy, at any rate, has yet to prove convincingly that it can always be a natural bulwark against the terrorist option.

The banner of moral values under which the U.S. responded to terrorism after September 11th lies stained and tattered before the exposure of torture at the Abu Graib prison in Baghdad, the indefinite detention and abuse of military prisoners at Guantanamo and in Afghanistan, and the transporting of terrorism suspects to other countries that practice torture. The most recent revelations of the systematic, almost quotidian, abuse of prisoners in Iraq underscores the endemic quality of US rights violations and may in its own way be telling evidence of the failure of US counterterrorism policies. Yet the cavalier acceptance of torture constitutes appalling hypocrisy from an administration which talks of moral clarity in its political vision and cloaks its foreign policy in the rhetoric of moral imperatives. More practically, it harms the US's effort to combat terrorism, encouraging anti-Americanism, fueling Al Qaeda's propaganda and making terrorist retribution more probable. The country is living through an extraordinary period when *The New York Times* can write without irony that two Republican senators showed remarkable *courage* in proposing legislation to honor international law and end the torture of detainees held by the US military. The Bush admin-

istration's deplorable human rights record and Washington's obvious subordination of international law to its peculiar strategy for fighting terrorism also weaken US authority in leading the effort for democratic reform in the Muslim world.

The Bush administration's record after four years of a "global war on terror" cries out for a serious reassessment, one which focuses less on the ideological predilections of either the supporters or critics of the Bush administration, and more on facts on the ground. What indeed has been accomplished? Are all of the assumptions and policy components still valid? Is the world a safer place because of these policies? May we be creating more potential terrorists than we are eliminating? What have we learned that can result in more effective policies? If the answers aren't crystal clear yet, the doubts are still too many and various to continue a policy on auto-pilot. The US public asks whether we are really winning the war against Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and terrorism. A more relevant question is, are we really fighting them? The citizens who are being asked to pay for this war, and the soldiers who are being asked to die for it, must compel the administration to address this interrogative with more than the illusions of the past four years.