

## RECONCEPTUALIZING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

BY

COMMANDER GREGORY E. MCRAE  
United States Navy

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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by

Commander Gregory E. McRae  
United States Navy

Dr. James Bartholomees  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013



## **ABSTRACT**

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With the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, America was thrust into a national survival mode not witnessed since December 7, 1941. In the aftermath of these attacks, former President Bush officially launched a war on terrorism. As America enters its eighth year of the war on terror, several questions deserve examination. Is the Global War on Terror really a war? What is the nature and characteristics of the current conflict between Islamic extremists and the West? Finally, how should this conflict be prosecuted to ensure short term security and long term international peace and prosperity? This paper analyzes the Global War on Terror from its inception, provides a definition of war founded in classic warfare theory, provides a discussion of what America is doing wrong in its prosecution of the war, and recommends specific changes to improve international effectiveness and ensure ultimate success. The central thesis is that the current approach to terrorism is flawed. The strategic objectives are too aggressive, too vague, and absolutely unachievable in the current national security environment. The political objectives of the war on terror must be adjusted for the United States and her allies to achieve a successful outcome.



## RECONCEPTUALIZING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, began just like any other work day in America. The hustle and bustle of the morning commute, the sights and sounds of children rushing off to school, the slow but steady rhythm of the nation coming alive. As the routine of the work day began, a cloak of normalcy enveloped the country. But, at 0846, with the terrifying screech of American Airlines Flight 11 impacting the North Tower of the World Trade Center, everything changed. On that day, America was thrust into a national survival mode not witnessed since December 7, 1941 following the Imperial Japanese Navy attacks on Pearl Harbor. The nation initially feared for its safety, then feared for its security, then demanded to know who was responsible, and ultimately charted an aggressive course to insure its citizens were safe and secure.

In the aftermath of these terrorist attacks, former President Bush launched a war on terrorism. During a televised address to a joint session of congress, he said, "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."<sup>1</sup> The initial goals of the war on terror were "to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime".<sup>2</sup> Within thirty days, the United States military would have boots on the ground in Afghanistan, forcing the Taliban from power under Operation Enduring Freedom. Within two years, America and her coalition partners would commence Operation Iraqi Freedom, an invasion directed at toppling the tyrannical dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. In both cases, initial combat operations were superbly planned and flawlessly executed. In late 2001, in a three month campaign, the Taliban were forced from power throughout most of

Afghanistan. Similarly, coalition forces were able to invade Iraq and topple Saddam's brutal regime in three weeks in the spring of 2003.

Unfortunately for America, the problem of terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will never be defeated by military power alone. This has become painfully obvious to anyone paying attention the past seven years. As America enters its eighth year in the war on terror, several key questions deserve detailed examination. Is the Global War on Terror really a war, or is it more appropriately deemed an international criminal activity? What is the nature and characteristics of the current conflict between Islamic extremists and the West, particularly America? Finally, how should this conflict be prosecuted to ensure short-term security and long-term international peace and prosperity? This paper analyzes the Global War on Terror from its beginnings immediately following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, to its prosecution today. It provides a definition of war founded in classic warfare theory and applies it to the current conflict. Historical examples are then used to analyze the nature of this conflict and provide a strategic perspective. The paper then provides a detailed discussion of what America is doing wrong in its prosecution of the war, and recommends specific changes to improve international effectiveness and ensure ultimate success. The central thesis is that the current approach to terrorism is flawed. The long term objectives that evolved throughout the Bush administration are too aggressive, too vague, and absolutely unachievable in today's volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous strategic environment. The political objectives of the war on terror must be adjusted for the United States and her allies to achieve a successful outcome.

## Defining the Global War on Terror

Global War on Terror is the overarching phrase used by the United States to describe the conflict between Islamic terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, and the West. The Global War on Terror encompasses the use of all elements of America's national power including military, diplomatic, informational, economic, legal, and ideological in combating the global scourge of terrorism. Over time, both the phrase itself and the American foreign policy changes it has brought about have become a source of controversy as many argue it has been used to justify unilateral preemptive war, human rights abuses and other violations of international law.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Global War on Terror officially began for the United States with former President Bush's declaration in September 2001, for al Qaeda it began during the Clinton administration. The first attack on American soil by al Qaeda was the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Subsequent attacks against American interests included the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 United States embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in the Gulf of Aden. Osama bin Laden officially declared war on the United States in October 1996 in a fatwa asserting that the Islamic nation was under attack and justifying their aggression as defensive.<sup>4</sup> Then, in February 1998, the World Islamic Front issued a fatwa entitled "*Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders*", in which all Americans, civilian and military, were declared to be the enemy and every Muslim was called upon to kill Americans wherever they may find them.<sup>5</sup>

The international jihadist movement has some characteristics of an insurgency and some of a terrorist network. One national security expert proposes that terrorism can be recognized as a theory with violence as its essential feature.<sup>6</sup> He states,

“violence, collective violence to be precise, is the strategic concept, the way, used to advance a strategy consisting of a putative norm that the terrorists are attempting to alter and maintain using various tactics (e.g. bombing, assassination) in a strategic environment.”<sup>7</sup> Islamic extremists thrive in the ungoverned regions of the world, where they exploit young men filled by their environment with hopelessness and despair. They seek to delegitimize any form of secular government and define their enemy as the United States, Israel and all of their Western allies. These terrorists seek to defeat their enemies by attacking globally, overextending their adversaries’ forces throughout the world to weaken their response. They attack key nodes and population centers and force their enemy to protect along an infinite number of operational lines. Ultimately, the jihadists seek to establish or reunify the Islamic State.<sup>8</sup> Thus, rather than ideological and irrational, the terrorist leaders must be understood as rational calculators.<sup>9</sup>

The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat thereof to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of goals generally political, religious, or ideological.”<sup>10</sup> The stated goals of the Global War on Terror in 2001 were to bring Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda to justice and prevent the emergence of other terrorist networks.<sup>11</sup> These goals would be accomplished by means including economic and military sanctions against states perceived as harboring terrorists and increasing global surveillance and intelligence sharing. America’s response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 was swift and violent, an attempt to strike back at those who sought to harm the United States. In October of 2001, Operation Enduring Freedom was launched to destroy terrorist training camps and infrastructure in Afghanistan, kill or

capture al Qaeda leaders, and bring about the cessation of terrorist activities in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> Also in October 2001, the controversial Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001 was passed. This law dramatically expanded the power of the federal government to take preemptive action to ensure the safety and security of American citizens, including increasing the ability of law enforcement agencies to search private records, relaxing previous restrictions on gathering foreign intelligence inside the United States, broadening the authority of the Secretary of the Treasury to regulate financial transactions, and empowering law enforcement and immigration authorities to detain and deport immigrants suspected of terrorist acts.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in March 2003, the Bush administration launched Operation Iraqi Freedom to end the regime of Saddam Hussein, eliminate Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) capability, and capture or drive out terrorists.<sup>14</sup>

Today, more than seven years after the war on terror began, America maintains about 140,000 troops in Iraq and an additional 38,000 in Afghanistan. In the last few days of his second term, former President Bush contended that America as a nation was safer than it was in 2001 and argued that his administration had prevented more bloodshed at home through his aggressive policies.<sup>15</sup> "We have delivered a devastating blow to al Qaeda in the land Osama bin Laden once called the central battleground in the war on terror," Bush said of Iraq<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, the results to date of the coalition's efforts in the Global War on Terror are impressive and measurable:

- The al Qaeda network has been significantly degraded,
- the Taliban has been forced from power throughout most of Afghanistan,

- Saddam Hussein's regime was removed from power and Iraq is becoming a democratic ally in the Middle East,
- an international campaign to combat terrorist financing has helped make it difficult for terrorist groups to move money, and
- there is growing international consensus that targeting innocent civilians is never justified.<sup>17</sup>

The Global War on Terror is a struggle against Islamic extremist organizations that promote and use indiscriminate violence to induce fear and gain control over America and her allies.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, the Global War on Terror is not a conflict between religions or cultures, though Islamic extremists frequently use this characterization to capture the attention of their target audience and attempt to motivate the Muslim population at large to action.<sup>19</sup> But is the Global War on Terror really a war at all, or is it best described as an international criminal activity? Britain has refused to call the current international struggle a war for fear of legitimizing the terrorists and their cause. Britain's most senior criminal prosecutor has stated that those responsible for acts of terror do not deserve the credibility of soldiers in a war, but are more appropriately considered "inadequates" who must be managed by the criminal justice system.<sup>20</sup> He went on to say that, "On the streets of London there is no such thing as a war on terror. The fight against terrorism ... is not a war. It is the prevention of crime, the enforcement of our laws, and the winning of justice for those damaged by their infringement."<sup>21</sup> So, who is right? Is America at war or not? The answer depends on how one defines war.

## A Definition of Warfare

War accomplishes much within the human condition and history has repeatedly shown that more than any other human endeavor, war brings about change. Throughout the ages, wars have expanded territories, gained access to valuable natural resources, earned independence and freedom for populations from oppressive regimes and tyrannical leaders, and halted the advance of unbridled aggression. But, what exactly is war? What characterizes the inherent nature of war? In the past few decades, the term war has been used to describe everything from multi-national combat operations allied against a multi-national axis, to the United States' crackdown on illegal drug trafficking, from sophisticated computer attacks against the defense/industrial complex, to a Saturday afternoon college football game. Everyone is familiar with the terms cyber war, war on drugs, and Global War on Terror. But are these really wars, or are they something else? The following paragraphs provide a definition of war and discuss the fundamental characteristics of warfare. They also explore why wars are fought, who does the fighting, how wars are won, and they offer a brief glimpse of the future of warfare.

Fundamentally, Carl von Clausewitz had it right at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when he defined war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."<sup>22</sup> At the core of warfare is always the central theme of physically compelling a declared enemy to acquiesce to one's will. War must always contain an element of physical violence. The violence may be demonstrated or implied, but the intent must be clear, the capability must be proven, and the will must be unquestioned. War requires armed conflict; anything less is nothing more than a form of diplomacy. In addition to physical violence, war also must include politics. War is definitively a political instrument. Care

must be exercised here in the definition of politics. According to Webster, politics is the art or science of government, government is the act or process of governing, and to govern is to control, direct, or strongly influence the actions and conduct of.<sup>23</sup> Thus, politics are not necessarily nation-state based, but may also represent cultural, ethnic, religious, and tribal groups. Osama bin Laden is a politician for his cause and his followers, just as President Barack H. Obama is a politician for the United States of America. All recognized leaders of collective populations, whether based on national identity, shared religious beliefs, or common ethnicity, are politicians representing the respective interests and causes of their followers. It is this understanding of politics and policy that confirm, as Clausewitz proposed two hundred years ago, that “war is a continuation of policy by other means.”<sup>24</sup> The political qualifier in this definition distinguishes war from crime or other private violence and supports the idea that warfare is a just and moral endeavor.

Some modern strategic theorists dismiss the claim that war is a continuation of policy by other means. John Keegan writes that a Clausewitzian view implies the existence of nation-states and that warfare preceded the concept of a state.<sup>25</sup> He adds that Clausewitzian theory does not adequately account for the cultural aspect of warfare and says that “war embraces much more than politics” and is “always an expression of culture.”<sup>26</sup> If politics is defined using the discussion above, the Clausewitzian definition of war and its characteristics does not necessarily require a nation-state foundation and may adequately address cultural, class, ethnic and religious groups. According to Keegan, Clausewitz leaves out the cultural elements of war. But, if political intercourse

is viewed in a broader context than the Westphalian model, the Clausewitzian ideology becomes acceptable and complete.

Warfare is fundamentally characterized by physical violence, or the threat of physical violence, brought on by conflict between two populations with a specific political purpose in mind. War is always driven by political objectives of the involved parties. Like any human endeavor, warfare always includes some significant degree of risk and friction, as Clausewitz described. Though Edward Luttwak proposed that the overwhelming presence of paradoxical logic in the execution of warfare was significant and should be thoroughly integrated into military strategy, he overstates its importance.<sup>27</sup> All human competition, including economic, diplomatic, social, and recreational, involves paradoxical logic. To presume that this core component of all competition is somehow more significant to earning victory during war and thus must be considered more fully is unreasonable. Another characteristic of warfare is that it must be considered legitimate by those responsible for waging the war. Legitimacy here is highly dependent on perspective. Young Muslim males willing to carry out suicide attacks against Western targets consider their struggle legitimate. Likewise, President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 considered increasing military pressure on the North Vietnamese to stop the spread of Communism legitimate. In contrast, a majority of the Iraqi Army in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm clearly did not consider Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and subsequent statements that he was simply reclaiming Iraqi lands as legitimate. This lack of legitimacy led to the surrender of over 60,000 Iraqi soldiers while the war was being waged. Lastly, war contains an inherently human element that is inescapable. Wars are fought by humans against other humans in order to compel

and force will upon an adversary. Wars are not fought against activities, but against people who practice those activities. With this in mind, it is important to discuss the misuse of the term war in today's strategic environment. For all of the things that war is, there are many things that war is not. The meaning of the word war has been intentionally distorted over the last several decades to legitimize various struggles, lend credence to particular causes, and to convince the public of the situational gravity. The problem with this approach is that when the label war is assigned, the population logically applies, either consciously or subconsciously, the fundamental assumptions of warfare in a manner that may not be applicable to the situation at hand.

Everyone in the United States remembers the government's declaration of a war on drugs to stop the flow of illegal drugs into the country and crack down on proliferation domestically. The term war was used intentionally to highlight an increased importance and prioritization for this police activity and to justify the excessive monetary and human costs associated with this epic struggle. The concept of a war on drugs makes no sense, and appropriately failed to resonate with the American public. This struggle was, is, and always will be one of police action and not warfare. Everyone in America knows that, except maybe the President who made the declaration. Similarly, the Global War on Terrorism has, for the last several years, had an identity crisis. If America is fighting a war against a tactic, such as terrorism, then how does it go about identifying the enemy in time to stop his belligerent activity? If the enemy stops practicing terrorism, if only briefly, then is he no longer the enemy? The entire quandary is self-made and nonsensical. America is not at war with terrorism, but with radical Islamic fundamentalists like al Qaeda who have declared war on the United States.

In a similar fashion, many actions by states, non-state actors, Non-Governmental Organizations, and others may be considered acts of war, but do not constitute war in and of themselves. The term cyber warfare has been used to describe malicious cyber attacks waged by political organizations against other political organizations in an effort to shut down or disrupt vital aspects of military command and control systems, economic systems, security systems, etc. A terrific example of this tactic was Russia's use of cyber attacks preceding the military attacks on Georgia in August of 2008. While these events may be acts of war and may be tremendously disruptive, in and of themselves they do not include use of physical force that must be a prerequisite for war. The core meaning of the word war must be preserved and protected. There should be a sanctity and a conciseness to the term war, so that when it is used, there can be no misunderstanding of its significance.

Wars are waged by politicians who are charged with protecting the interests of a population or a culture or ethnicity. As Clausewitz said, "war is an extension of policy (political intercourse) by other or alternative means."<sup>28</sup> One has to view political intercourse here to encompass all groups of people with leaders making decisions for the group, whether they are religious, cultural, or state-based. As discussed earlier, political does not have to mean nation-state politics. Clearly political groups fight over interests, but there's more to it than that. The Commission on America's National Interests identified four prioritized categories of national interests ranging from high to low intensity (Survival, Vital, Important, Peripheral).<sup>29</sup> The presumption is that a nation's likelihood of going to war is highest for interests related to survival and lowest for peripheral interests. History has shown that populations fight over actual or perceived

credibility, honor, natural resources, international structure, power and fear. Most political organizations tend to fight for one of these reasons. In the Peloponnesian War, the Melians fought out of honor.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, for the Pashtuns in modern day Afghanistan, honor is the driving force behind their decision-making.

Wars are fought by political organizations for the reasons previously discussed. These political organizations include states as well as non-state actors, ethnic groups such as the ethnic Serbians, religious groups such as Hezbollah or the Irish Republican Army, and cultural groups such as the victims of apartheid in South Africa. Wars are fought by armed representatives of political groups whose leaders have declared war with other political entities. These representatives most often come from the population of the political group waging war, and may be volunteers or conscripts. In some cases throughout history, professional warriors have been used to wage war on behalf or in support of a political group. Take, for example, the Cossacks involvement in fighting on behalf of Russia against Napoleon in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> Policy is driven by politicians, and war is a continuation of policy, therefore, politicians must be constructively involved throughout the war to ensure the proper strategic ends are accomplished.

Victory in warfare is achieved when the enemy loses the ability or the will to continue fighting and the policy objectives requiring the initiation of war in the first place have been met. Thus, victory is defined by the victor since only he can know if he has achieved his purpose, but it must be confirmed by the adversary to be a clear victory. Victory in war must include breaking the will of the enemy leadership to continue the fight, but does not necessarily have to include breaking the will of the people. Thomas

Schelling accurately observed that “military strategy can no longer be thought of ... as the science of military victory. It is now equally, if not more, the art of coercion, of intimidation and deterrence. Military strategy ... has become the diplomacy of violence.”<sup>32</sup> Traditionally, total wars are thought to be brought to an end through one of three forms of strategy: annihilation, attrition and exhaustion. Schelling’s view offers an alternative to these total war concepts. If one accepts his proposition, the end state is achieved when the enemy loses his will to conduct future combat operations, and not necessarily when his military is destroyed, his combat personnel are reduced to the point of being ineffective, or his population or leadership is exhausted.

The fundamentals of warfare have not changed. At its heart, war will always be about the use of physical force at the tactical and personal level to compel an enemy to bend to one’s will. While the fundamentals of war are unchanging, the methods of executing war are in a state of perpetual evolution. Globalization has had a tremendous effect on warfare and continues to alter its application. The explosion in global communications capabilities, the globalization of many of the world’s economies, and the expansion of international travel has permitted the development of a new type of political organization. Al Qaeda operates throughout the world, maintains no permanent home address, affiliates with no currently recognized nation-state, consists of combat troops hailing from over 60 countries, and has a membership united around a central religious belief in creation of a great Islamic state. Such an organization could not have existed 20 years ago. Couple this new type of organization with the increased ability for small groups to wage war against nation-states using biological weapons and the increased effectiveness a determined group could have on any global resource, as

Colonel T. X. Hammes points out, and the nature of the threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has certainly evolved.<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, great power war is still very much a possibility due to the presence of traditional powers such as Russia and China and the potential of future conflict between powerful nations. While the advent and proliferation of nuclear weapons among several traditional powers has seemingly kept great power war in check since 1945, the proposition that traditional great power war is extinct due to the threat it may escalate into nuclear warfare is irresponsible. Similarly, globalization has had some potential positive effects on traditional warfare. Many believe that economic interdependence will reduce the likelihood of future conflict between nations that are dependent on each other for prosperity. The United States' relationship with China is the example most often cited. This assertion neglects the historical record that clearly and consistently illustrates that predicting human behavior in terms of our capacity to do harm to our fellow man is tenuous, at best. Thus, to base our national security strategy on such a tenuous hypothesis would be negligent. Future warfare will include elements of traditional war, but will also be characterized by an increase in irregular and asymmetric warfare.

War is innate in human behavior. In the Christian New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:12 states, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."<sup>34</sup> Conflict will always persist throughout the world and will, at times, result in armed conflict in support of a political objective. While modern warfare has evolved, as Colonel T. X. Hammes says, from traditional great power wars to 5<sup>th</sup>

generation warfare, at the fundamental level it has not changed.<sup>35</sup> It is still about applying force to impose will. Military leaders have the responsibility of ensuring political leaders and their respective populations understand this basic tenet of human conflict.

### Reconceptualizing the Global War on Terror: What is America Doing Wrong?

For all of America's success in the Global War on Terror, it is easy to see that the nation is at a crossroads when it comes to national security. The United States alone has spent in excess of a trillion dollars on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet the West is still struggling to win the support and cooperation of the target population it deems so critical to future peace and security. For all intents and purposes, it appears that America is no closer now to achieving a stable and secure Afghanistan than it was in 2001. Despite years of intense fighting, and billions of dollars in aid, the population of Afghanistan is increasingly skeptical of the United States and their own government.<sup>36</sup> The Afghan view of the United States has deteriorated from 83 percent favorable in 2005, to a disheartening 47 percent favorable today.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, 40 percent of the Afghan population thinks their government is moving in the right direction today compared to 77 percent in 2005.<sup>38</sup> In neighboring Pakistan, anti-American and anti-Western sentiments continue to be prominent among the general population. Reasons offered for these deeply held beliefs include unprecedented collateral damage caused by the United States in its pursuit of Islamic militants, the United States' invasion of Afghanistan the war in Iraq, and the half-hearted efforts by the United States to resolve the disputes over Kashmir and Palestine.<sup>39</sup> "A majority of Pakistanis believe that most American foreign policies are not only against Muslims in general, but also against

Islam.”<sup>40</sup> So, what is America doing wrong in its prosecution of the Global War on Terror?

First, the political ends in the Global War on Terror have been shifting throughout the campaign and are too ambitious, particularly in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, the goals of the war on terror were to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.<sup>41</sup> These goals were specific, purposeful, and achievable. Given these political ends, the military successfully executed the opening phase of Operation Enduring Freedom with unparalleled swiftness and lethality. But as soon as the Taliban was driven from power, the political ends began to expand. Today, the military strategic approach includes such language as enabling partner nations to counter terrorism, denying terrorists what they need to operate and survive, countering state and non-state support for terrorism, and contributing to the establishment of conditions that counter ideological support for terrorism.<sup>42</sup> To meet these objectives, America is wasting vast amounts of national resources and national power in a vain effort to rebuild Afghanistan in its own image. This is mirror-imaging at its most frightful, strategic level.

Second, the United States is increasingly attempting to do too much with its armed forces. The current Secretary of Defense recognized this when he said, “The United States cannot expect to eliminate national security risks through higher defense budgets, to do everything and buy everything. The Department of Defense must set priorities and consider inescapable tradeoffs and opportunity costs.”<sup>43</sup> America must determine fundamentally what it wants out of its military, and what it expects from other governmental agencies. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell

offered a tutorial on what an armed force is and does. He said the mission of the military was to fight and win the nation's wars. Because the military maintains the capacity to accomplish this mission, it is also uniquely qualified to perform many other missions such as peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, disaster relief, etc. Despite this fact, however, he offered that the nation "never want[s] to do it in such a way that [it] lose[s] sight of the focus of why [it] [has] armed forces – to fight and win the nation's wars."<sup>44</sup> The most recent Capstone Concept for Joint Operations lists four basic categories of military activity – combat, security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction, but it does not provide any priority to these missions.<sup>45</sup> The same document acknowledges that adjusting the joint force capabilities and capacities to provide greater emphasis on security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction activities risks reducing combat capabilities and capacities.<sup>46</sup> This expansion of the military's role in foreign affairs is potentially devastating. It is devastating to the U.S. economy as the nation grapples with the almost unilateral responsibility for the price tag associated with building nations out of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is devastating to the American military as the declaration of victory is withheld pending creation of some futuristic utopia where love and peace abound. And, ultimately, it is devastating to the United States' national power as the nation loses international legitimacy and the credibility it has worked over two centuries to create.

Third, the peace dividend following the Cold War has distressed the other United States government agencies and prevented them from being able to respond adequately to the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment. These civilian agencies have not adequately maintained the capacity or ability to respond to modern security threats and,

since 2001, their burden has been borne by the military. In response to the end of the Cold War, the State Department stopped hiring new Foreign Service Officers, the United States Agency for International Development cut its permanent staff from a high of 15,000 during the Vietnam War to less than 3,000 today, and the United States Information Agency was reduced in size and capability and placed under the State Department.<sup>47</sup> Since the end of major combat operations in Iraq, there has been a persistent claim that the weakest link in any United States governmental response to an international crisis is the interagency process.<sup>48</sup> During the last decade, the United States has been involved in many post-conflict reconstruction operations, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Somalia with very limited success.<sup>49</sup> The common lesson learned again and again throughout each of these experiences is that the United States government is not prepared, not manned, not organized, and not equipped to efficiently execute the mission of nation building. Civilian agencies lack an operational culture and have few deployable experts and very limited capabilities. Additionally, these agencies lack the necessary authorities and resources to rapidly deploy and efficiently establish programs in foreign countries. A Post Conflict Strategic Requirements Workshop conducted at the United States Army War College found that “the lack of quick response capability in the civilian agencies [ensures] that the military [will] bear the brunt of all essential tasks in a stabilization and reconstruction operation.”<sup>50</sup> This mission creep forces military personnel to conduct tasks “for which they are ill-suited and ill-prepared.”<sup>51</sup>

Fourth, America must reexamine the promotion of democracy as a cornerstone of foreign policy. The United States has consistently pushed an agenda of creating and

supporting democracies throughout the world in an effort to end tyranny. Unfortunately, world opinion is that the United States' freedom agenda is inherently selective.<sup>52</sup> On the one hand, it appears that democracy is vital in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, but in nations such as Thailand or Kazakhstan, it falls off Washington's radar.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, autocratic rulers like Saddam Hussein are vilified and forcefully removed from power while the United States embraces dictators in Ethiopia and Azerbaijan. Ironically, the Arabic governments that have historically maintained the closest ties with the United States, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, are not democracies. In addition to its disjointed execution, the freedom agenda is potentially a terrifying concept to the international community. The world's richest country, with enough destructive power to end life on earth as it exists today, has determined that its form of government is not only superior to all others but should be adopted without question by every nation as soon as practicable. This sounds like the plot from a 1950s horror film. No wonder America has consistently lost legitimacy and credibility throughout the world the past eight years.

#### What can America do to Improve Effectiveness of the Global War on Terror?

First, the United States must modify current national objectives to be more achievable and realistic. Secretary of Defense Gates and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, have already begun the dialogue to reign in the goals and objectives of the Global War on Terror, and their efforts are spot on. The "ready, fire, aim" approach to strategy that has characterized the past eight years must be halted. In its place, the National Security Council must delineate a set of realistic, achievable goals for the culmination of current military occupations in Iraq and

Afghanistan to bring successful closure to this chapter in American history and allow seamless transition back into a Phase 0, or environmental shaping, operational posture. Make no mistake, the need for diplomatic, economic, and informational elements of national power will continue in these regions for the foreseeable future. But the long term goal of establishing conditions that counter ideological support for terrorism is best accomplished with minimal United States military presence.

Second, the United States must prioritize the military role in the Global War on Terror. If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority. The military is a can-do organization full of motivated individuals that truly believe there is nothing they cannot accomplish. The past eight years have been spent identifying shortcomings in the Department of Defense capacity to fight the war on terror and applying short term corrective action to achieve results rapidly. This approach has resulted in unprecedented spending and growth within the Defense Department to accommodate all of the new roles and missions that have been thrust into the purview of national defense. One such organization is the Task Force to Improve Business and Stability Operations in Iraq (TFBSO) with the mission of revitalizing the Iraqi economy and reducing the high unemployment facing Iraqis today. How is it that such an organization finds its way into the Defense Department and not the Department of State, Treasury, or Commerce? The fact is the TFBSO does not belong under the defense umbrella, any more than uniformed service members belong in Afghanistan building schools and roads. To quote former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "There's nothing wrong with nation building, but not when it is done by the American military."<sup>54</sup> Given this, the Department of Defense in consultation with the National Security Council must prioritize

the military missions of combat, security, engagement, and relief and reconstruction.

This prioritization must permeate the military structure, from training and personnel, to organization and equipment, so that the focus of uniformed personnel is exactly where it should be, with no distractions.

Third, the U.S. must build capacity and capability within civilian agencies to fully exercise the nation's diplomatic, informational, and economic power. As a nation, America has been reluctant to adequately resource the capabilities needed to further its interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment. The key to success in the future is resourcing the capabilities needed to address the challenges of reconstruction and nation building. If the State Department is truly responsible for diplomacy, then it must be resourced, organized, and trained to provide those functions. Likewise, the Treasury Department and Commerce Department must also be adequately funded and organized to respond to international reconstruction. Additionally, the National Security Council must play a greater role in coordinating policy planning and overseeing policy execution during America's involvement in regional crises. The Bush administration issued NSPD-44 on December 7, 2005 titled "Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization". It states that the State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) should take the lead in integrating the efforts and capabilities of the interagency for reconstruction and stabilization purposes. The S/CRS is also tasked with developing a civilian response capacity for these types of operation. While this direction is adequate, it must be fully executed and fully enabled through commensurate resourcing which has yet to be realized.

Fourth, the United States must revamp its foreign policy with less emphasis on democratization and more emphasis on peace and stability. The true objective of American foreign policy is to ensure a stable and peaceful future. This objective is best achieved by allowing nation's and regions to come to their own conclusions about the type of government they choose. America must recognize that democracy means very different things to different people and different cultures. Rather than an aggressive approach to democratization, America should choose a path of example where it serves as the world's role model for democracy. Allow other nations to express themselves through their form of government, as long as they adhere to a few internationally recognized requirements, such as respect for human rights and the rule of law. With regard to international involvement on the continent of Africa, South African leaders are fond of the phrase, "African solutions for African problems." This same concept must be applied across the international community.

Finally, the phrase Global War on Terror must be retired. From its first utterance by former President Bush in 2001 to describe the current fight, this phrase has clouded the strategic objectives, diluted the global effort, and confused the international community and the American people. The phrase itself has become counterproductive, and has been distorted to represent everything from a war between Westerners and Arabs to a religious war between Judeo-Christian forces and Islam. Much like the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay, the phrase Global War on Terror has taken on a life of its own and is now seen throughout the Middle East as anti-Arab and anti-Islam.<sup>55</sup> Today's conflict is not a war on terror, it is a struggle against specific terrorist organizations who seek to use indiscriminate violence to induce fear and gain control

over America and the West. America is not fighting the tactic of terrorism; it is fighting those radicals who have declared war on America and wake every day in anticipation of the next attack. Any phrase used to describe the current war must be specific enough to unify effort and clarify intent.

### Conclusion

America is at war with a determined enemy bent on its destruction. Today's war is being fought against a new type of enemy, a transnational conglomeration of individuals, organizations, and networks that exploit the religion of Islam and exercise the tactic of terrorism to achieve their ideological ends.<sup>56</sup> Throughout the prosecution of the Global War on Terror, America has had its share of successes and defeats as it sought to define the appropriate strategic end state for the conflict. The United States has learned much from its involvement in the current war, about its military and about its ability to apply full spectrum national power throughout the world. While much has been done, much remains to be done. America must take advantage of the lessons learned in the Global War on Terror and apply them to the national security apparatus. Significant changes must be made to ensure the United States government is better aligned to deal with future threats. Only through aggressive action can America prepare itself to meet the current and future challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare.

### Endnotes

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<sup>6</sup> Frank L. Jones. "Toward a Strategic Theory of Terrorism: Defining Boundaries in the Ongoing Search for Security," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, Vol. 1: *Theory of War and Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, June 2008), 96.

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<sup>8</sup> Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, trans. William McCants (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, "Toward a Strategic Theory of Terrorism," 98.

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<sup>18</sup> Pace, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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<sup>22</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

<sup>23</sup> Merriam-Webster, *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-W Webster, Inc., 1989), 911, 529.

<sup>24</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3-15.

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<sup>42</sup> Pace, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2009).

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age."

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Troxell, "PDD-56: A Glass Half-Full," 60.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

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