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# U.S. Anti-Terror Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report

**Updated February 4, 2005**

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# Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

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| 1. REPORT DATE | 2. REPORT TYPE | 3. DATES COVERED |
|---|---|---|
| **04 FEB 2005** | **N/A** | **-** |

| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE | |
|---|---|
| **U.S. Anti-Terror Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report** | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
| | 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
| | 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br>**David D. Acker Library and Knowledge Respository Defense Acquisition University Fort Belvoir, VA** | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) |
| | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) |

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

**Approved for public release, distribution unlimited**

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. REPORT | b. ABSTRACT | c. THIS PAGE | | | |
| **unclassified** | **unclassified** | **unclassified** | **SAR** | **14** | |

**Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)**
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

# U.S. Anti-Terror Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report

## Summary

On July 22, 2004 the 9/11 Commission released its final report. The report calls for changes to be made by the executive branch and Congress to more effectively protect our nation in an age of modern terrorism and provides forty-one concrete recommendations. Generally, the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission as they relate to strategy content and implementation appear consistent with, and supportive of, the National Strategy. Few question the 9/11 Commission Report's overarching premise that U.S. counter-terrorism structure, strategy, and implementation can be improved.

Some, however, see certain Commission recommendations as incomplete, if not flawed. They suggest that the Commission is often focused on the "last war" and not a future one and suggest that the Commission consciously avoids tackling some of the more complex, yet pressing issues. For example, the Commission, as its first recommendation, stresses the need for identifying and prioritizing terrorist sanctuaries with a focus on failed states. Some assert, however, that terrorists are increasingly returning to their politically stable home countries for sanctuary where they blend into local communities, where their training camps are in civilian housing complexes, and where their bomb factories are in private residences. Although a number of the Commission's recommendations fall within the category of preventing the growth of Islamic extremism, none addresses directly the issue of confronting incitement to terrorism when promoted, countenanced, or facilitated by the action — or inaction — of nation states.

With terrorists able to change targets, tactics, and weapons on short notice, many argue that a successful counterterrorism strategy and institutional structures will need similar flexibility. The degree to which such flexibility will be built into strategy, and into any new institutional structures recommend by the 9/11 Commission, is yet to be determined.

On December 17, 2004, President Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Prevention Act of 2004 (S. 2845, P.L. 108-458) establishing the position of National Intelligence Director (a position separate from that of the CIA Director) to serve as the President's principal intelligence advisor, overseeing and coordinating the foreign and domestic activities of the intelligence community. Established as well is a National Counterterrorism Center designed to serve as a central knowledge bank for information about known and suspected terrorists and to coordinate and monitor counterterrorism plans and activities of all government agencies. The Center will also be responsible for preparing the daily terrorism threat report for the President.

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# U.S. Anti-Terror Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report

## Introduction

Central to a global strategy for combating terrorism is defining the threat and understanding who the enemy is. "Terrorism" as a generic concept is too vague and amorphous to design a strategy against. Moreover, terrorism, though often perceived as a threat, is perhaps better characterized as a tactic or a process. An important point made by the 9/11 Commission is that the strategic threat faced by the United States and its allies is from an enemy consisting of certain groups and with a specific ideology and with stated objectives. In the words of the Commission: "The enemy goes beyond al Qaeda to include the radical ideological movement, inspired in part by al Qaeda, that has spawned other terrorist groups and violence. Thus our strategy must match our means to two ends: dismantling the al Qaeda network and, in the long term, prevailing over the ideology that contributes to Islamist terrorism."[1]

A comprehensive national anti-terror strategy must address many issues. Included are the appropriate roles for military force, law enforcement, intelligence, diplomacy, economic development, education, promotion of social and political equality, and nation and institution building within the context of policies promoting national security. *Tactically*, in the short term, how does one employ the wide portfolio of tools available to policymakers to reduce pressing and immediate threats? *Strategically*, in the long term, how does one win "hearts and minds"? In addition, a strategy ideally attracts allies. How does one both maximize international "buy-in" and national effectiveness?

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism addresses these issues.[2] The recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, as they relate to strategy content and implementation, appear consistent with, and supportive of, the National Strategy.[3]

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[1] The 9/11Commission Report, Executive Summary, p.16-17. [http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/index.html].

[2] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html]

[3] Note, that in contrast to the 9/11 Commission's recommendations, the National Strategy does not deal with the issue of government organizational structure to combat terrorism.

# National Strategy for Combating Terrorism

## Framework

On February 14, 2003, the White House released the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, a 30-page interagency document.[4] The intent of the strategy is to stop terrorist attacks against the United States, its citizens, its interests, and U.S. friends and allies around the world, as well as to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists and their supporters.

The strategy emphasizes that all instruments of U.S. power — diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information dissemination, intelligence, and military — are to be called upon in combating international terrorism. The strategy fits into the wider strategic concept of "defense-in-depth," which projects four concentric rings of defense against terrorist attacks against the United States.[5]

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism is designed to complement other elements of the National Security Strategy[6] including sub-strategies for homeland security, weapons of mass destruction, cyberspace, critical infrastructure protection, and drug control. While the National Strategy for Homeland Security[7] focuses on preventing terrorist attacks within the United States, the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism focuses on identifying and defusing threats before they reach U.S. borders. Incorporated in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism is a strong preemptive component, a strong focus on reducing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and a defense-in-depth framework.

While pre-emption and military force remain important components, the strategy recognizes that the war on terror will not be won on the military battlefield and gives policy emphasis to strategic long-term policy components. Earlier Bush Administration draft versions of the strategy had placed even heavier emphasis on international law enforcement cooperation as a policy pillar.

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[4] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html]

[5] The outermost ring consists of diplomatic, military, and intelligence organizations, operating mostly overseas. One goal of these organizations is to help pre-empt attacks on the U.S. homeland. In the 2003 plan, organizations such as the Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Coast Guard — all of which are now incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security — constituted the next ring, which focuses on U.S. borders and the goods and people that cross them. The next ring includes federal, state, and local law enforcement, "first responders" such as the fire service, and the National Guard. These operate for the most part within U.S. borders and are responsible for protecting towns and cities. Private citizens, who are being asked to report suspicious activity and take preventive action to reduce vulnerability to perilous situations, are part of this ring also. The final ring includes the private sector and federal agencies that play a key role in safeguarding the facilities that comprise critical physical infrastructures (e.g., transportation, financial, telecommunications, and energy systems).
See [http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2003/Dec/31-646035.html]

[6] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf]

[7] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland/book/nat_strat_hls.pdf]

The strategy details a desired end state where the scope and capabilities of global terrorist organizations are downscaled to such an extent that they become localized, unorganized, unsponsored, and rare enough that they can be almost exclusively dealt with by criminal law enforcement. To accomplish this mission, emphasis is placed on international action by "working with the willing, enabling the weak, persuading the reluctant, and compelling the unwilling."[8] One aspect of the strategy is that economic development is formally enumerated as an important factor in reducing conditions that terrorists exploit. The strategy also raises the priority of using information programs to de-legitimize terrorism.

## Strategy Elements

The Administration's 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism is founded on four pillars — **defeating, denying, diminishing, and defending**.

- **Together with U.S. allies, defeating terrorists by attacking their sanctuaries; leadership; command, control, and communications; material support; and finances**. Components include (1) identifying and locating terrorists by making optimal use of all intelligence sources, foreign and U.S., and (2) destroying terrorists and their organizations by capture and detention, use of military power, and through employment of specialized intelligence resources, as well as international cooperation to curb terrorist funding;

- **Denying terrorists state sponsorship, support, and sanctuary/safehavens.** A central strategy objective is to ensure that other states take action against such elements within their sovereign territory. Elements include (1) tailoring strategies to induce individual state sponsors of terrorism to change policies; (2) promoting international standards for combating terrorism; (3) eliminating sanctuaries; and (4) interdicting terrorist ground, air, maritime, and cyber traffic, in order to deny terrorists access to arms, financing, information, WMD materials, sensitive technology, recruits, and funding from illicit drug activities;

- **Diminishing underlying conditions that terrorists exploit, by fostering economic, social, and political development, market-based economies, good governance, and the rule of law.** Emphasis includes (1) partnering with the international community to alleviate conditions leading to failed states that breed terrorism; and (2) using public information initiatives to de-legitimize terrorism; and

- **Defending U.S. citizens and interests at home and abroad to include protection of physical and cyber infrastructures.**

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[8] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html], Introduction.

Inherent in these four pillars are the following components:

First and foremost is an **intelligence component**. Counterterrorism requires sound intelligence. Since 9/11, the United States has sought to identify and implement measures designed to better merge domestic with foreign intelligence.[9]

Increasingly, U.S. counter-terrorism strategy incorporates a **law enforcement** component, subject, however, to restrictions found in the Posse Comitatus Act and the Homeland Security Act that limit involvement of the military in domestic law enforcement.[10] Central to the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism is law enforcement cooperation. For example, since September 11, 2001, the FBI has initiated cooperative programs with Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and other nations aimed at apprehending suspected terrorists and has shared expertise and technology with the law enforcement agencies of these nations. An increasingly important component of law enforcement cooperation involves curbing terrorist financing.[11]

U.S. counterterrorism policy also has a strong **economic component** with both defensive and preemptive characteristics. On the defensive side much attention is being given to minimize disruption of the American economy by protecting economic infrastructures. A major function of the Department of Homeland Security [DHS] is to assess the vulnerability of critical infrastructures. Supporting such efforts is a growing use of risk analysis and threat matrices.

On the preemptive side of the economic component, since 9/11, combating global terrorism has become one of the top priorities of U.S. foreign assistance.[12] The Bush Administration has launched a new foreign aid program, the Millennium Challenge Account which would increase foreign economic assistance starting in FY2004 to a level which would be $5 billion higher by FY2006. Currently, U.S. economic aid worldwide totals $12.87 billion. Aid would go to countries that have demonstrated sound development practices and over time the new aid would be limited to countries with a per capita annual income of less than $2,975. For

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[9] For example, The USA Patriot Act was passed and signed, the interagency Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) was formed, as was the 9/11 Commission.

[10] See CRS Report RS21012, *Terrorism — Some Legal Restrictions on Military Assistance to Domestic Authorities Following a Terrorist Attack*, by Charles Doyle and Jennifer Elsea, and CRS Report RS20590, *The Posse Comitatus Act and Related Matters: A Sketch*, by Jennifer Elsea.

[11] See CRS Report RS21902, *Terrorist Financing: the 9/11 Commission Recommendation*, by Martin A. Weiss, and CRS Report RL32499, *Saudi Arabia: Terrorist Financing Issues,* by Alfred Prados and Christopher Blanchard.

[12] [http://www.congress.gov/brbk/html/ebter85.html]. In addition to aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the U.S. has provided roughly $ 14 billion to 24 other "front-line" states in the global war on terror since September 11, 2001.

FY2004, Congress appropriated $994 million for this account; the FY2005 budget proposes $2.5 billion with a commitment for $5 billion in FY2006.[13]

Also evident is a growing **counter-drug component**. In the wake of the events of September 11th, the international community has placed emphasis on curbing financing of terrorist groups, and has dramatically enhanced efforts to limit and seize sources of terrorist funding[14]. This has spawned renewed focus on the narcotics trade as a source of funding for such groups. Even in instances where groups do not actively work together, the synergy of their separate operations and shared efforts at destabilization pose an increasing threat.[15]

In addition, there is a **military component**. This military component is reflected in the war in Iraq;[16] U.S. operations in Afghanistan; deployment of U.S. forces around the Horn of Africa, to Djibouti, and the former Soviet Republic of Georgia; and ongoing military exercises in Colombia. The U.S. is also undergoing a shift in overseas base locations to tactically support a more flexible strategy allowing for extended global military reach.[17]

On the home front, U.S. policy increasingly has a **homeland security focus**. The Department of Homeland Security was the biggest reorganization of the federal government in America's history, incorporating 22 government agencies and some 179,000 people into a single organization charged with coordinating the nation's domestic response to terrorism. The budget of the new department is roughly equal in amount to 10% of the nation's defense budget. For FY2003, approximately 44% of federal law enforcement positions and 48% of federal law enforcement funding were transferred to DHS.[18]

Central to the U.S. Government approach to combating terrorism is **globalizing threat reduction** and **counter-proliferation** of WMD and delivery systems. On May 31, 2003, President Bush proposed a Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) aimed at keeping WMD materials out of the hands of terrorists and rogue nations.[19]

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[13] See CRS Report RL32427, *Millennium Challenge Account: Implementation of a New U.S. Foreign Aid Initiative* by Larry Nowels.

[14] On May 14, 2004, Ministers from 33 nations announced reauthorization for 8 more years of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the group that coordinates the global fight against terrorist finance and money laundering.

[15] See CRS Issue Brief IB88093*, Drug Control: International Policy and Approaches*, by Raphael Perl.

[16] Note, however, that although some see the Iraq war as anti-terrorism connected, others vehemently disagree.

[17] See CRS Issue Brief IB10119, *Terrorism and National Security: Issues and Trends*, by Raphael Perl.

[18] Note that the Department of Justice and more specifically the FBI, organizations with important homeland security functions, were not merged into DHS.

[19] See [http://www.state.gov/t/np/rls/fs/32725.htm]

Since then, 16 nations have pledged their cooperation in interdicting shipments of weapons of mass destruction-related materials.[20]

# The 9/11 Commission Report

On July 22, 2004, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States ["9/11 Commission"] issued its final report.[21] Included are forty-one recommendations for changing the way the government is organized to combat terrorism and how it prioritizes its efforts. Many of the Commission's recommendations are consistent with elements of the Administration's February 14, 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism[22], such as diplomacy and counter-proliferation efforts, preemption, intelligence and information fusion, winning hearts and minds — including not only public diplomacy, but also policies that encourage development and more open societies, law enforcement cooperation, and defending the homeland.[23]

The 9/11 Commission's recommendations generally fall into the categories of (1) preemption [attacking terrorists and combating the growth of Islamic terrorism]; (2) protecting against and preparing for attacks; (3) coordination and unity of operational planning, intelligence and sharing of information; (4) enhancing, through centralization, congressional effectiveness of intelligence and counter-terrorism oversight, authorization, and appropriations; (5) centralizing congressional oversight and review of homeland security activities; and (6) increasing FBI, DOD, and DHS capacity to assess terrorist threats and their concomitant response strategies and capabilities. The report specifically recommends confronting openly problems in the U.S.- Saudi relationship, read by some to include such issues as terrorist financing and the issue of ideological incitement. The report also recommends sustaining aid to Pakistan and Afghanistan, which are perceived to be vital geo-strategic allies in the global war on terror.

Prominent in the report are specific recommendations calling for (1) creation of a more unified congressional committee structure for oversight, authorization, and appropriations involving intelligence and counterterrorism (e.g., a joint committee or separate committees in each chamber — possibly combining authorizing and appropriating authorities); (2) creation of a single principal point of congressional oversight and review for homeland security; (3) creation of a position of National

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[20] See CRS Report RS21881, *Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI),* by Sharon Squassoni.

[21] [http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/index.htmlm].
Note that many of the Commission's findings are consistent with generic findings contained in a series of pre-9/11 reports, such as the June 5, 2000 congressionally mandated report of the bi-partisan National Commission on Terrorism; see CRS Report RS20598, *National Commission on Terrorism Report: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Raphael Perl.

[22] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html].

[23] See also: [http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2003/Dec/31-646035.html].

Intelligence Director (NID) in the Office of the President; and (4) creation of a National Counterterrorism Center. The National Intelligence Director, as envisioned by the 9/11 Commission, would exercise some degree of control of intelligence agencies across the federal government, propose and execute a unified intelligence budget, and serve as principal intelligence adviser to the President.[24] The National Counterterrorism Center, in the view of the Commission, should be the central office for intelligence gathering, analysis, and overall counterterrorism operations.

Mirroring Commission recommendations, on August 2, 2004, President Bush urged Congress to create the position of a National Intelligence Director — a position separate from that of CIA Director — to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, and to serve at the pleasure of the President. The Director would serve as the President's principal intelligence advisor, overseeing and coordinating the foreign and domestic activities of the intelligence community. The President also announced plans to establish a National Counter-Terrorism Center — a move envisioned as building on the analytical work of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center. The new center is envisioned as serving as a central knowledge bank for information about known and suspected terrorists and would be charged with coordinating and monitoring counter-terrorism plans and activities of all government agencies, and preparing the daily terrorism threat report for the President and senior officials.[25]

On December 17, 2004, President Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Prevention Act of 2004 (S. 2845, P.L. 108-458) establishing the position of National Intelligence Director (a position separate from that of the CIA Director) to serve as the President's principal intelligence advisor, overseeing and coordinating the foreign and domestic activities of the intelligence community. Established as well is a National Counterterrorism Center designed to serve as a central knowledge bank for information about known and suspected terrorists and to coordinate and monitor counterterrorism plans and activities of all government agencies. The Center will also be responsible for preparing the daily terrorism threat report for the President.

Some, however, are concerned that the newly created National Intelligence Director (NID), as an integral part of the President's team, might be more vulnerable to political pressure.[26] Central to this debate is a desire to maintain the independence

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[24] Note that the prickly issue of the extent of the NID's authority over agencies, and their budgets is as of yet undetermined. See CRS Report RL32506, *The Position of Director of National Intelligence: Issues for Congress*, by Alfred Cumming.

[25] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/print/20040802-2.html].

[26] Conversation with Peter Probst, Vice-President and Director of Research for the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, August 8, 2004. For purposes of historical assessment, note that examples of a close relationship between the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) and the White House are arguably documented in Plan of Attack by Bob Woodward. New York : Simon & Schuster, 2004, 467 p. See also: CRS Report RS21696, *U.S. Intelligence and Policymaking: The Iraq Experience*, by Richard Best.

of objective intelligence from administration policy goals.[27] As the proposed National Intelligence Director would have access to both domestic and foreign intelligence, another concern is the overall power wielded by the proposed position and its potential for abuse.[28]

## Issues Regarding the 2003 National Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report

Given the potential access by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, designing effective responses to terrorism may well be the greatest challenge facing governments today. Bedeviling policymakers is how to combat effectively this growing global phenomenon with sufficient intelligence support and at a sustainable level of economic, social, and political cost. Inherent in this policy debate are two overarching issues: (1) how to ensure protection of civil liberties while enhancing security, and (2) how to deal with the seemingly unending costs of enhancing security.[29] Critical to both these issues is the development of a methodology to measure the adequacy of antiterrorism efforts, an issue not addressed in the 2003 National Strategy, or in the 9/11 Commission report recommendations.

In this regard, some raise concern that creation of positions or structures in government where domestic and foreign intelligence are coordinated or fused — such as the National Intelligence Director and National Counter-Terrorism Center — will result in encroachments on civil liberties. Clearly as a nation, they say, the United States does not seek to defend freedom abroad and ignore it at home. On the other hand, others counter that providing security in today's increasingly borderless world is a basic responsibility of governments to their citizenry. Without intelligence gathering and analysis that adequately detects an increasingly intertwined continuum of threats of both foreign and domestic origin, they say, policymakers may find themselves at a major disadvantage in implementing strategies to counter such threats.

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[27] See press release of Senator Carl Levin, "The Intelligence Community Was Only Half the Problem," July 15, 2004. [http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/release.cfm?id=224062]

[28] See generally, August 4, 2004 hearing of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on the September 11 Commission Recommendations.

[29] For a variety of material relating to the 9/11 Commission Report, see the CRS website [http://www.crs.gov/products/browse/is-terrorism.shtml]. For the 9/11 Commission report see:[http://www.gpoaccess.gov/911/index.html]. Note that the 9/11 Commission recommendation on p. 391-392 of the 9/11 Report refers to "hard choices" in allocating limited resources and refers to use of "risk based" priorities for evaluating and identifying transportation assets needing protection. Moreover, the recommendation on p.396 begins with the wording "Homeland security assistance should be based strictly on assessment of risks and vulnerabilities." Such recommendations are based, however, on the premise that threat based vulnerability assessment methodologies exist, or can be developed, which are able to assess terrorist risk.

Concern also exists over the potential for seemingly limitless economic costs of security associated with homeland defense. No sizeable nation can afford the cost of fortifying every square inch of its territory from terror attacks, so as the 9/11 Commission recommends, both strategy and implementation policies must wisely prioritize allocation of resources for counterterrorism and homeland defense.[30]

Complicating these efforts, governments and terrorists may be fighting "different" wars. Policymakers often view success against terrorism in terms of minimizing physical damage — death, injury, and destruction of property — and concentrate their energy and resources in this area. On the other hand, terrorists, while seeking physical damage, may also view success in abstract or ideological terms. For example, what is the impact of an action on recruitment? How does it affect government policies or the stability of the government in power? What is the impact of an act of terrorism on the economy of a nation or on global economic networks? What is the impact on behavioral patterns of a target population? Might the public pressure government to pursue policies that appease terror? The question arises, how long can democratic governments pursue policies that pressure terrorists if such policies are seen as bringing on terrorist retaliation? Breaking or weakening this political will is likely to be a central terrorist goal.

Some well thought out strategies promote holding the line on terrorism or setting it back. But a potential danger in formalized strategies such as the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism[31] is that the strategy may rigidly dictate the response instead of the threat dictating the response — as the threat is often rapidly evolving. One option for policymakers charged with combating terrorism is to design flexibility into strategies, organizational structures, and funding utilization.

While strategies or changes in governmental organizational structures such as those recommended for the intelligence community by the 9/11 Commission may accelerate success against global terrorism, other factors are equally critical as well. Strong national leadership and a high quality of rank-and-file personnel and technology are central, as is the strong political will of leadership and the general population. Hence, one potential pitfall of relying on strategies and reforms involving restructuring of government organizations is that a focus on implementing strategies or administrative changes may overshadow other important factors such as quality of personnel and technology. In particular, this human factor may warrant more attention in an environment where organizations may feel pressed to find personnel to fill a plethora of newly created counter-terror related positions.

Overall, the 9/11 Commission recommendations share many features of the Administration's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism. The theme of using a portfolio of "all elements of national power" resounds in both documents. Both documents emphasize the core importance of timely and actionable intelligence. Both emphasize a need for pre-emptive strategy, for attacking terrorists and their organizations, for international cooperation, for foreign economic assistance, for winning hearts and minds, for strengthening counter-proliferation efforts, for

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[30] See 9/11 Commission recommendations on pages 391-992, and 396.

[31] [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html]

attacking terrorist financing, for denying sanctuaries, and for border security.[32] Pursuit of government policies that draw potential recruits away from terrorist agendas is a core recommendation of the 9/11 Commission report.[33]

Some, however, see certain Commission recommendations as incomplete, if not flawed. They suggest that the Commission is often focused on the "last war" and not a future one, and liken the Commission's recommendations to picking the "low hanging fruit on the tree while avoiding going after the higher — more difficult to reach, yet richer — clusters."[34] For example, the Commission, as its first recommendation, suggests identifying and prioritizing terrorist sanctuaries with a focus on failed states. Some assert, however, that terrorists increasingly return to their politically stable home countries for sanctuary where they blend into local communities, where their training camps are in civilian housing complexes, and where their bomb factories are in private residences. In another recommendation, the Commission suggests that vigorous efforts to track terrorist financing remain front and center, yet does not address the prickly, and growing, issue of use of the *hawalah* system by terrorist networks.[35]

A number of the Commission's recommendations fall within the category of preventing the growth of Islamist extremism and both the 2003 National Strategy and the 9/11 Commission Report to a large degree equate the terrorist threat with al Qaeda and affiliated groups. However, a valid question is the degree to which, if at all, such a single-minded approach detracts attention from individuals or groups with other motivations that may soon appear on the horizon. Another issue central to combating Islamist extremism, not addressed in the 2003 National Strategy or the 9/11 Commission recommendations, is that of confronting incitement to terrorism when promoted, countenanced, or facilitated by the action, or inaction, of nation states.[36]

Although, the 2003 National Strategy and the 9/11 Commission both support the use of foreign assistance as a means of taking away fertile breeding ground for

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[32] Note that it is widely recognized that terrorists are especially vulnerable to law enforcement activity while in transit. To exploit this vulnerability, targeting travel is given special emphasis in the 9/11 Commission's recommendations.

[33] See generally 9/11Commission recommendations under the heading "Prevent the Continued Growth of Islamist Terrorism", pp.374-383 of the Commission Report.

[34] Conversation with Peter Probst, Vice-President and Director of Research for the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, August 8, 2004.

[35] CRS/Probst conversation, August 8, 2004. Note that Commission indicates that an important purpose of targeting terror financing is to gather information on terror networks and coalitions and to raise the costs of raising money (in terms of financial expenditures and organizational energy) to al Qaeda and other groups. Moreover, the Report (p.283) suggests that if al Qaeda is replaced by smaller decentralized groups, the assumption that terrorists need a financial support network may become outdated. Another benefit of targeting financing, not mentioned in the report, is that it may prove useful as a coalition building tool.

[36] See generally, Commission recommendations pages 374-379 and specifically the recommendation relating to the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia, p.374.

the nurturing of terrorist groups, the question of a correlation between standard of living levels and terrorism is open to debate.[37] Nevertheless, there is a growing recognition in U.S. anti-terrorism strategy that poverty can breed ignorance and despair and that despair can be exploited to support terrorist goals.[38]

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[37] The question arises, to what degree is it economically sustainable — for even the richest nations — to raise world standard of living levels to a plateau where social, ethnic, religious, economic, or political grievances do not vent themselves in terrorist movements or acts? Note also that Usama bin Ladin can hardly be characterized as poor, nor can many of his major financial supporters.

[38] See "Expert Sees More Proactive U.S. Policy Against Terrorism", U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, July 2, 2002. [http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/02070204.htm]