

# The War of Ideas

## How the U.S. Can Defeat al-Qaeda

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A large portion of the debate about al-Qaeda has centered on the idea that al-Qaeda hates the U.S. for what it is and what it stands for – its democratic form of government, individual freedoms, religious tolerance, and equal rights for women. Some have argued that extremist religious beliefs are the reason for al-Qaeda's hatred of the U.S. Others contend that economic reasons provide the root cause of terrorism. If only, proponents argue, a solid economic foundation could be laid in place – low unemployment, a strong middle class, and a GDP per capita on par with other middle class countries – then most otherwise “moderate” people would not be drawn to terrorism. Numerous world leaders have argued that economic distress leads to terrorism, including President Bush, who said “We fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror,”<sup>1</sup> and Tony Blair, who stated that “...the dragon's teeth of terrorism are planted in the fertile soil of wrongs unrighted ...[and] of poverty and deprivation.”<sup>2</sup> Former head of the World Bank James Wolfensohn went further: “...the war [on terror] will not be won until we have come to grips with the problem of poverty and thus the source of discontent. ... The disease is the discontent seething in Islam and, more generally, the world of the poor.”<sup>3</sup> Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Jordan's King Abdullah, and others have echoed similar

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<sup>1</sup> George Bush, “Remarks by the President at United Nations Financing For Development Conference” (Cintermex Convention Center, Monterrey, Mexico, March 22, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Tony Blair, “Speech by the Prime Minister at the Lord Mayor's Banquet,” (London, England, November 12, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Alan B. Kruger, *What Makes A Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.

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sentiments tying poverty to terrorism.<sup>4</sup> However, a variety of academic authors have consistently laid to rest these claims.

Conventional wisdom of the few available studies of suicide terrorism in general have been based on either religious indoctrination or psychological predisposition. Yet, religious indoctrination does not account for the explicitly secular Tamil Tigers suicide bombing campaign against the government of Sri Lanka, a group that has accounted for more suicide attacks than any other since 1980. Nor does it account for the secular Kurdish PKK, which is guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology. Finally, it does not explain the secular or communist groups of the Middle East such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the Lebanese National Resistance Front, the Lebanese Communist Party, or the Syrian National Socialist Party, all of whom committed a multitude of suicide attacks. Overall, Islamic fundamentalism is associated with about half of all suicide attacks between 1980-2005.<sup>5</sup> As to the other side of conventional wisdom, if psychological predisposition were indeed the cause, then the individual would likely commit suicide anyway. Further, psychologists cannot explain why suicide attacks only occur in certain societies at certain times.<sup>6</sup> Psychological factors also cannot explain why suicide attackers come from educated as well as uneducated families, are both married and single, are both male and female, and are both young and old.

However, scholars have shown that deep poverty, though an attractive explanation at first, is a poor answer for understanding the causes of suicide terrorism.<sup>7</sup> Examining the World Bank's World Development Indicators of "Economic and Human Development Indicators for Countries and Areas Associated with Suicide Terrorism from 1980 to 2001" shows that countries who have produced populations which have turned to terrorism tend to without exception have a higher GNP per capita and a longer life expectancy than those of eco-

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

<sup>5</sup> Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005), 16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism," *BNER Working Paper 9074* (2002): 34.

nominically poor countries who were not associated with terrorism between 1980 and 2001.<sup>8</sup> Tellingly, Middle Easterners who support terrorism tend to come from more educated backgrounds, whereas Middle Easterners with minimal education or uneducated backgrounds tend to not support terrorism.<sup>9</sup> A similar trend appears when studying the population by income quartile, whereby results show that generally, the wealthier portions of society are drawn to terrorism.<sup>10</sup> Other studies have also shown that being unemployed specifically does not induce people to commit terrorism, where in fact the unemployed were the least likely of a variety of occupations to become involved in terrorism.<sup>11</sup>

These studies are supported by a variety of other academic work which notes that terrorists tend to have more education on average, very few are illiterate, and terrorists typically come from the middle class.<sup>12</sup> Notably, bin Laden is a well-learned billionaire and al-Zawahiri is a doctor; both are from well-educated, wealthy, well-known families.<sup>13</sup> Fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia – which is also the country with the most al-Qaeda members – which is a well-off OPEC nation, not an economically undeveloped country like Somali or Bangladesh.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, not only do the economically deprived not turn to terrorism, but evidence exists to suggest that terrorism causes poverty through the devastation and destruction of tourism, utilities, or food and service industries.<sup>15</sup> Discrimination can equally be discredited as an explanation, as it fails to account for the many more Muslims who are discriminated

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<sup>8</sup> World Bank, "World Bank's World Development Indicators, 2000," World Bank website, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,menuPK:232599~pagePK:64133170~piPK:64133498~theSitePK:239419,00.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Kruger, 25- 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Rex A. Hudson and Federal Research Staff of the Library of Congress, *Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why: The 1999 Government Report on Profiling Terrorists* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 1999), 75-76.

<sup>13</sup> Tawfik Hawmid, *Inside Jihad: Understanding and Confronting Radical Islam* (Abdelhamid, 2008), 42-61.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 58.

against yet do not turn to terrorism, and it does not explain why non-Muslims who are discriminated against do not become terrorists.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the absence of democracy, though a popular political solution, cannot accurately be identified as a root cause of terrorism. Many Muslims and Arab Christians experience a lack of democracy in their societies yet do not turn to terrorism. The establishment of a predominantly secular democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Lebanon has not yielded an abatement of extremist violence and certainly does not account for homegrown terrorists in western countries. Finally, a Salafi (an extremist brand of Islam) influenced population has been shown statistically not to be an indicator of terrorism.<sup>17</sup> In short, the most common explanations for the root causes of terrorism are also the most fallacious.

It is worth noting here that each of the four “antidotes” prescribed in the White House’s National Security Strategy 2006 are inconsistent with the academic literature. Three of its stated causes of terrorism are invalid (political alienation, grievances blamed on others, and subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation) and the fourth, radical Islam, is more of an enabler than a source, and the four corresponding responses all relate to the spread of democracy,<sup>18</sup> presuming that democracy is a panacea for terrorism, which is also the cornerstone of the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.<sup>19</sup> While the expansion of legitimate, authentic, self-sustaining democracy is clearly in America’s national interest for a myriad of reasons, it does not cure terrorism.

What then, is the *raison d’être* of al-Qaeda? Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and al-Qaeda have repeatedly stated why they declared war on the U.S. Al-Qaeda has been clear in telling the world that it is fighting the U.S. because of American foreign policy decisions, namely its placement of U.S. military personnel in Muslim countries – not because it disagrees with the foundations of Western

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 59-61.

<sup>17</sup> Pape, 111.

<sup>18</sup> White House, “National Security Strategy 2006,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>.

<sup>19</sup> White House, “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>.

civilization. Al-Qaeda makes itself appear sanctioned by its radical version of Islam which give the false cover of legitimacy to the group.

In one address, bin Laden stated, "...whether America escalates or de-escalates the conflict, we will reply in kind. ... They will target key sectors of your economy until you stop your injustice and aggression or until the more short-lived of us die."<sup>20</sup> Later, bin Laden claimed that the U.S. showed "no understanding" of the New York and Washington attacks because the U.S. was not changing its policies.<sup>21</sup> Time and again, bin Laden has railed against the U.S. for the "calamity" of "...occupying ... the land of the two holy cities."<sup>22</sup> In November 2001, bin Laden stated, "This is why I used to say that if [the Muslims] do not have security, the Americans also will not have it. This is a very simple formula. ... this is the formula of live and let live."<sup>23</sup> Al-Zawahiri also embraces this line of thinking. In an April 2008 videotape address, when asked if al-Qaeda had further plans to attack countries that participated in the Iraq war, he responded, "'Yes! We think that any country that has joined aggression on Muslims must be deterred.'"<sup>24</sup> Simply put, bin Laden asked "Why are we waging jihad against you? The answer to that question is very simple. Because you attacked us and continue to attack us."<sup>25</sup>

Bin Laden did not declare war on the U.S. because he hates secular democracy; his goal is to deter the U.S. from using military force. This is the same phenomenon that caused the mujahedeen to fight the Soviet Union – they fought not because the Soviets were atheists and communists, but because the Soviets invaded a Muslim country. Max Abrahms concurs that al-Qaeda targets the U.S for its actions and that bin Laden has been consistent in this message since the late 1990s in his study "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," citing authors as varied

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<sup>20</sup> Usama Bin Laden, "Statement by Usama bin Laden," *Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television*; October 6, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Schauer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington: Potomac Books Inc., 2004), 17.

<sup>22</sup> Bin Laden, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Hamid Mir, "U.S. Using Chemical Weapons-Usama Bin Ladin," *Ausaf*, November 10, 2001, 1, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Maggie Michael, "Al-Qaida No. 2 says 9/11 theory propagated by Iran," *The Associated Press*, April 22, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Schauer, 131.

as Peter Bergen, Daniel Byman, Jessica Stern, Michael Schauer, Assaf Moghadam, Steve Simon, and Daniel Benjamin.<sup>26</sup> Abrahms also clearly lays out al-Qaeda's stated intentions, which include deterring the U.S. from future action which harms Muslims, ending U.S. support for pro-western Middle East regimes, and destroying Israel,<sup>27</sup> quoting bin Laden as saying their terrorist attacks are a response to the fact that "you spoil our security [and] attack us."<sup>28</sup> Others go further, adding that bin Laden's foreign policy intentions include: ending U.S. aid to Israel and establishing an Islamic Palestinian state; withdrawal of all U.S. and European troops from the Arabian peninsula; ending all U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan; and to restore the Islamic Caliphate.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Qaeda leaders envision the restored Caliphate – an image that conjures up the golden age of Islamic civilization for Muslims – in a totalitarian state similar to the Taliban regime.<sup>30</sup> Essentially, al-Qaeda is employing a transnational religious identity to gain broad support with a sacred symbol in order to achieve a specific goal with a very limited appeal. Their plan for success is to hit the U.S. economy as hard and as often as possible. Al-Qaeda believes they can bankrupt the U.S. and force a region-wide withdrawal of forces by draining U.S. financial resources. In an essay online published by al-Qaeda terrorist Abu-Ubayd al-Qurashi called "A Lesson in War," al-Qurashi adapts Clausewitz's principle of attacking an enemy's "center of gravity" and to do so against the U.S. today by attacking the financial sector.<sup>31</sup>

Bin Laden employs this track of jihad because he genuinely believes that Islam is under attack from America and, in response, is performing his Muslim duty by waging a defensive jihad. (The attack by infidels is what triggers the jihad, not the call by a religious lead-

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<sup>26</sup> Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* (Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006): 66-67.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>28</sup> Schauer, 153.

<sup>29</sup> Schauer, 210.

<sup>30</sup> General David H. Petraeus, Lt. General James F. Amos, and Lt. Colonel John A. Nagl, *The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>31</sup> Schauer, 101.

er.<sup>32</sup>) It is not the call to jihad but rather the repeated, clear articulation of painting the U.S. as attacking Islam that makes bin Laden's strategy effective. Notably, religion is rarely the root cause, but rather a tool used for recruitment and gaining broader ideological support.<sup>33</sup>

Some experts propagate the theory that the presence of a perceived (whether actual or not) foreign military occupation is the common denominator in all campaigns of suicide terrorism. The goal, which is secular and strategic, of the organized suicide attack campaign is to compel a democratic country to withdraw its forces because democracies, unlike autocracies or dictatorships, are uniquely susceptible to terrorism.

Al-Qaeda has successfully tapped into broad anger towards secular, corrupt, repressive Muslim regimes, but focused their organization on the "far enemy" (the U.S.) rather than the "near enemy" (the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan – and most ominously, Israel, especially due to its occupation of the Palestinian territories). Bin Laden also draws heavily from the Koran for religious inspiration in order to broaden al-Qaeda's message and appeal. Perhaps most publicized is that bin Laden effectively utilizes historical grievances against Muslims to gain acceptance of his message while offering an alternative to the mainstream way of life, particularly for those who look for someone to stand up to the U.S. Though impossible to concretely determine, al-Qaeda also enjoys support in the form of thousands of sympathizers of those who may not support terrorism but are generally anti-American. Though it is less capable of pulling off spectacular attacks than it was pre-9/11, its cause is far more popular<sup>34</sup> and still poses a lethal, truculent threat to the U.S. Indeed, al-Qaeda's greatest success was not 9/11 – though it was a grim tragedy of global proportions – but rather the widespread adoption of its ideology.

In the eyes of the Muslim world, bin Laden is often perceived as an Islamic hero because of his defense of Islam, personal piety, physi-

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<sup>32</sup> Schauer, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Pape, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: A Better Way to Fight Global Jihad*, (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2007), 2.

cal bravery, integrity, and generosity.<sup>35</sup> It is also likely that there are hundreds of thousands of both Muslims and non-Muslims who oppose the U.S. for a variety of reasons – foreign policy, ethical, environmental, globalization, etc. – and applaud bin Laden for rhetorically defying the U.S. while militarily attacking it. Rather tellingly, in 2002, one of the most common names for newborn Muslim males was Usama.<sup>36</sup> More importantly, bin Laden and al-Qaeda's stature continue to resonate with anyone who can get to an internet café due to the widespread expansion of the internet in recent years. Finally, on the topic of suicide attacks, much of the Muslim world perceives these incidents as acts of heroic bravery, patriotism, sacrifice, and piety that should be praised, respected, and emulated.<sup>37</sup>

To help promulgate this message, al-Qaeda has developed a sophisticated propaganda machine. Recently, al-Qaeda has launched al-Sahab ("the clouds," a reference to the skyscraping mountains of Afghanistan), its media branch to assist its marketing and recruitment efforts. Computer technicians with advanced degrees are being recruited to aid the media portfolio, and some of its productions rival western media.<sup>38</sup> Postings are often in three languages (Arabic, Urdu, and English), with "...professionally edited documentaries or television news broadcasts, with flashy graphics, maps in the background and split screens."<sup>39</sup> Notably, the productions do not require elaborate studio equipment – only a laptop, generators, and the right software – and using a USB stick at an internet café and disguising the server to electronically hide with a "proxy server," terrorists can evade U.S. surveillance and detection. Worse, incriminating files are not stored on laptops but are sent and stored in pieces on various servers.<sup>40</sup> The use of the internet enables al-Qaeda to reach a broader, global audience without utilizing satellite television that may be edited or is only available in Arabic and in the Middle East.

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Schauer, 104.

<sup>36</sup> James Kitfield, "Breaking al-Qaeda Means Getting bin Laden," *National Journal*, (2002): 34-96.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Schauer, 135.

<sup>38</sup> Associated Press. "Al Qaeda looking for a few media-savvy geeks," *Associated Press*, March 5, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Associated Press.

<sup>40</sup> Associated Press.



Widespread support in the Muslim world for bin Laden has demonstrated al-Qaeda's successful communication and the resonance of its message. The quagmires of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay served only to bolster al-Qaeda's cause and sully America's reputation. Though al-Qaeda tries to change the terms of the debate to U.S. prison abuse, the communications issue a fundamental difference of reaching the target audience. As Richard Holbrooke once asked, "How has one man in a cave managed to outcommunicate the world's greatest communications society?"<sup>41</sup> This sentiment has been repeatedly echoed, including by Defense Secretary Gates in November 2007, "It is just plain embarrassing that al Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the Internet than America."<sup>42</sup> Al-Sahab has been an enormous boon to al-Qaeda's effective communication efforts, producing 58 videos in 2006 and 97 in 2007 – a six-fold increase over 2005, when just 16 videos were produced, 13 in 2004, 11 in 2003, and six in 2002.<sup>43</sup> The massive increase in resources pushed towards this arena signifies that the al-Qaeda leadership recognizes the importance of the war of ideas. Another reason for al-Qaeda's communication success is that the U.S. did not take the al-Qaeda communications threat seriously in its infant stages and missed early opportunities to disrupt their systems.<sup>44</sup> Regrettably, the U.S. has been unsuccessful in tracking the video traces back to their origins – a tactic that worked against Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah, who was killed in an airstrike 36 hours after giving a television interview in May 2007, as well as al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed two months after showing his face on video for the first time.<sup>45</sup>

The U.S. may be faring poorly in the communications department, but it hasn't ignored it, either. Al-Hurra, the U.S.-funded 24-hour news network channel in the Middle East, has after four years in existence barely any viewers and is widely regarded as a flop in the Arab world. The station has been plagued by "...mediocre programming,

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<sup>41</sup> Bernd Debusmann, "Polishing al Qaeda's brand image," *Reuters*, April 23, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Debusmann.

<sup>43</sup> Craig Whitlock, "Al-Qaeda's Growing Online Offensive," *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2008, News section.

<sup>44</sup> Whitlock.

<sup>45</sup> Whitlock.

congressional interference and a succession of executives who either had little experience in television or could not speak Arabic," as well as numerous journalistic blunders.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the Cold War where Eastern Europeans could not get any news, Middle Easterners have a wide variety of television and news channels to choose from, and worse, al-Hurra is broadly perceived as boring, out of touch with common people, and tends to produce programs that have no resonance with a Middle East audience.<sup>47</sup> Other than al-Hurra, there has been a lack of a sustained, substantive effort aimed at producing a real, objective alternative to news networks like al-Jazeera as well as a general dearth of a direly needed comprehensive public relations campaign in the region.

From the homeland perspective, there has been much speculation in the U.S. as to why al-Qaeda has not pulled off another attack within the U.S. since 9/11. Five primary reasons help explain this absence. First, since 9/11 there have been numerous U.S. targets in Iraq and Afghanistan which are far easier to hit than targets inside the U.S. Perhaps more importantly, these targets carry serious weight because if there are enough attacks, then the U.S. may be inclined to withdraw from those countries, thus handing al-Qaeda and franchises a tremendous victory. Second, bin Laden has turned his attention towards Europe in order to drive the U.S.-led coalition apart one country at a time. This not only makes the endeavor more expensive in terms of both blood and treasure to America, but it puts the Europeans on notice that they are targets too, if only secondary targets, as would be suggested by the fact that bin Laden offered Europe a truce following the Madrid attacks.<sup>48</sup> Third, al-Qaeda is an extremely patient network with a penchant for spectacular attacks. In order to satisfy their leadership and guarantee continued recruitment, their next terrorist attack plan in the U.S. needs to be on a similar scale as 9/11. Al-Qaeda called off attacks in 2003 on the New York City subway because it would not

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<sup>46</sup> Whitlock.

<sup>47</sup> Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Network Falters in Mideast Mission," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2008, News section.

<sup>48</sup> Schauer, 147.

have been "...sufficiently inspiring to serve al-Qaeda's ambitions."<sup>49</sup> Fourth, domestic security improvements as well as law enforcement vigilance have been significantly enhanced. One example is Lyman Faris' aborted 2003 plot to sever the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge with a blowtorch, proof of which came when authorities intercepted a message from him to his overseas contact stating that the authorities were too close.<sup>50</sup> Naturally, it is difficult to accurately measure the extent to which these plots *could have* proceeded under pre-9/11 conditions, but without a doubt, they have played an important role in preventing al-Qaeda terrorism. Fifth and perhaps most obviously, U.S. military, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic tools have disrupted the planning and operations of al-Qaeda operations and leadership significantly. However, following 9/11, al-Qaeda leadership believes that its next attack must entail a similarly monumental psychological impact.

Al-Qaeda has also maintained a steady flow of recruits entering its organization. The al-Qaeda network has been described as "...larger, more ethnically diverse, more geographically dispersed, younger, richer, better educated, better led, more military trained and combat experience than any terrorist group in history."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, today even more militants are drawn to al-Qaeda's cause due to the internet. In the meantime, supporters and recruits are drawn to the movement because they view their own goals as compatible with the larger al-Qaeda agenda. Their success in recruiting is at least in part due to their flexibility as a network to appeal to wider, more diverse audiences since 9/11 and its resiliency, highlighted by the immediate replacing of captured or killed commanders and its hydra-like structure.<sup>52</sup> Tellingly, in July 2007, U.S. intelligence agencies warned that

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<sup>49</sup> Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "U.S. Adapts Cold-War Idea to Fight Terrorists," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2008, News section.

<sup>50</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Schauer, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Sebastian Rotella, "Dangerous, endangered: A Look Inside Al Qaeda," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 2008, News section.

al-Qaeda had “protected or regenerated” its leadership and capabilities with its safe haven in the tribal regions of Pakistan.<sup>53</sup>

Discomfortingly, al-Qaeda has maintained a strong base of willing volunteers. Their deadly attacks have been undertaken in the Middle East, East Africa, North Africa, Southeast Asia, South Central Asia, Russia, Western Europe, and of course, the U.S. Alarming, not only have recruits been in no short supply, but DCIA Hayden stated publicly that there are on-going, consolidated efforts by al-Qaeda aimed at recruiting western-looking individuals so that they would not appear suspicious in the U.S. or when attempting to enter the U.S.<sup>54</sup> Another advantage this provides al-Qaeda is that most western countries are on the U.S. visa waiver list, so if recruited, their first encounter with U.S. officials would be at a port of entry. Additionally, al-Qaeda has a strong incentive to recruit Americans for symbolic purposes in addition to having an expatriate who can tailor their messages to target audiences in the U.S. Adam Gadahn, known as “Azzam the American” has performed exactly this role for al-Qaeda’s propaganda machine.

In sum, al-Qaeda is a ruthless, ambitious, resilient, flexible, patient and extremely lethal enemy network with global reach, a penchant for spectacular attacks and an ideological pull that resonates worldwide. Al-Qaeda presents a unique threat to the United States that is nearly sui generis in modern history. Understanding the threat it poses today is a necessary prerequisite to devising a strategy to defeat it.

### *A Plan for Defeating al-Qaeda*

“There is no substitute for victory.” (General Douglas MacArthur)

During the American Civil War, Confederate General Robert E. Lee correctly observed that to win, the Confederacy only needed to survive; without scoring a decisive victory, the Confederacy would even-

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<sup>53</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070717\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, “The New Face of Terror: Is Al Qaeda recruiting Westerners to get past U.S. security?” *Newsweek*, April 2, 2008.

tually become a fact of life and the North's will would wear thin. Similarly, in order for the U.S. to defeat al-Qaeda, it must score a decisive victory against hard core al-Qaeda terrorists. Dragging the war on without making significant, tangible progress against al-Qaeda operatives and relevant gains in the war of ideas will only serve to extend al-Qaeda's lease on life.

Al-Qaeda will not be defeated by the U.S. engaging in a nebulous "war on terror." Rather than declaring a "war on communism" during the Cold War, the U.S. articulated a carefully calculated policy of containment that drew broad, bipartisan political support. Many European countries had and still have communist parties in Parliament. Moreover, terrorism has existed worldwide for at least 2,000 years and is unlikely to end anytime soon. Looking to U.S. history, it should be clear that the results derived from declaring war on poverty and war on drugs brought marginal benefits and are widely seen as failures. The U.S. has not pursued every terrorist organization worldwide the way it has al-Qaeda, and if al-Qaeda were to forswear the use of terrorism, the U.S. would not make peace with or relinquish the battle against al-Qaeda for the simple reason that America's problem is not with terrorism per se; it is with al-Qaeda. Terror is a tactic and tactics can never be permanently prevented or defeated; an organization or network can. Al-Qaeda can be defeated by a sustained, intense and focused commitment from the U.S.

There are two main branches of the approach to defeating al-Qaeda. The first branch is dealing with those that are currently irreconcilable terrorists, already radicalized, and pose a threat to U.S. interests. Combating this branch involves projecting and deploying military power, enhancing intelligence capabilities, strengthening homeland defense, eliminating safe havens, and minimizing the terrorist's ideological base of support in order to kill or capture hardcore al-Qaeda members. The second branch involves freezing and reversing the increasing radicalization across the Muslim world to prevent would-be future terrorists today and in the future. Winning this branch of the war requires the U.S. to win the war of ideas, which entails robust public diplomacy, increasing cultural exchanges, building multi-lateralism solutions, and a serious public relations campaign. Ultimately, the key will be not to radicalize the moderate population

when attacking the radicals. As Naval Postgraduate School research professor Thomas Johnson said, “‘The [tribal] Pashtuns have a saying: ‘Kill one person, make 10 enemies.’ ... This is a war in which the more people you kill, the faster you lose.”<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the war against al-Qaeda militants can be won decisively while combating its ideology will likely be a generational struggle that will revolve around containing and then rolling back the ideological threat.

### *Combating Radicals and Militants*

Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell stated clearly in February 2008 that “...al-Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates continue to pose significant threats to the U.S. at home and abroad, and al-Qaeda’s central leadership based in the border area of Pakistan is its most dangerous component.” There is no question that al-Qaeda absolutely must be defeated as a terrorist network. Currently, the U.S. is on the offensive engaging the enemy, but it is not winning and the enemy is strengthening. Though the exact number is unknown, it is widely believed that al-Qaeda terrorists number in the hundreds.<sup>56</sup> Similar to combating an insurgency, not winning over the long term amounts to losing,<sup>57</sup> and attacking recruiting appeals will be important. Some of the key elements in encouraging youth to join the organization include the suppression of critical thinking about Islam, sexual deprivation, and the promise of virgins in paradise.<sup>58</sup> Al-Qaeda spreads the message that Islam is in a state of war, a war that has been thrust upon them by the West. In it, it is the job of every Muslim to defend Islam. The goal for Islamic defenders is to battle infidels until all non-believers convert, submit to sharia or die, according to Ayman al-Zawahiri.<sup>59</sup> The U.S. can and currently is working

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<sup>55</sup> Robin Wright and Joby Warrick, “U.S. Steps Up Unilateral Strikes in Pakistan,” *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2008; News section.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: A Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2007), 9.

<sup>57</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush At War, Part III: State of Denial* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 373.

<sup>58</sup> Hawmid, 33-35.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 41.

with local religious leaders who promote peace and tolerance. These efforts should expand and continue.

Disrupting plans and operations will keep al-Qaeda terrorists off-balance. It is even better to regularly alter the strategic environment they operate in,<sup>60</sup> which would prevent terrorists from plotting, training, and executing plans. Anything that can be done to make a terrorist's life more difficult is worthwhile because the more time al-Qaeda has to spend locating sources of income, recruiting radicals, obtaining fraudulent documents, acquiring weapons or changing cell phones is less time that they have to focus on terrorist attacks. Though effective counter-terrorism tactics, these methods are only a few pieces of the puzzle. A well-known adage for combating terrorism states that a goalie can stop 99 shots out of 100, but the one that gets through is fatal, and ultimately the only way to win is to take the opponent off the field altogether. Simply put, al-Qaeda must not be allowed to maintain a sanctuary anywhere in the world.

Better intelligence sources are needed to successfully rollback al-Qaeda. This will be an inherently difficult task not only because of the nature of intelligence gathering, but also because penetrating terrorist networks is a categorically different game than developing sources in the Kremlin. During the Cold War, the U.S. faced an equally powerful nation-state, and intelligence sources were developed by enticing Soviet officials who had little (if any) choice in their profession and may have welcomed the opportunity to defect to the U.S. America does not hold this appeal to al-Qaeda members; in fact, the very idea is anathema to its members. Inducing a fervent, absolutist terrorist to defect – individuals who deliberately chose their affiliation with that organization, and who believe that it is a religious duty – is nearly impossible, making human intelligence inside the group almost an insurmountable challenge. Penetrating terrorist networks is further complicated due to the intense secrecy surrounding its activities; for example, only a handful of bin Laden's senior-most deputies knew where he was sleeping on any given night or knew the date of the 9/11 attacks in advance. It is unreasonable to expect that a small, tight-knit group people who have spent years or sometimes decades

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<sup>60</sup> Byman, 53.

training for war against the U.S. to one day turn in their closest friends and leaders they admire most.

It is little wonder, then, that al-Qaeda has proven to be quite impervious to spies, as its internal security is based upon lifelong relationships and family and tribal ties and loyalties.<sup>61</sup> Many former intelligence officials have pointed out that successful infiltrations can end up assigned for suicide missions or murder, which government officials have an obligation to prevent. At the same time, intelligence officials run the risk of blowing the cover of undercover operatives. In January 2008, Spanish police arrested a group of suspected terrorists in Barcelona and disclosed in court that the arrest was prompted by a Pakistani French informant – forcing France to withdraw him – but from Spain's perspective, waiting until after an attack would be a tragedy.<sup>62</sup> Joining the organization is no easy task and often requires personal references from movement sympathizers and current al-Qaeda members, and the network often avoids entirely recruiting certain nationalities or categories of people altogether, such as Algeria because it was assumed that they were penetrated by that country's security forces.

The U.S. can and will have to be more persuasive in recruiting sources from the local community who may be able to help pinpoint the location of al-Qaeda members. There is a reason why no one has claimed the \$25 million dollar bounty on bin Laden or al-Zawahiri's head. Al-Qaeda members are extremely popular in large swaths of territory in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), particularly Waziristan, as well as the Northwest Frontier Province. Al-Qaeda is very well protected by the population who at best is willing to turn a blind eye to al-Qaeda's presence and at worst, view the group as world heroes. Establishing intelligence sources are naturally a long-term endeavor and undercover operations are further challenging for the U.S. in the mountainous, lawless, isolated region of the FATA – a far cry from cocktail party recruitment of a western Soviet official in a lavish European hotel. Locals in isolated villages all know each other and never betray fellow Pashtun to outsiders. Intelligence

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<sup>61</sup> Craig Whitlock, "After a Decade at War With West, Al-Qaeda Still Impervious to Spies," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2008, News section.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



will also improve as relations improve with foreign countries and vice versa. As terror experts have noted, "...foreign liaison is the single greatest element of successful counterterrorism [due to] numbers, legal authorities and means of influence."<sup>63</sup>

Negotiating with terrorists is an extremely dangerous game and is not advisable for a number of reasons, most of all because it only encourages more terrorism. Pakistan negotiating with the warlords allied with al-Qaeda militants in Waziristan and the tribal regions, Columbia negotiating with the FARC, and Spain negotiating with ETA are all recent examples of peace talks bestowing legitimacy on the terrorist group and their tactics of kidnapping and murder of innocents, allowing time for the terrorist organizations to regroup, re-arm, replenish their ranks, and embolden them further. It would be a glaring signal of U.S. weakness that it cannot eliminate terrorists that strike the U.S. homeland and therefore has to "surrender" (in the enemy's eyes). Negotiations would make al-Qaeda appear legitimate and worse, a multitude of other terrorist groups would likely follow suit. Negotiations with al-Qaeda must be out of the question.

Economic sanctions and pressure are also important tools to utilize against al-Qaeda. It is well known that terrorist operations are inexpensive to mount – the Bali bombings cost less than \$35,000, the *USS Cole* operation about \$50,000 and the 9/11 attacks between \$400,000 – \$500,000.<sup>64</sup> Understandably, it is not an overwhelming challenge for al-Qaeda to fund its operations over time with the movement of smaller amounts of money, concomitant with the use of the hawala banking system and money transfers from charity organizations, donations and fund raising. Al-Qaeda has multiple sources to obtain finances. However, when the U.S. does attack the money trail, it signals to other countries that the U.S. is committed and other countries may be more willing to cooperate. The U.S. has a number of tools at its disposal, including: blocking the sources of funding; freezing assets of terrorists as well as terrorist supporters; preventing ter-

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<sup>63</sup> Daniel Byman, "Six Years Later: Innovative Approaches to Defeating Al Qaeda" (paper presented to Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, February 14, 2008).

<sup>64</sup> 9/11 Commission, "Staff Report No. 16," in *9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

rorist access of the international monetary system; ensuring charities are not funneling money to terrorists; and stopping asset movement through alternative systems.<sup>65</sup> These efforts must be expanded in both scope and nature.

*The War of Ideas: Hearts and Minds*

The war for the hearts and minds of the Muslim world will be crucial to defeating the brutal, murderous ideology promoted by al-Qaeda. Alarming, al-Qaeda's greatest success has been the widespread adoption of its ideology. The U.S. must uproot this development and alter the conditions which allow it to flourish.

Many of the theories on how to "defeat" terrorism suffer the fallacy of believing that all terrorism is monolithic; however, nothing could be further from the truth, as terrorism is by no means derived from the same center of power or ideology. Radical Shiism differs from radical Sunnism. State-directed terror differs from non-state actor terror; terrorism directed against the U.S. differs from terrorism aimed at Middle Eastern Arab governments and Israel. Atheistic, communist, polytheist, and Hindu terrorist organizations differ from Muslim terrorist organizations. Terrorists waging a civil war against one nation differ from worldwide terror organizations who are fighting larger causes and multiple enemies. Policymakers must understand the broad divisions and significant diversity across terrorist groups before they can combat the al-Qaeda threat.

Notably, al-Qaeda supporters are also not monolithic<sup>66</sup> and Islamic extremist terrorists are also not monolithic. Terrorists vary widely in the nature of their identity (religious, national, and political), extent of goals (limited or absolutist), target choice (civilian or military), and most varied of all, their methods (degree of coerciveness, kidnapping, assassination, negotiation circumstances, and relationships with foreign entities). Remarkably, top military brass either did not recognize or act upon this important distinction in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. As has been well documented, senior Penta-

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<sup>65</sup> White House, 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Byman, 9.

gon leadership sought to take the fight beyond Afghanistan before the Afghanistan invasion was even launched in order to, as then Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld indicated, "...demonstrate that the United States had the guile to hit enemies when and where they did not expect it."<sup>67</sup> In the words of then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, "We were not going to solve this problem by focusing narrowly on the perpetrators of 9/11. Rumsfeld wanted some way to organize the military action so that it signaled that the global conflict would not be over if we struck one good blow in Afghanistan."<sup>68</sup> This conflation of a lump-sum terrorist organization inaccurately portrays the al-Qaeda threat as operating in conjunction with other terrorist groups. Differentiations between terrorist groups and within terrorist groups need to be made – and in al-Qaeda's case, distinctions between franchises. Though published in January 2008 with the benefit of hindsight, even the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) "Terminology to Define the Terrorists" paper writes in its first recommendation to "...respond to ideologies that exploit Islam without labeling all terrorist groups as a single enemy."<sup>69</sup> Strategically, it would be a colossal mistake to treat all terrorists the same, while feeding the notion that al-Qaeda somehow represents all Muslims and has some underlying moral legitimacy.

The language used in describing al-Qaeda activities is of enormous importance. In April 2008, the U.S. government officially dropped the term "jihadist" and "Islamofascism" as well as referring to al-Qaeda as a "movement" from its lexicon in order to delegitimize al-Qaeda's actions and thus lessen al-Qaeda's appeal and shift to the use of "terrorist" or "violent extremist."<sup>70</sup> The term "jihadist" implies an aura of religious credibility that boosts terrorists' standing among Muslims by portraying them as legitimate, brave fighters defending their faith from foreign attackers, such as mujahe-

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<sup>67</sup> Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, "Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims," (Department of Homeland Security, January 2008).

<sup>70</sup> Matthew Lee, "'Jihadist' booted from government lexicon," *Associated Press*, April 25, 2008.

deen defending Afghanistan from the Soviet invasion. Though long overdue, this move is beneficial and should be implemented government-wide because it is vital to deny legitimacy to terrorists that they do not have and desperately seek.

Again, that sentiment was echoed by DHS, which also recommended the discontinuation of using the term “moderate” to describe Muslims who do not condone terrorism, as it implies that there is some inherent problem with Islam. If a moderate is someone who does not commit terrorist acts, then most terrorists would be moderate until the moment of the attack. If a moderate is someone who is non-Salafist, then there will be a distinction between “mild” Salafists and more hardcore members;<sup>71</sup> instead, it is recommended to use the terms “mainstream, ordinary, or traditional,” as individuals may adhere to fundamentalist doctrines, yet abhor violence. Further, “moderate” has become offensive to many Muslims because of the perception that it refers to those that the U.S. prefers to deal with.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, it would be prudent to abstain from using the term “takfirism.” Takfirism refers to the practice of declaring a Muslim a non-believer (“kafir”), thus making “acceptable” and providing moral justification for the ending of their lives. Al-Qaeda employs this tactic extensively to name all Muslims who reject their ideology as apostates, believing that this condones their being killed.<sup>73</sup>

Regarding the communications struggle with al-Qaeda, there have been positive developments from the U.S. strategic point of view. First, al-Qaeda’s longterm goals for world reorganization are not appealing to the vast majority of Muslims. In places where al-Qaeda has gained a foothold, the local population which had embraced al-Qaeda typically later turned on them. Northwest Pakistan, which brought al-Qaeda members to power in elections, saw their support fall dramatically after their administrations were disastrous and local conditions deteriorated; al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Sunni Awakening is another example. As DCIA Hayden noted in June 2008, “Despite this ‘cause célèbre’ phenomenon, fundamentally no one really liked al-Qaeda’s

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<sup>71</sup> Hawmid, 109.

<sup>72</sup> Department of Homeland Security, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Department of Homeland Security, 2008.

vision of the future.”<sup>74</sup> Second, al-Qaeda’s appeal has dropped significantly in countries where al-Qaeda attacks have taken place. In countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, al-Qaeda’s popular support plummeted after attacks there killed many locals, leading some to suggest that Muslims may support al-Qaeda so long as their attacks take place elsewhere. Al-Qaeda struck Jordan in 2005, Saudi Arabia in 2003, and Pakistan a number of times but most recently was responsible for the assassination of former Prime Minister Bhutto in 2007 – all of which coincided with a drop in local support of al-Qaeda. In short, al-Qaeda is its own worst enemy when it attempts to expand its influence.

Most of the victims of al-Qaeda bombings have been Muslims.<sup>75</sup> Emphasizing this fact to Muslim audiences will help cut al-Qaeda’s base of moral support. Because al-Qaeda leaders believe strongly in takfirism, many Muslims have been killed by al-Qaeda without remorse. It was not until recently in a video tape address by al-Zawahiri that al-Qaeda claimed that they do not target civilians and that the loss of innocent Muslim life was either “accidental” or Muslims mixing with non-Muslims were “fair game.”<sup>76</sup> The practice of takfirism was officially banned in July 2005 with “The Amman Message,” a conference of over 200 of the world’s leading Islamic scholars, which included both Shia and Sunni; since then, over 500 Islamic scholars worldwide have adopted this ruling.<sup>77</sup>

Portraying al-Qaeda as an enemy of Muslims is a successful component of the strategy to defeat al-Qaeda’s ideology while also preventing the next generation of terrorists from emerging. Deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor for combating terrorism Juan Zarate acknowledged as much, saying “More and more Muslim and Arab populations – [including] clerics and scholars – are questioning the value of al-Qaeda’s program” and noted that former jihadist leaders recently published a series of books

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<sup>74</sup> Joby Warrick, “U.S. Cites Big Gains Against al-Qaeda,” *The Washington Post*, May 30, 2008, News section.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Homeland Security, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Walter Pincus, “U.S., Allies See Progress in Selling Al-Qaeda As an Enemy to the Muslim World,” *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2008, News section.

<sup>77</sup> Department of Homeland Security, 2008.

“...highly critical of al-Qaeda,” which have a strong effect in the Muslim world – if the voice that broadcasts the message is credible and comes from someone other than the U.S.<sup>78</sup> A good example of this was the Saudi grand mufti in October 2007 warning Saudis against unauthorized jihadist activities and lectured against “...funding causes that ‘harm Muslims.’”<sup>79</sup> Former national intelligence officer Paul Pillar qualified this tactic stating that it was difficult to measure, but al-Qaeda’s image affects their “...recruitment, donations and support in Muslim and religious communities.”<sup>80</sup> This message can be reinforced by reiterating that the U.S. is an open society that both tolerates and welcomes individuals of all faiths, including many Muslim Americans who have successfully integrated into American society for many generations. This is highlighted by the motto of the seal of the U.S., “E Pluribus Unum,” which means “Out of Many, One.” The U.S. can push its positive image further and highlight the humanitarian assistance given to tsunami victims by the U.S. – delivered by the U.S. military – in 2004 and relief assistance to Pakistanis following the devastating 2005 earthquake. This type of effort not only wins friends but also counters negative perceptions of the U.S. not doing what is right.<sup>81</sup> Depicting al-Qaeda as an enemy of Muslims should not be difficult because the vast majority of victims from al-Qaeda attacks are Muslims.

While U.S. public diplomacy and cultural exchange programs are helpful and should be expanded, the key turning point will not come when Muslims understand American culture and values, but it will come when Muslims see al-Qaeda as a threat to their own society and do not provide support or sympathize with al-Qaeda – the indicator to watch is the international norm against killing innocent civilians. Recent evidence repeatedly points to this powerful resonance in the Muslim world, as well as al-Qaeda’s recognition of this effect which is potentially enormously devastating to the group and may well trigger its downfall. During a recent television interview, Mustafa Abu al-

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<sup>78</sup> Walter Pincus, “U.S., Allies See Progress in Selling Al-Qaeda As an Enemy to the Muslim World,” *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2008, News section.

<sup>79</sup> Pincus.

<sup>80</sup> Pincus.

<sup>81</sup> Byman, 2008.

Yazid, al-Qaeda's commander of operations in Afghanistan, confirmed that al-Qaeda was responsible for bombing the Danish embassy in Islamabad which killed eight people – all of whom were Muslims – and subsequently noted that “We had chosen a time for the attack when there would no innocent Muslims around.”<sup>82</sup> Al-Qaeda is having a difficult time explaining the deaths of innocent Muslims in its attacks.

Deterrence has been a hotly contested issue in the intelligence community. According to the U.S. National Security Strategy 2002, “...traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy.”<sup>83</sup> But in the 2006 publication of the National Strategy to Combat Terrorism, “A new deterrence calculus combines the need to deter terrorists and supporters from contemplating a WMD attack and, failing that, to dissuade them from actually conducting an attack.”<sup>84</sup> This has led many analysts to believe that the “territory” al-Qaeda holds is largely ideological, and that their standing with Muslims is where the real battle will take place. “By encouraging debate about the moral legitimacy ... we can try to affect the strategic calculus of terrorists,” National Security Advisor Steven Hadley said regarding the popularity and theological motivations of al-Qaeda terrorists.<sup>85</sup> Pentagon special operations official Michael Vickers furthered this logic, stating that “...if we can deter the support network – recruiters, financial supporters, local security providers and states who provide sanctuary – then we can start achieving a deterrent effect on the whole terrorist network and constrain terrorists’ ability to operate.”<sup>86</sup> Applying some level of deterrence is crucial, although this is only one tool against al-Qaeda.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, where al-Qaeda is engaging in an insurgency, the threat can be mitigated with counter-insurgency methods. It has often been noted that insurgencies are 20% military and 80% political. It is necessary to build hospitals, roads, and schools as

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<sup>82</sup> Ilyas Khan, “Al-Qaeda leader in TV interview,” *BBC World News*, July 22, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> White House, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> White House, “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>.

<sup>85</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>86</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

well as provide food and water where appropriate – meeting the population’s basic needs – to win popular support. Refurbishing schools also entails altering the curriculum to include subjects and training to prepare students for jobs rather than an intense focus on religion – a transition taking place in Algeria.<sup>87</sup> Winning hearts and minds also means nation-building. Institutions such as police, judges, penal authorities, political parties, and an independent media and press all need to be established, developed, and then sustained by the host nation for a country to hold together beyond the duration of direct U.S. involvement, in addition to holding free and fair elections. A glaring example of a lack of basic security and needs includes the deterioration of Iraqi society in mid to late 2003, when many citizens joined the insurgency simply because of a lack of adequate running water, electricity, sewage systems, and trash services – issues that were entirely unconnected to the insurgent leaders’ goals.<sup>88</sup> Accounting for past injustices can also foster a sense of peace, resolution, and leave a favorable impression among the population.<sup>89</sup> Success stories against al-Qaeda and affiliates can be seen in southeast Asia, where a combination of “...aggressive policing, improved intelligence, enhanced military operations and an erosion of public support” have amassed to a knock-out blow to al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist networks in Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines.<sup>90</sup> These Southeast Asian nations have been successful in convincing their populations that operations are being conducted by their own governments for their own good, a lesson that could serve the U.S. well, particularly in Pakistan.<sup>91</sup>

Without question, the lack of progress and ultimately the lack of an equitable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a major source of Muslim and extremist frustration and anger with the U.S.

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<sup>87</sup> Michael Slackman, “In Algeria, a Tug of War For Young Minds,” *The International Herald Tribune*, June 23, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> Petraeus, 2007.

<sup>89</sup> James Dobbins, *Nation Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 166.

<sup>90</sup> Eric Schmitt, “Experts See Gains Against Asian Terror Networks,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Jayshree Bajoria, “A Different Tack on Terror,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 25, 2008, Daily Analysis section.



Bin Laden and al-Qaeda have repeatedly cited the existence of a Jewish nation and the subjugation of Palestinians as a cause for jihad. However, despite frequent<sup>92</sup> and timely rhetoric,<sup>93</sup> bin Laden and al-Qaeda have never once attacked Israel; this type of broadcast is likely intended to increase al-Qaeda's ideological support and boost recruitment. Of course, solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not end support for al-Qaeda. It will, however, serve to reduce radicalism, lessen anti-American sentiment, help stabilize a volatile and strategically vital region, and facilitate chipping away at al-Qaeda's appeal. Given the acknowledgement of the paramount status of this issue in the Muslim world and the need for American involvement in the White House's National Security Strategy 2002<sup>94</sup> and 2006,<sup>95</sup> it is curious that the White House waited until November 2007 to get involved. What is certain is that the conflict will not be peacefully resolved without American involvement. Other conflicts and post-conflicts the U.S. should continue and expand assistance to locations including Bosnia, Kosovo, Kashmir and Lebanon.

As has been noted by a number of strategists, worldwide diplomacy will be more effective than military operations in the conflict with al-Qaeda,<sup>96</sup> as U.S. allies are indispensable in combating al-Qaeda. Allied military and police forces are more appropriate to take action against al-Qaeda forces operating within national boundaries of a home country because they are familiar with the territory and people, and they will likely have information and intelligence the U.S. does not. The chances of finding al-Qaeda members and preventing collateral damage increase greatly when a host nation does the work, and can better mitigate any collateral damage that does occur while staving off further anti-American resentment.<sup>97</sup> This has the added benefit of avoiding the appearance of U.S. intervention into the inter-

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<sup>92</sup> Tawfik Hawmid, 68.

<sup>93</sup> Lin Noueihed, "Bin Laden marks Israel Anniversary with Combat Vow," *Reuters*, May 16, 2008.

<sup>94</sup> White House, 2002.

<sup>95</sup> White House, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> Barry Posen, "The Struggle Against Terrorism: Grand Strategy, Strategy and Tactics," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (Winter 2001/2002): 42.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

nal affairs of other nations, especially Muslim nations, a frequently cited reason for anti-American sentiment in the Middle East.

NATO has been and should continue to be a key component of the coalition to battle al-Qaeda. On September 12, 2001, NATO for the first time in its history invoked Article 5,<sup>98</sup> the collective defense clause that served to be the heart of the treaty that helped sow the seeds of the transatlantic alliance. NATO has also developed a Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism which facilitates intelligence sharing and cooperation on border security, terrorism exercises, developing capabilities against a terrorist attack, and mitigating the consequences of an attack.<sup>99</sup> The Military Concept includes military operations for force protection, counter terrorism, and military cooperation, which includes sharing intelligence, standardization of threat warning, assistance in air and maritime protection, and assistance to nations withdrawing their citizens from threatened areas.<sup>100</sup> These positive developments should continue to be procured and NATO should expand its partnerships to combat al-Qaeda.

It will also be vital and prudent to work with the U.N. and the EU to defeat al-Qaeda. Showing a unified, worldwide support against al-Qaeda's ideology will be both a symbolic gesture as well as a shared resources responsibility that will lighten the burden on the U.S. The U.N.'s 1267 Committee was assembled immediately following 9/11 and is an important mechanism set in place to track al-Qaeda. The U.S. should take advantage of every possible opportunity to use the U.N. to further its strategy to defeat al-Qaeda. These actions have practical applications for not overburdening the U.S., showing a wide variety other countries that they too have a stake in the battle against al-Qaeda, and being a strong symbolic gesture of a united world against al-Qaeda.

As a byproduct, working in concert with allies will help rebuild the U.S.'s credibility on the world stage. A first step in this direction could be a renewed focus on human rights, to include closing Guan-

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<sup>98</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Briefing: Response to Terrorism," March 2005.

<sup>99</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, International Military Staff, "NATO's Military Concept for Defense Against Terrorism," April 14, 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

tanamo Bay and writing clear-cut, palatable rules governing al-Qaeda terrorist war criminals, as well as defining which interrogation methods constitute torture and banning them. These steps would be welcomed by the entire world, boost U.S. credibility, help restore U.S. global leadership, and decrease the risk that captured Americans would face torture. It will be equally essential for the U.S. to forge stronger alliances with countries more strategically important to the war against al-Qaeda<sup>101</sup> – countries like Jordan, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Somalia, and Yemen. In a new Middle East facing a resurgent al-Qaeda, the U.S. must build strong partnerships to work towards the common goal of eliminating the al-Qaeda threat. The U.S. must remember that allies are perishable commodities and must never be taken for granted.

The U.S. home front also matters. Homeland defense is a crucially important function of America's battle with al-Qaeda. The mere symbolism, aside from the tragedy surrounding the loss of life and the physical, economic, social, and psychological damage caused by an attack, will have tremendous consequences for the U.S. To fortify its defense, the U.S. cannot and should not attempt to physically protect every possible target nationwide; if the U.S. did, the effort would become "...overstretched, poorly coordinated, and inordinately expensive."<sup>102</sup> Political leaders should prepare the American public for the possibility of smaller target terrorist attacks while protecting the higher priority targets, including national leadership, national symbols, military bases, CBRN facilities, as well as Critical Energy Infrastructure and allot federal funds according to perceived threats. This is not to say that terrorism is inevitable, but rather inevitably *possible*. In the meantime, standard defenses against criminality that are in place or may be upgraded have the ability to serve as protection against terrorism that would simultaneously not drain manpower or waste valuable financial resources.

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<sup>101</sup> Daniel Byman, 2008.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

### *Conclusions*

Throughout U.S. history, a sense of special providence has guided America's foreign policy.<sup>103</sup> This tradition has played itself out from manifest destiny in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the clear sense of purpose that endured during the Cold War. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. is the "...last, best hope of Earth."<sup>104</sup> That same spirit must be summoned and embraced for the U.S. to prevail in its current struggle against al-Qaeda.

The battle against al-Qaeda will be a generational struggle for the United States. It involves combating radical militants as well as winning the war of ideas – both equally important missions in which the U.S. must succeed. A thorough, authentic understanding of the enemy is first needed in order to truly, decisively defeat the al-Qaeda network and ideology. The U.S. can win and must win. By combining military might with an ideology of peace, justice, and tolerance, the U.S. will have created the key for a victorious strategy designed to successfully defeat al-Qaeda forever.

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<sup>103</sup>Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 3-10.

<sup>104</sup>Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, edit., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 241.