

Fear Cannot Counter Terror

In his 2006 book titled *Unconquerable Nation*, world-renowned terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins assesses the state of U.S. counterterrorism efforts. He argues that the “global war on terror” has conflated too many threats and lumped together too many missions. The focus of U.S. counterterrorism efforts must return to the destruction of the jihadist enterprise. The war on terror cannot be the sole framework for American foreign policy.

Homeland security should move beyond gates and guards and become the impetus for rebuilding America’s decaying infrastructure, he adds. Americans should adopt a realistic approach to risk and become more sophisticated about security. Instead of stoking fear, government should fire up citizen participation in emergency preparedness and response.

Strategic Principles for Defeating the Enemy

Destroy the jihadist enterprise. Terrorist operational capabilities have been reduced since 2001, but the jihadists have proven to be adaptable, resilient, and capable of continued action. The global jihadist enterprise remains the primary immediate threat to U.S. national security.

Conserve resources for a long war. Resources that must be conserved include blood, treasure, the will of the American people, and the support of allies.

Wage more-effective political warfare. Political warfare should target those on their way into enemy ranks, those among the ranks who might be persuaded to quit, and those in custody. In dealing with the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, political warfare should accept local accommodations to reduce violence, offer amnesties to induce divisions and defections, and cut deals to co-opt enemies. It must be ferociously pragmatic.

Break the cycle of jihadism. The U.S. strategy must address the entire jihadist cycle, from entry to exit (see figure). Insufficient attention has been paid to defeating radicalization, indoctrination, and recruitment at the front end or dealing with detainees at the back end.

Impede recruitment. Recruiting sites can be shut down or kept so obviously under surveillance that potential recruits see them as unsafe. Respected communicators can counter jihadist

Abstract

Five years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, terrorism expert Brian Michael Jenkins finds that progress in the global counterterrorist campaign has neither dented the determination of the jihadists nor blunted the appeal of their ideology. In America, official reactions to terrorism have often increased the national anxiety. Jenkins proposes one set of strategic principles for defeating the enemy and another set for strengthening America. He underscores the need to attack the terror, not just the terrorists.

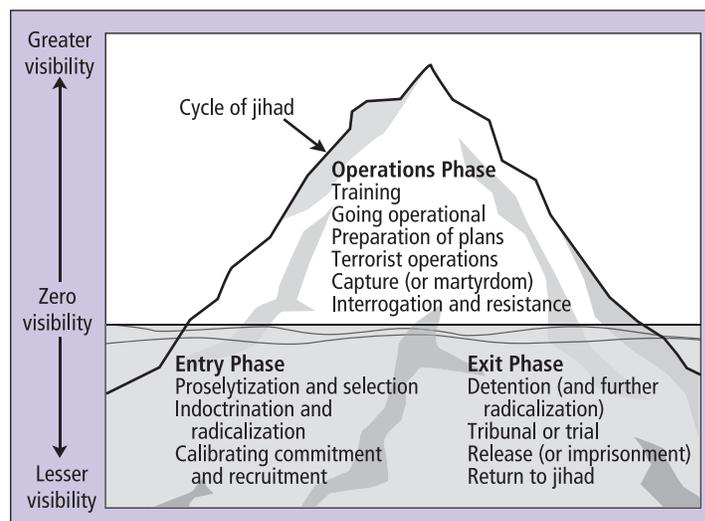
recruiters. False recruiting sites can be set up. Recantations and denunciations can be elicited and broadcast.

Encourage defections and facilitate exits. Even the ranks of fanatics include potential defectors who might quit if offered a safe way out. The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program during the Vietnam War persuaded more than 100,000 enemy soldiers to defect to the South Vietnamese side by offering them amnesty, cash, job training, and homes.

Persuade detainees to renounce terrorism. Those in custody should be offered the opportunity to quit jihad, repent, and publicly recant. Rehabilitation, especially if it can be used to discourage jihadist recruiting, is more important than prosecution.

Maintain international cooperation. International cooperation is a prerequisite to success, a precious commodity not to be squandered by bullying, unreciprocated demands, indifference

American Counterterrorist Efforts Focus on Jihadist Operations but Overlook Phases in the Jihadist Cycle That Fall Below the Surface



to local realities, or actions that repel even America's closest friends.

Rebuild Afghanistan. Investing even modest resources could have a big effect. America learned the lesson of neglecting Afghanistan once. America cannot walk away again.

Preserve but narrow the principle of preemption. It is important to distinguish between preemptive action and preemptive war. Preemption should be limited to precise actions, not regime changes, and should be used only as a last resort.

Reserve the right to retaliate—a muscular deterrent. America's adversaries should be forewarned that a bioterrorist or nuclear terrorist attack would fuel a demand for all-out warfare against any group or government known to be or even suspected of being responsible.

Strategic Principles for Strengthening America

Get realistic about risk. The most realistic danger is that relatively minor terrorist attacks involving lethal chemicals or small amounts of radioactive material might still produce mass psychological effects, inciting panic and social disorder, which could cause more casualties than the attacks themselves. This is where public preparedness comes in.

Enlist the public. The goal should be to inform all teenagers, adults, and able-bodied senior citizens how to take care of themselves first, then their families, and then their neighbors who need assistance. Citizen volunteers could be assigned emergency roles.

Become more sophisticated about security. America cannot protect everything, everywhere, all the time. Americans must formulate broad security strategies that estimate comparative risks and establish priorities.

Favor security investments that help rebuild America's infrastructure. Funding should favor investments that yield benefits even if no attack occurs. Improving the nation's public health and emergency care systems are two obvious examples.

Improve local intelligence. Local police departments need to be given sufficient resources for intelligence collection and

analysis, which differ from making cases for prosecution. Local police also need to be connected with other police departments, at home and abroad, and with the national intelligence apparatus.

Build a better legal framework for preventive interventions. The USA Patriot Act expands the definition of providing "material assistance" to a terrorist group, an offense that courts appear to be interpreting broadly. Meanwhile, the president has asserted wartime authority to detain suspected terrorists and hold them indefinitely, without judicial review. However, this type of extrajudicial action opens the way for abuses of innocent people. Carefully crafted legislation is needed to provide better legal alternatives.

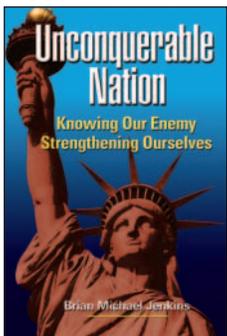
Guarantee oversight. The Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act of 1978 placed U.S. electronic surveillance and physical searches under the jurisdiction of special courts. But after 9/11, the U.S. administration chose to bypass those courts and the related oversight procedures. To eliminate all external review by courts or legislative bodies on the grounds of executive authority in wartime is to assert unlimited presidential power, which is incompatible with the practice of democracy.

Preserve American values. "Whatever we do . . . must be consistent with our values, and here I think we in America are in some danger," warns Jenkins. "We have too readily accepted assertions of executive authority as necessary for our security. We have confused the appropriate need to gather intelligence with the rejection of all rules that govern collection. We have yielded too much to fear, and it is fear that could destroy us."

Jenkins concludes: "We cannot claim to be a nation of laws, a champion of democracy, when we too easily accept a disturbing pattern of ignoring inconvenient rules, justifying our actions by extraordinary circumstances, readily resorting to extrajudicial actions based on broad assertions of unlimited executive authority, and espousing public arguments against any constraints on how we treat those in our custody. The defense of democracy demands the defense of democracy's ideals. To ignore this is to risk alienation and isolation. And defeat." ■

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