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Beyond Bullets:
Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism

Edited By Alice E. Hunt, Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl, Seth D. Rosen
Contributing Authors: Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl, Seth D. Rosen, David Kilcullen, Larry Diamond, Camille Pecastaing, Harvey M. Sapolsky, Daniel Benjamin

Center for a New American Security

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Cover Image

A U.S. Marine provides first aid care for an Afghan man during a patrol through the Helmand province in southern Afghanistan in August 2008.

Photo courtesy of U.S Department of Defense; Cpl. Alex C. Guerra, U.S. Marine Corps.

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About the Solarium Strategy Series

The CNAS Solarium Strategy Series draws its name and inspiration from an effort undertaken by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953. The original Project Solarium was a competitive strategy development process that is credited with helping articulate several pillars of American Cold War strategy. Through a similarly structured process of inclusive debate and extensive analysis, CNAS has developed several strategy documents that are designed to serve as useful inputs to the broader national debate over U.S. national security in the post-September 11 era. They are available online at www.cnas.org.

Beyond Bullets:
Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism

BACKGROUND

To guide future American efforts to counter violent Islamist extremism, the Center for a New American Security launched a strategy development process modeled after President Eisenhower's Project Solarium. CNAS asked five experts to recast the effort in sustainable terms and in a manner consistent with American values. The result was a series of essays that recommended new counterterrorism tools and strategies for the Obama administration.

- Kristin Lord, John Nagl, and Seth Rosen present a comprehensive strategy to combat violent Islamist extremism.
- David Kilcullen recommends a "balanced response" that disaggregates disparate Islamist groups and recalibrates the civilian and military tools of U.S. power.
- Larry Diamond focuses on democratization in the Arab world as a means to staunch the supply of violent extremists and the grievances that inspire them.
- Camille Pecastaing suggests that the U.S. government dismantle the "war on terror," relegate counterterrorism to the jurisdiction of technical government agencies, and educate the American public about the true nature of the threat.
- Harvey Sapolsky proposes a reduction of U.S. military deployments in order to undercut extremist propaganda and conserve limited resources.
- Finally, Daniel Benjamin presents a counterterrorism strategy that would recommit the United States to international legal standards and to expand civilian tools of government, while continuing to track down al Qaeda.

CNAS researchers James Miller and Alice Hunt then convened the authors, along with leading experts and stakeholders from the U.S. government, to debate the merits and challenges of each approach. From these discussions, CNAS researchers crafted a draft strategy and presented it to the authors and outside experts at a second conference. The feedback from that session, along with a series of expert reviews, resulted in the final documents presented in this volume.

BEYOND BULLETS: A PRAGMATIC STRATEGY TO COMBAT VIOLENT ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

By Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl, Seth D. Rosen

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Introduction

Violent Islamist extremism will remain a potent threat to American national security for the foreseeable future. Nearly eight years after the September 11 attacks, al Qaeda retains the capability to launch devastating attacks around the globe, and President Obama has warned publicly that the organization is planning attacks on American soil.[1] Catastrophic terrorism — employing chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons — is a remote but grave risk. Beyond U.S. borders, American interests, including American allies, institutions, and citizens, remain likely targets. From Pakistan to Somalia, a complex assortment of Islamist extremists threatens to destabilize whole countries or regions, potentially unleashing political turmoil, economic distress, and widespread violence. These threats are likely to persist, challenging the United States and its allies throughout the Obama administration and beyond.

To protect vital American interests, our country needs a pragmatic and comprehensive strategy that works to eliminate al Qaeda as a functioning organization and undermines violent Islamist extremism in its many forms. As other national security concerns proliferate, America must re-commit to countering violent extremism by employing an approach that is sustainable, properly resourced, grounded in bipartisan political support, and bolstered by a dense network of partnerships that engages actors both inside and outside of government. This strategy must provide broad strategic direction as well as a coherent roadmap to guide government-wide planning, day-to-day decision making, and budgeting. American policy and its implementation are already moving in the right direction, a process that started in the later years of the Bush administration and now has a new chance for success in the Obama administration.

An effective strategy will engage all appropriate instruments of national power in a cohesive vision for action: military and moral, diplomatic and economic, intelligence and informational. It must thwart the conditions that nurture violent Islamist extremism and work to prevent the recruitment of the next generation of extremists. It must discredit the movement's methods and undermine its credibility, while strengthening the ability of those best positioned to challenge these organizations and ideologies. And it must recognize the variety of motivations and interests that distinguish violent extremist groups, as well as the ideological and organizational threads that pull them together.

"America's government and armed forces cannot and should not be at the center of every effort to combat violent extremism."

America's government and armed forces cannot and should not be at the center of every effort to combat violent extremism. They cannot be all places at all times and, in many instances, less direct measures are more effective. To kill and capture terrorists, foreign intelligence services, militaries, and police forces must often lead. To foster environments hostile to violent extremism, civilians and civilian organizations must assume greater responsibility and strengthen their capacity. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the communities in which violent extremists thrive, the U.S. must draw more effectively on experts outside of the government. In short, the United States must find a new way to combat violent extremism that more effectively engages foreign partners and actors outside of government. Some control will be lost. But that loss will be repaid, many times over, by increased effectiveness. The United States must adapt its role to circumstance, being sometimes a leader, sometimes a quiet supporter, sometimes the coordinator of diverse actors, and sometimes the determined projector of force. America needs all of these capacities to effectively confront violent extremism. In developing them, the U.S. government will create the expertise and networks necessary to protect America against a range of transnational challenges, from nuclear proliferation to transnational crime, pandemic influenza to cyber security.

Despite the all-too-real menace posed by violent Islamist extremism, America must respond without overstating the threat, overspending national resources, reacting in ways that are ultimately counterproductive, or compromising core values. Violent extremism will not be the only threat to American security in the coming years. A reaction that compromises America's moral authority undercuts its power. And, perversely, the threat will become all the more potent if it is exaggerated.

The more time that passes without an attack on American soil, the more this threat will test the commitment of American leaders and the nation's collective patience. The struggle with violent Islamist extremism is likely to be long, with neither a formal declaration of victory from U.S. leaders nor an acknowledgment of defeat by adversaries. Thus, this strategy calls on America's leaders and the American public to put the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in proper perspective and to sustain the will necessary to confront this threat. At a time of abundant challenges—economic, environmental, and security—this will be politically difficult. But to suppress violent extremism, America must gather the political will to take the

threat seriously, mobilize a coherent and unified response, and sustain the public support necessary to win a long and wearying struggle.

This paper seeks to support this effort by presenting:

- A chronology of America's evolving response to violent Islamist extremism
- A clear analysis of the threat
- Strategic principles to guide U.S. actions
- A realistic vision of success
- A comprehensive plan — involving intelligence, diplomacy, military operations, strategic public engagement, law enforcement, finance and development, and homeland defense — to achieve U.S. objectives.

The strategy presented here draws from a competitive policy analysis led by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). Modeled after President Eisenhower's Project Solarium, CNAS asked five experts to examine the threat posed by violent Islamist extremism, to recommend U.S. policies to counter extremism, and then to debate them. This paper distills these insights, and our own views, into a comprehensive strategy to suppress violent Islamist extremism and combat the threat it poses to American interests.[2]

America's Response to Violent Islamist Extremism

America's struggle against violent Islamist extremists began well before September 11, 2001. The February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center marked the beginning of a wave of Islamist attacks against American targets, but the threat failed to earn widespread public or political recognition until the 2001 attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. These attacks shook the public conscience and led the Bush administration to make terrorism the defining centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy. A less well defined third phase began during the second Bush administration, when policy makers adopted a less aggressive tone and emphasized the utility of non-military instruments of national power to combat violent extremism. Under President Obama, U.S. counterterrorism strategy has entered still a new chapter, one that continues some of the previous administration's policies while breaking sharply from others.

"The United States must adapt its role to circumstance, being sometimes a leader, sometimes a quiet supporter, sometimes the coordinator of diverse actors, and sometimes the determined projector of force."

A NEGLECTED THREAT

Despite the efforts of a small group of individuals within the Clinton administration, concerns about the severe threat posed by violent Islamist extremism failed to resonate with politicians and the broader public even after the 1993 attack against the World Trade Center, 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in East Africa, and the 2000 attack against the USS Cole in Yemen. In this context, the administration treated terrorism largely as a law enforcement challenge, an approach reinforced by the threat of domestic terrorism, which earned new attention after the bombing of an Oklahoma City federal building by a U.S. citizen. America's leading law enforcement agency, the FBI,

received an infusion of funding in the mid-to-late 1990s to expand its counterterrorism division, enhance its investigative tools, and strengthen its training programs.[3]

To counter the threat posed by foreign terrorists, the Clinton administration emphasized non-military responses.[4] The Anti-Terrorism Act of 1996 criminalized financial support of designated terrorist organizations by Americans.[5] After the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, a federal grand jury handed down a 238-count indictment against Osama bin Laden and five associates, and the State Department announced a $5 million reward for information leading to bin Laden's capture.[6] An executive order signed by President Clinton imposed economic sanctions on the Afghan Taliban for aiding bin Laden.[7]

The Clinton administration took direct military action against violent extremists sparingly. In retaliation for the 1998 embassy bombings, the United States fired cruise missiles at a bin Laden camp in Afghanistan and the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan. However, national security officials decided not to authorize strikes on several other occasions when the CIA received intelligence reports on bin Laden's location. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, this reluctance stemmed from the uncertainty of intelligence reports, fears of collateral damage, legal questions, the failure of the 1998 strikes, and the partisan climate in Washington.[8] As Samuel Berger, Clinton's national security advisor, told the 9/11 Commission, such decisions were made "from the vantage point of the driver looking through a muddy windshield moving forward, not through a clean rearview mirror."[9]

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, countering terrorism became a central organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy. President George W. Bush rejected the approach of his predecessor, arguing, "Our goal is not to reduce terror to some acceptable level of nuisance. Our goal is to defeat terror by staying on the offensive, destroying terrorists, and spreading freedom and liberty around the world."[10] In a speech to the nation, Bush explained the administration's more forceful approach: "We have learned that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength. They are invited by the perception of weakness."[11]

To counter the threat posed by al Qaeda, the Bush administration launched the "global war on terror." In October 2001, Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan to deprive al Qaeda of its sanctuary and training camps and weaken its command-and-control structure. President Bush later justified the 2003 invasion of Iraq partly because of perceived links between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, a claim later refuted.[12] Because of the emphasis placed on military operations to defeat al Qaeda, the Defense Department and intelligence communities played leading roles. According to the Congressional Research Service, as of July 2008, approximately 94 percent of "war on terror-related" funding had gone to the Defense Department, with only 6 percent spent on foreign assistance and State Department programming.[13]

The administration's focus on countering terrorism influenced policies both at home and abroad. Domestically, the United States invested heavily in homeland security, creating a new government agency devoted to that cause and imposing new restrictions on the movement of goods and people. The passage of the Patriot Act gave law enforcement agencies sweeping power to search communication records without a court order.[14] Internationally, diplomatic priorities and foreign assistance were reconfigured to prioritize relationships that could help counter terrorism. President Bush launched an unprecedented campaign of covert action, detaining thousands of terrorism suspects across the globe and adopting the

practice of extraordinary renditions. A European Parliament report found that at least 1,200 CIA-operated flights had used European airspace for renditions from 2001 to 2005.[15] In order to interrogate terrorism suspects for as long as necessary, the CIA created a secret network of "black site" facilities, some of which were in Eastern Europe.[16] Administration officials approved the use of harsh interrogation methods — including the controversial practice known as waterboarding — from 2002 to 2005 to retrieve information from some detainees.[17]

Advancing democracy — a policy known as the "freedom agenda" — was viewed as a critical component in the fight against Islamist extremism. The violence of September 11, 2001, was seen as a manifestation of the political repression and stagnation that had consumed the Middle East in the preceding decades, creating a breeding ground for radicalism.[18] Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice echoed that refrain in an important speech in Cairo in June 2005: "For 60 years, the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East — and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people."[19] Major new initiatives such as the Middle East Peace Initiative invested millions in democracy promotion.

BEYOND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

America's approach to counterterrorism shifted noticeably during the second Bush administration. Administration officials used less aggressive rhetoric and discussed dropping the phrase "global war on terror" in favor of "global struggle against violent extremism." In a 2005 interview, Stephen J. Hadley, Bush's national security adviser, said that the fight against al Qaeda was "more than just a military war on terror" and that the United States had to combat "the gloomy vision" of the extremists and "offer a positive alternative."[20] Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice ensured that diplomacy played a larger role in America's national security arsenal. One of the president's closest advisors, Karen Hughes, took over the effort to win "hearts and minds." The CIA stopped using harsh interrogation techniques in 2006. That year the president acknowledged that the prison at Guantanamo Bay alienated some allies and provided fodder for extremists and said, "I'd like to close Guantanamo."[21] Robert Gates replaced Donald Rumsfeld as defense secretary, producing a marked change in both style and substance at the Pentagon. Time and again, Gates emphasized the importance of civilian agencies playing a leading role in the struggle against al Qaeda. During a 2007 speech at Kansas State University, he said that, "We must focus our energies beyond the guns and steel of the military, beyond just our brave soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen. We must also focus our energies on the other elements of national power that will be so crucial in the coming years."[22] In the final months of the administration, a new public diplomacy leader, journalist James Glassman, shifted the tone of the "war of ideas" further, observing that this struggle was occurring within the Muslim world and that the United States should step out of the spotlight.[23]

A NEW ERA

The election of President Obama launched a new phase in the U.S. effort to combat violent extremism. Upon entering office, Obama took immediate steps to deprive extremists of anti-American sympathy and public support by issuing executive orders to close the Guantanamo Bay facility and ban the use of interrogation methods he considered torture.[24] He declared his firm intention to draw down troops in Iraq and named a distinguished envoy, former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, to seek progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. In his inaugural address, the president called for America to "seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect" with the world's Muslim populations. He then granted his first formal interview to

an Arab television station, underscoring that "the United States has a stake in the wellbeing of the Muslim world."[25] Additionally, the administration emphasized that concerns about al Qaeda would no longer dominate America's relationship with Muslims worldwide.[26]

"The Obama administration's early days offer a promising foundation on which to build an effective new strategy to counter violent Islamist extremism, one that continues those aspects of the Bush administration's policies worth retaining and rejects sharply those that should not endure."

President Obama also moved rapidly to adopt a new strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the territorial heartland of violent Islamist extremism. That strategy aims to destroy al Qaeda's safe haven in those countries and disrupt its ability to launch future attacks. Referring to al Qaeda's relations with Islamist militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan, General David H. Petraeus indicated that "There is a degree of hierarchy, there is a degree of interconnection, and there is certainly a flow of people, money, expertise, explosives and knowledge."[27] By building the capacity of Afghan and Pakistani institutions, the administration seeks to develop those countries' ability to combat insurgents and terrorism with limited international support and, in the longer term, deliver the services and level of governance necessary to reduce popular support for the insurgency.[28]

To date, President Obama's nascent counterterrorism strategy shows some signs of continuity with his predecessor's. Obama has authorized drone strikes not just on al Qaeda targets in northwest Pakistan, but against the training camps of Pakistani militant Baitullah Mehsud.[29] The Obama administration has also been grappling with how to handle the detainees in Guantanamo who cannot be sent to other countries or brought before a court because of the harsh interrogation techniques used on them. "What do we do with the 50 to 100—probably in that ballpark—who we cannot release and cannot try?" Secretary Gates asked in an April hearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee.[30]

The Obama administration's early days offer a promising foundation on which to build an effective new strategy to counter violent Islamist extremism, one that continues those aspects of the Bush administration's policies worth retaining and rejects sharply those that should not endure. Large numbers of policy makers and national security experts from both parties are likely to find much common ground regarding the contours of the principled and pragmatic new policy to combat violent extremism.

Evolving Adversaries

Though the State Department's list of terrorist organizations is comprised of more than 40 groups, the most dangerous to the United States shroud themselves in the symbols of Islam. The majority of faithful Muslims rejects the violent means of Islamist radicals, decrying them

as heretical to a religion of peace. Yet the radicals' ability to appeal to religious devotion and a common sense of grievance among Muslims is undeniably a source of power, allowing extremists to attract resources, followers, and moral support.

Among Islamist militants, the most serious threat comes from the movement known as al Qaeda, a global network connected by a unifying ideology. The organization's narrative is not one of violence for the sake of violence. It commits terrorism to achieve particular political ends — the withdrawal of U.S. influence, and especially the U.S. military presence, in the Middle East; the overthrow of autocratic Sunni regimes; the eradication of Israel; and the reestablishment of a pan-Arab caliphate. This ideology is predicated on a particular interpretation of history, Islamic theology, and U.S. foreign policy, first outlined in Osama bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans." In this declaration, bin Laden presented set of grievances against the United States and its "agents," which he blames for the suppression and humiliation of the true Muslim faith and Muslims everywhere. The United States, he argued, has propped up autocratic rulers, invaded Muslim lands, supported Israel, repressed the Palestinians, and stationed forces in the holy land of Saudi Arabia.[31]

Al Qaeda has shaped global opinion and radicalized individuals in Muslim communities worldwide, including diaspora communities in the West. Since September 11, al Qaeda's leaders have inspired a steady stream of young men to join the ranks of the global jihad and provided them with training and support. The organization's leaders have employed both traditional and "new" media to promote their narrative and garner influence. "More than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media," Zawahiri wrote in a letter to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the former head of al Qaeda in Iraq. "…We are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma."[32]

The organization has a prodigious propaganda machine — *as-Sahab* — and has skillfully adapted the latest technology, including blogs, YouTube videos, and Web forums, to advance its agenda.[33] Al Qaeda's objective is to spur independent attacks on Western targets without its own direct involvement. Thanks to the Internet, new supporters can be steeped in the ideological beliefs and operational tactics of the movement before ever meeting an al Qaeda operative.

Al Qaeda has maintained a degree of public sympathy and support. According to a February 2009 poll conducted by the coalition of polling groups known as World Public Opinion.org, 21 percent of Egyptians and 16 percent of Pakistanis support al Qaeda's attacks on Americans and the organization's view of the United States.[34] Furthermore, 7 percent of British Muslims, including 13 percent of those 16–24 years old, "admire" the organization.[35] While al Qaeda does not enjoy wide public support in Europe or the United States, a devoted and highly mobilized core is more than sufficient to constitute a threat.

Al Qaeda has evolved into a dispersed and durable network. Whereas before September 11 the organization consisted mainly of a core group of graduates from the Afghan insurgency against the Soviet Union, the movement is now composed of four distinct elements: al Qaeda's central organization, affiliated groups, semi-autonomous actors, and *takfiri*[36] "self-starters."[37] In the words of Bruce Hoffman, al Qaeda now implements both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches. Its leaders encourage "independent thought and action from low- (or lower-) level operatives…[while] issuing orders and still coordinating a far-flung terrorist enterprise."[38] It is important to remember that these four general categories only represent today's al Qaeda. As long as it survives, the movement will evolve and adapt to circumstances.

The al Qaeda Movement

Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda's central organization is composed of a core group of commanders, led by bin Laden and Zawahiri, who live in the rugged terrain of northwest Pakistan. From this base al Qaeda continues to train operatives, deploy recruits, disseminate propaganda and funding, and communicate with cells abroad.[39] Al Qaeda serves as the "inciter in chief" of a movement that links local groups and their missions to a global cause, cloaked in legitimate symbols of religious devotion.[40] It conveys support to a diverse range of actors that it co-opts to serve its own ends. Although numerous al Qaeda leaders have been captured or killed since 2001, the organization possesses a deep bench with operational experience and has had little difficulty generating new leaders.[41] Al Qaeda still holds the aspiration, acumen, and capacity to commit devastating attacks on American targets in the United States and abroad.[42]

Affiliated groups: Since September 11, al Qaeda's collaboration and affiliation with other Islamist extremist organizations has deepened. Al Qaeda often provides money, training, and weapons to these groups, as well as a wider platform to espouse their cause.[43] In return, al Qaeda has channeled these groups' local grievances into the larger narrative of global jihad.[44] Several local organizations have formally adopted the al Qaeda brand name. Prominent among these is the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which transformed in 2007 into al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb. The al-Shabab organization in Somalia has not officially become an al Qaeda franchise, but its leaders regularly state that they share al Qaeda's beliefs, motivations, and objectives. Finally, al Qaeda has enhanced the operational abilities of and provided logistical support to Taliban-linked extremists in Pakistan.

Semi-autonomous actors: These operatives have links to the central organization, often receiving training or seed money. However, they recruit, plan, and execute attacks with little direct guidance from al Qaeda commanders.[45] A prominent example is the group that conducted the London bombings of July 7, 2005.[46] Semi-autonomous extremists and radicalized individuals in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia represent an acute danger to the United States, its allies, and interests. Jonathan Evans, the director general of the United Kingdom's Security Services, said at the end of 2007 that 2,000 British residents posed a threat because of involvement in Islamist terrorist activities—a jump of 400 from the previous year.[47] The possibility that second- or third-generation immigrants, holding European or American passports and thus the ability to circumvent strict screening processes and border controls, will launch terrorist attacks inside the United States is a major concern.

Takfiri "self-starters": The final component of the network of violent Islamist extremists is individuals radicalized by al Qaeda's extreme ideology without any direct connection to the organization. Because they are not tied into the larger movement, *takfiri* entrepreneurs are difficult for intelligence services to identify and thwart. One of the most notorious examples is Mohammed Bouyeri, the Dutch-Moroccan teenager who killed the iconoclastic filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004.

The threat posed by these four groups remains genuine and persistent despite the many plots foiled by U.S. and foreign officials.[48] Of greatest concern, al Qaeda has experimented with chemical and biological agents and demonstrated a long-standing desire to acquire nuclear weapons. Ever mindful of the propaganda value of terrorism, al Qaeda is unlikely to want to signal its own weakness by launching an attack smaller than those of September 11. However, this does not eliminate the possibility of smaller attacks by independent or semi-autonomous groups against targets in the United States or American interests overseas. For example, the September 2008 assault on the U.S. embassy in Yemen, which killed ten guards and civilians, but no Americans, could be a harbinger of future attacks.[49]

Attacks against American allies are likely to continue. Al Qaeda and its affiliates have perpetrated deadly attacks on three continents since September 11, 2001, including attacks in Indonesia, Jordan, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom. European nations face a particularly grave risk due to a small minority of radicalized Muslims within their populations. Some of these second- and third-generation Europeans have extensive connections and easy access to their ancestral homelands in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia, enabling them to receive training and operational guidance from other violent extremists. Al Qaeda remains a significant threat to Iraq's fragile stability. While the organization's support and capabilities have been dramatically degraded, it can still be deeply disruptive, especially in and around Mosul. The planned withdrawal of most U.S. troops in upcoming years opens opportunities for the organization to regenerate and reignite sectarian tensions.

The combined efforts of al Qaeda and local insurgents also imperil the stability of weak states. This endangers not just these nations but also America's larger strategic interests. After all, al Qaeda planned the September 11 attacks from the safe haven of a fragile state. Within the "ungoverned spaces" of weak states, local violent extremist groups can flourish. Yemen, for example, is emerging as a training ground and sanctuary for militants. Furthermore, these areas can serve as a magnet for foreign extremists, who then prey upon and conflate local grievances into the larger *takfiri* narrative. Imbued with the ideological fervor and operational expertise of foreign fighters, these local groups can magnify their ability to weaken their national governments and threaten U.S. interests abroad. This scenario is playing out in Somalia, where al Shabab's capabilities are being enhanced by hundreds of foreign fighters.[50]

Afghanistan and Pakistan are countries of particular concern because they offer al Qaeda a safe haven from which to operate and are a base for homegrown Islamist militants with growing links to the al Qaeda movement.[51] In both countries, extremists could foment enduring unrest and political instability. Their victories are likely to embolden Islamist militants elsewhere. Pakistan faces particularly grave security challenges. Persistent terrorist attacks — the country has suffered more than 60 suicide attacks in the last two years, plus military and political victories of Taliban groups in locales less than 100 miles from Islamabad — present an existential threat to Pakistan's government.[52] The thought of a collapsed Pakistan raises the specter of nuclear terrorism — one of the gravest threats to American national security today. According to General Petraeus, "Pakistan has become the nerve center of al Qaeda's global operations, allowing the terror group to re-establish its organizational structure and build stronger ties to al Qaeda offshoots in Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, North Africa and parts of Europe."[53]

MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

Though the threat from al Qaeda and its affiliates is concerning it is important not to overstate the organization's power or skill. The al Qaeda movement has committed numerous strategic errors, most prominently its actions in Iraq. Through the use of excessive violence, al Qaeda in Iraq alienated the Iraqi population, discredited the organization's message, and undermined its wider goals. As a result, the organization's attempts to foment a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites backfired. Al Qaeda in Iraq not only isolated itself from the surrounding population, but also pushed Sunni tribes into an unlikely alliance with U.S. forces.[54] These missteps caused dissension within the organization's own ranks. Abu Taha al-Lihebi, a former al Qaeda in Iraq leader in eastern Anbar, told *The Washington Post* last year that he left the organization because it indiscriminately targeted civilians instead of the occupying power.[55]

The killing of Muslim civilians has cost the wider al Qaeda movement support elsewhere as well. The Abu Musab al-Zarqawi network's November 2005 bombings of three hotels in Amman, Jordan, which killed 60 people, produced a backlash against al Qaeda. Thousands of Jordanians took to the streets to denounce native son al-Zarqawi and al Qaeda's ideology.[56] A poll conducted by Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies a month after the bombings showed that only 20 percent of the population viewed al Qaeda as a "legitimate resistance group"—down from 67 percent in 2004.[57] In Pakistan, the Taliban's vicious tactics are generating growing public anger, according to media reports.[58]

The Way Forward

The time has come for the new administration to adopt and implement a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that works to eliminate al Qaeda as a functioning organization and undermines violent Islamist extremism in its many forms. A new strategy must ensure that the U.S. government devotes the proper resources, staff, attention, and political capital to a struggle that is likely to last a generation or more and builds the necessary diplomatic relationships and public-private partnerships to support those efforts. This paper lays out a whole-of-government strategy to counter violent Islamist extremism and recommends specific steps below.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Seven principles guide this strategy:

1 *Since violent extremists are decentralized, dispersed, and able to appeal to local populations, an effective strategy must craft a decentralized, credible, and local response.*

Wherever feasible, the United States should step out of the spotlight in favor of empowering, coordinating, and amplifying the efforts of partners. A decentralized approach carries numerous benefits. First, it avoids negative reactions to American intervention. Even if locals do not support extremist agendas, a desire to reject outsiders may unite them. Second, by empowering and supporting local actors, the United States can accomplish its own objectives while building the local capacity vital to preventing extremism over time. Third, by engaging vast networks of nongovernmental organizations, private businesses, journalists, and individual citizens, counter-extremism initiatives can reach farther, faster, and more effectively than the U.S. government and armed forces ever could.[59] It is not necessary for these groups to love America or agree with American policies. In fact, distance from American positions enhances their credibility with some audiences.

A decentralized approach also recognizes the complexity of violent Islamist extremism. Some extremist groups are only loosely affiliated with al Qaeda; others simply adapt the al Qaeda narrative to serve their own local ends. A strategy that seeks to separate extremists from their sources of

support must also sever links between al Qaeda and local insurgent groups. The United States and its allies should pursue a "strategy of disaggregation" that takes advantage of divisions between al Qaeda and local groups and seeks to peel insurgents away from the global *takfiri* network.[60] Yet the legitimacy and local knowledge necessary to neutralize these threats before they grow more powerful is found in the communities where these groups are active. Thus, local actors — whether military or civilian — should take as much responsibility as possible.

The imperative of taking a local approach applies to America's official representatives overseas. As in counterinsurgency doctrine, a key principle in this strategy is to empower the lowest levels. Whether official representatives are diplomats, aid workers, or military officers, those in the field have the most knowledge and the greatest ability to adapt to local circumstances. They need a clear sense of mission and "commander's intent," operational guidance, and the resources necessary to accomplish their tasks. They should then be encouraged to execute that intent, empowered with the local knowledge that only they possess.[61]

This approach to countering violent extremism will require central authorities to relinquish control in return for greater effectiveness. Undeniably, this carries some risk. While leaders in the field will invariably make mistakes if given greater freedom, a level of experimentation must be tolerated. Additionally, foreign governments and militaries may abuse the training or equipment they receive. These costs must be mitigated through clear doctrine, coordination, and transparency, but they cannot be completely avoided. Though there are costs to decentralization, the opportunity cost of not empowering those with local knowledge is far higher.

2 *Since violent extremism is nourished by popular legitimacy and support, an effective strategy must deprive extremists of that support.*

Though the effort to target our nation's enemies must continue, America's goals must extend beyond preventing attacks and apprehending or killing terrorists. Neutralizing the threat posed by al Qaeda and suppressing violent extremism necessitates depriving terrorist organizations of support and legitimacy in Muslim societies.[62] In particular, the U.S. government and its allies must staunch recruitment of the next generation of *takfiris*, thus precluding the movement from regenerating over time.[63] Such an approach recognizes that suppressing violent Islamist extremism is inherently a political struggle as well as a military one. Offensive operations, led by intelligence agencies and armed forces, are of great importance. But they must be supplemented by non-kinetic defensive operations that strive to undermine al Qaeda's appeal and counter its propaganda.

As David Kilcullen argues in his companion essay, it is helpful to frame the threat from violent Islamist extremism not as a traditional problem of terrorism but as a global insurgency, fought in myriad locales and seeking to overthrow the existing political and social order.[64] Consequently, the struggle to defeat al Qaeda should be recast as a global counterinsurgency campaign. As in a classic counterinsurgency campaign, winning the allegiance of populations — the struggle's center of gravity — is key to U.S. success. When terrorists lose the support of populations, they not only lose manpower, financial resources, and moral support; they also must fear populations who share valuable information with law enforcement or intelligence agencies.

The United States need not, and should not, attempt to deprive extremists of support alone. Local voices hold more credibility with local populations and are best positioned to gather

opposition to extremists. Americans can help to amplify those voices. By providing independent radio stations with security, American forces can ensure that independent broadcasts reach their intended audiences. By brokering partnerships between private information technology companies and local civil society groups, American aid officers and diplomats can connect new resources and communications platforms to the people who need them. By linking activists around the world, civil society organizations can convey critical new skills to counter extremist propaganda.[65]

"A core objective of terrorist groups generally, and al Qaeda specifically, is to launch operations that provoke an overreaction by their adversaries."

3 *Since overly strident responses to attacks generate more support for violent extremists, an effective strategy must be calibrated and prudent.*

A core objective of terrorist groups generally, and al Qaeda specifically, is to launch operations that provoke an overreaction by their adversaries.[66] Osama bin Laden's strategy has always been to lure the United States into a protracted fight in a Muslim country, reinforcing the *takfiri* narrative and overextending American resources.[67] "All we have to do is to send two mujahidin to the furthest point East to raise a cloth on which is written al Qaeda, in order to make the [U.S.] generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic and political losses without achieving for it anything of note," he said in December 2004.[68]

In the years following 2001, the United States fell into this trap. By using language that inflated the threat from al Qaeda and bin Laden, the United States only glamorized and empowered them. By using tactics such as torture that run counter to cherished values and international law, the United States undermined its moral authority. By emphasizing the use of force and aggressive rhetoric to counter al Qaeda, the United States created the impression in many Muslim communities that the United States is at war with Islam. According to a 2009 report by World Public Opinion.org, 87 percent of Egyptians, 87 percent of Palestinians, and 80 percent of Jordanians believe that the United States seeks "to weaken and divide the Islamic world."[69] Perhaps because of this sentiment, large majorities in predominantly Muslim countries endorse al Qaeda's goal to "push the U.S. to remove its bases and its military forces from all Islamic countries" and significant numbers approve of attacks on U.S. troops based in Muslim countries. In Egypt (78–83 percent), the Palestinian territories (87–90 percent), and Jordan (66–72 percent), large majorities approve of attacks on U.S. troops based in Muslim countries.[70]

Significant military operations, even on a large scale, will remain essential in some circumstances. In Afghanistan, for instance, the United States faces an enemy that cannot be defeated without the determined application of force to secure the population and kill or capture those who will never lay down their arms.

Yet the use of war to counter violent extremism is a decision that should be made with the full costs of that decision in mind. Wars give terrorists and insurgents critical fighting experience and build "alumni" networks able to call on each other for future causes. They inevitably cause collateral damage that can undermine popular support.

Wars are also rallying points for fundraising and recruiting. For instance, the U.S. invasion of Iraq provided a propaganda and recruitment boon for al Qaeda, becoming, in the words of the 2006 National Intelligence Estimate,[71] a "cause célèbre" for *takfiris*. The majority of Islamist extremists traveling to Iraq were not the battle-hardened veterans who survived the Afghanistan campaign, but newcomers inspired by the narrative of resisting Western occupation. Thomas Hegghamer, a Norwegian analyst, surveyed 205 Saudis who committed suicide bombings in Iraq and found that only nine had previous combat experience.[72] Iraq has served as an extremist training ground, improving the skills of fighters and teaching new recruits how to kill. New tactics are emanating from Iraq as jihadists from Algeria to Afghanistan learn how to deploy suicide bombers, to more efficiently kidnap adversaries, and to detonate improvised explosive devices with greater precision and effect.[73] Neighboring nations are dealing with an influx of fighters tutored in Iraq who may seek to destabilize their home countries. For example, in Lebanon in 2007, more than 50 Iraq veterans participated in the bloody battle between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.[74]

A pragmatic strategy will require greater use of non-military instruments of power to accomplish American objectives, which will require the reallocation of U.S. government resources. The Defense Department's spending is approximately 350 times that of the combined budgets of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), even though these agencies are equally central to the fight against violent extremism.[75] Perhaps counterintuitively, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has emerged as a leading advocate of devoting more resources to civilian agencies of government. During a 2007 speech at Kansas State University he said that, "having robust civilian capabilities available could make it less likely that military force will have to be used in the first place, as local problems might be dealt with before they become crises."[76] When force is required, it must be used at the minimal level necessary to accomplish the task at hand. Additionally, because militaries always risk intimidating local populations by their mere presence, civilian organizations should play leading roles whenever possible.

4 *Since ideology unites and strengthens violent extremists, an effective strategy must undermine that ideology's appeal.*

A contest for "hearts and minds" lies at the center of a "population-centric" effort to cripple al Qaeda and suppress violent Islamist extremism. Countering the movement's guiding narrative, discrediting its methods, and sapping it of popular support should be critical benchmarks of success in a new counterterrorism strategy. The United States cannot capture or kill every violent Islamist extremist. Therefore, limiting radicalization and preventing the recruitment of Muslim youths must be an overarching objective.

American armed forces and government agencies should not be at the forefront of efforts to undermine Islamist extremists. The contest for "hearts and minds" is happening largely within the Muslim world, not between Muslim societies and the West. Voices from within those societies are far more persuasive than those of outsiders. For instance, effective challenges to al Qaeda's narrative have arisen from those who formerly supported the organization's vision.[77] For those drawn to extremist ideologies, it is principally these voices, not those of the U.S. government, which will discredit al Qaeda and its narrative.

The challenge for the United States, therefore, is how to support and amplify the voices that can undermine the appeal of extremist ideology, how to support social networks that pull young people

away from extremist recruiters, and how to contribute to environments that are not conducive to extremist ideology taking root. The goal is *not* to make Muslims like the United States more, to convince Muslims of the judiciousness of our foreign policy, or to make sure they appreciate all that American taxpayers do for them.

5 *Since negative perceptions of the United States galvanize violent extremists, America must rebuild and extend its moral authority.*

In the eyes of many foreigners, the United States has lost moral authority. At least in part, these attitudes reflect displeasure with policies such as the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, the maintenance of secret prisons, and the torture of captured al Qaeda members. Controversial within the United States, those policies drew even wider criticism abroad, rendering allies reluctant partners and garnering support and sympathy for extremists.

America's moral authority has been tarnished further by charges of hypocrisy. Arabs expressed disappointment that the United States promoted democracy only to reject the results of elections in Palestine, called for an end to human rights abuses only to stand by the authoritarian governments that perpetrated them, and argued for press freedom only to pay journalists to write what the U.S. government wanted Iraqis to hear. Though these policies were contested efforts to balance competing interests, for many Muslims they wove a narrative that the United States did not live up to its own rhetoric and could not be trusted.

Strengthening America's moral authority will enhance U.S. power and undercut the appeal of violent extremists. Such authority confers legitimacy on the United States and U.S. policy, contravenes extremists' ability to attract recruits, and facilitates American actions around the globe. At a tactical level, it enables more effective counterterrorism missions by giving partner governments political cover to cooperate with the United States.[78] And, in the area of intelligence gathering, moral authority can motivate individuals to share information. During the Cold War, some of the best intelligence sources sought out the United States at great personal risk because they believed in American principles.

To accomplish this objective, U.S. leaders must demonstrate through their words and deeds that America lives up to its values. These values are a source of power for the United States, as well as a moral imperative within our own society. By staying true to values that have wide appeal around the world, the United States offers an enduring demonstration of pluralism and the rule of law. This is not always easy, as evidenced by current debates over declassifying documents relating to the American torture of al Qaeda prisoners. Yet America is a country that faces up to its own mistakes. However painful this may be in specific instances, it remains both the right thing to do and the prudent course, contributing to America's long-term authority and influence.

6 *Since violent extremists are sustained by permissive environments, the United States must work to create conditions hostile to extremists, both at home and abroad.*

Terrorists use violence to create uncertainty, spread fear, and undermine a population's confidence in its government's ability to protect them.[79] Thus, the United States can minimize the impact of terrorist attacks by preparing the public to recover from attacks as swiftly as possible. This requires excellent emergency preparedness and response. More importantly, it requires government leaders to demonstrate resolve and prudence in the event of an attack.

Overseas, the United States and its allies can curtail violent extremism by investing in the future of

populations most vulnerable to the lure of violent extremism. Chief among these groups are young people in majority Muslim countries and Muslim minorities in Western Europe. While the causes of violent extremism are complex and numerous, political, social, cultural, and economic grievances aid recruitment efforts and provide a broader base of sympathy.[80] For instance, extremist ideologies appear to thrive among marginalized populations with limited economic prospects and few opportunities to channel their desires for change within a political process. While it is *not* the case that poverty, unemployment, or a lack of political participation lead to terrorism, those factors intertwine with concrete grievances, ideological appeal, social pressures, and personal relationships to create fertile ground for violent extremism.

As argued forcefully in the Arab Human Development Reports published by the United Nations, a large swath of the Muslim world is falling farther behind the rest of the global community.[81] Political systems are too often rigid and oppressive, human rights too often abused, and economic opportunities too slim. The pressures on these societies are compounded by exploding youth populations, putting unparalleled pressure for resources on already strained educational institutions and economies. According to a major World Bank report, the Arab region alone must create 100 million new jobs by 2020 just to maintain current — and already high — unemployment levels.[82]

While the U.S. government cannot and should not take responsibility for such a monumental task, it can work with international organizations, allies, and the private sector to address this urgent challenge.

7 *Since violent extremists exploit their own nuanced understanding of local and global trends, the United States must similarly enhance its own understanding of the local and global terrain on which violent extremists operate.*

Operating according to the principles laid out in this strategy requires a deep and nuanced understanding of culture, politics, economics, ideology, social networks, and the media. A significant amount of this information is openly available to those with the inclination to find it. Much is available by tapping into networks of scholars, business people, diaspora groups, and civil society groups. The rest requires painstaking intelligence collection. However, distilling this information in a form useful to policy makers in the United States and practitioners in the field requires an intelligence community with an extremely high level of foreign language skills and regional knowledge. It also requires a willingness to go beyond the "cult of the classified" and raise awareness of open source information such as Web sites, diaspora newspapers, and foreign broadcasts. It necessitates strong partnerships with foreign intelligence agencies in allied countries and a willingness to invest in the capacity of those agencies. Finally, it requires the long-term cultivation of intelligence analysts and operatives with the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct this type of work.

In addition to understanding current and emerging environments in which Islamist extremism can flourish, the United States must understand the identity, motivations, and goals of both al Qaeda and the many groups that are or could become affiliated with it. Understanding the local operating milieu of extremists — and especially where divisions exist and can be exploited — is critical. Countering violent extremism requires the empowerment of credible, local alternatives and the ability to divide extremists from popular support, which is only possible with a high degree of cultural and local knowledge.

A Realistic Vision of Success

A strategy to combat violent extremism should be constructed with clear, realistic end states in mind. Apprehending or killing every Islamist militant is not an achievable objective. There will always be individuals motivated by extremist ideology and rhetoric, and there will always be individuals willing to use terrorist tactics. However, the United States possesses the capabilities to eliminate al Qaeda as a significant threat to U.S. strategic interests and to suppress the global violent Islamist extremist movement. The goal must be to eradicate the capacity of terrorist networks to perpetrate attacks on U.S. soil and interests abroad and ensure that these groups do not replenish themselves with new recruits.

With these constraints in mind, the United States should seek to achieve clear objectives in the global struggle against violent extremism. A realistic strategy will steer toward the following ends:

WITH RESPECT TO OUR ADVERSARIES:

Al Qaeda loses the ability to plan and launch international terrorist attacks

The leading commanders and operatives are killed, apprehended, or on the run; physical safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan are abolished, and the group is incapable of reconstituting in another locale; virtual safe havens that serve as incubators of extremism are disrupted; access to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons is denied; its financing sources are drained; and it can no longer train new recruits.

Affiliate groups no longer pose an existential threat to home countries

Islamist extremist organizations with connections to al Qaeda are either neutralized or marginalized; they no longer have the capacity to commit significant terrorist acts; local communities have turned against them; they no longer receive guidance, training, weapons, or financing from al Qaeda; and they perceive their grievances as local, with no larger linkage to a global jihad.

Semi-autonomous cells are dissolved or marginalized

Through vigorous action by police departments, intelligence units, and armed forces, Islamist extremists with connections to al Qaeda are apprehended around the world; individuals who remain at large do not have the capability to commit large-scale terrorist attacks; semi-autonomous actors are unable to recruit locally and are incapable of receiving training and guidance from extremists in other countries.

Recruits to the cause are few in number

Few Muslim youth become radicalized to the point of committing violence; those that are radicalized to this point are tracked by police and intelligence services and apprehended if plotting attacks; individuals receive no support from larger communities and struggle to recruit fellow Muslims.

The al Qaeda narrative is discredited

Al Qaeda's influence with its target population—Muslim publics—is largely eliminated; popular backlash against the organization's tactics, narrative, and vision grows; fewer individuals are drawn to extremist propaganda; more positive narratives spread.

Al Qaeda faces hostile operating environments, both real and virtual

Governments threatened by violent extremists can control their borders, govern their territory, provide basic services for citizens, and counter local insurgents and terrorists with limited international support; Muslim communities worldwide work

with law enforcement and intelligence units to identify potential terrorists in their midst; extremists are unable to use Web sites, radio, and other vehicles to garner widespread support without being contested.

WITH RESPECT TO THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES:

Resourcing for counterterrorism is robust, well allocated, and sustainable

Countering violent Islamist extremism becomes a "whole of government" mission; budget allocations for counterterrorism programming are economically sustainable and distributed appropriately across departments; planning, collaboration, and communication among agencies is efficient.

The government prevents attacks on U.S. soil and interests abroad

The most critical infrastructure at home and abroad is protected; U.S. and allied intelligence and law enforcement agencies work to detect, deter, and disrupt plots; the United States and its allies prevent extremists from acquiring chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons to safeguard against the most lethal attacks.

If attacks do occur, the consequences are managed and mitigated

Domestic authorities have a robust response infrastructure in place; the American people are prepared to take steps that will enhance their own safety and speed recovery from an attack; and they are resilient and go about their lives without fear.

Foreign governments cooperate in law enforcement, intelligence gathering, and attack response

Governments cooperate, share information about terrorist groups, and come to each other's aid in the rare event of successful attacks; key partner states convene regularly to evaluate the shared challenges posed by violent Islamist extremism and to coordinate strategies and tactics.

Civilian agencies assume greater responsibility

Civilian government agencies in the United States and abroad play an increasingly important role in the struggle against violent extremism; post-conflict transitions to civilian leadership are early and smooth; civilian agencies have the skill, will, and resources to counter violent extremism and prevent its resurgence.

Civil society, businesses, and public-private partnerships provide economic opportunities and reduce the marginalization of Muslim communities

Non-governmental organizations, private businesses, and citizens create environments infertile to violent extremism; young people in at-risk populations have access to economic opportunities; non-governmental groups engage marginalized populations and minimize their sense of grievance; civil society condemns violent extremism and reduces the social pull of extremist organizations.

Ways And Means

To accomplish the objectives laid out above, a new strategy to combat violent Islamist extremism must employ a wide variety of tools in a manner consistent with the aforementioned principles. Success requires the ability to integrate these tools effectively, in support of a common strategy carried out by an array of actors both within and outside government.

Seven pillars should serve as the foundation of this unified effort: intelligence, diplomacy, strategic public engagement, military operations, law enforcement, finance and development, and homeland protection and preparation.

INTELLIGENCE

The intelligence community must play a critical role in the fight against violent extremism and al Qaeda by continuing to develop a sophisticated understanding of the threat, to gather actionable intelligence, and to disrupt terrorist operations. In all three of these areas, Islamist militants present a formidable challenge to U.S. and allied clandestine services. Violent Islamist extremists comprise an extremely diffuse set of actors and hold a wide variety of goals. Operatives are typically embedded within a diverse range of local populations and often do not come to the attention of intelligence services until they are in the late stages of planning an attack, if at all. Moreover, the goal is not just to stop specific attacks but also to eliminate entire cells and undercut their resources and support.

Despite its vast intelligence infrastructure, the United States will do well to ask what it can learn from others. Valuable and actionable information, both classified and unclassified, can be found by engaging American and foreign partners.

As part of a new counterterrorism strategy, the U.S. government should:

- Invest in the long-term human capital necessary to counter violent extremism, including the acquisition of critical foreign language skills and nuanced regional expertise.
- Hire more analysts and operatives at all intelligence agencies, including the FBI, who speak critical languages, especially Arabic, Pashto, and Urdu.
- Engage networks of private citizens and organizations to inform American policies.
- Increase assistance, including training and technical support, to intelligence services in partner states; cultivate strong relations with trusted foreign intelligence services.
- Provide more low-level classified and unclassified information to state and local officials to ensure they are better informed of threats.[83]
- Encourage the sharing of intelligence analysis, especially analysis drawn from unclassified sources, across government agencies and with operatives in the field at all levels.

DIPLOMACY

International collaboration is critical to countering violent extremism. The battleground in the struggle against violent Islamist extremism is mostly outside U.S. borders, and is met first and most effectively in those locales. Thus, diplomats must work closely with foreign governments to build partnerships, share information, and coordinate policies that undermine and marginalize violent extremists.

Not every nation places the same priority on suppressing violent extremism; some are either unable or unwilling to devote adequate resources to neutralizing extremist elements within their territory. The United States must therefore "convince, cajole or compel" partner countries to concentrate on defeating al Qaeda.[84] Effective diplomacy can strengthen the resolve of these nations and provide them with the necessary guidance, incentives, and—in some cases—resources. For instance, the budget of the State Department's Anti-Terrorism

Assistance Program, which helps partner states improve their counterterrorism capacity, is $141.5 million for fiscal year 2009.[85] However, there is room for improvement. A Government Accountability Office report calls on the State Department to better prioritize its funding allocations and provide recipient states with more guidance about how to spend the money.[86]

In order to engage foreign populations as well as governments, American embassies must change. The State Department must allow diplomats to leave the embassy compound, even in the presence of security risks, and find ways to hire more diplomats willing to accept the risks inherent in service in combat zones and reward those who do. Diplomats should also be encouraged to spend longer tours in high-priority countries where violent extremism is a threat. The custom of cycling diplomats in and out of key countries such as Pakistan after just one year is not conducive to developing the sort of deep understanding and personal relationships necessary to implement this strategy.

While the promotion of democracy in predominantly Arab countries should not be viewed through the prism of counterterrorism, over the long run the advent of more pluralistic and law-based societies in the Middle East should help address some of the legitimate grievances held by extremists.[87] If governments are more responsive to the needs of their constituents — and provide forums for vibrant political and social discourse — then those nations are less likely to be breeding grounds of radicalism. Through their rhetoric and actions, U.S. leaders must continue to promote democratic values and the protection of human rights. The U.S. government should work both quietly and publicly with regimes in the Middle East to encourage institutional and other governance reforms. Yet as the past few years have shown, there are limits to what the United States can do on its own. Local actors, nongovernmental organizations, and private groups will be the most effective and credible voices. The U.S. government should encourage and strengthen these organizations in ways that do not undermine their legitimacy.

As part of a new strategy to suppress violent extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Hire thousands more Foreign Service Officers and USAID employees to improve U.S. capacity for large-scale, sustained diplomatic and development efforts; provide them with the greater resources they need to do their jobs.
- Create "expeditionary" civilian specialists who can embed with military units and provide much-needed assistance in political, economic, and governance missions.[88]
- Encourage diplomatic staff to leave their embassies and engage with local populations despite heightened safety risks.
- Increase funding for the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, while ensuring that money is efficiently disseminated to partner states; provide recipients with proper guidance on spending funds.
- Continue support for organizations such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and National Endowment for Democracy, but review programs to ensure that (especially in the case of MEPI) funds are well spent.

STRATEGIC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Strategic public engagement — encompassing public diplomacy, strategic communications, and military information operations — is central to undermining violent Islamist extremism. The aim of this engagement is not to convince Muslim populations of the righteousness of American foreign policy or the supremacy of American culture. Instead, U.S. strategy should focus on countering al Qaeda's appeal and sapping violent extremists of support.

This effort should advance three objectives: undermining popular support for al Qaeda and violent extremist ideologies; promoting positive relations with Muslim communities; and encouraging popular support for universal values such as human rights, the protection of innocent life, and political participation.[89] To do this, the United States must empower a wide range of persuasive voices able to counter the al Qaeda narrative and delink that narrative from local causes. It must send strong signals that the United States is not a threat to Islam. The United States must also build a dense network of positive relationships between Americans and predominantly Muslim societies to show that the United States stands for a better future for all the world's citizens, including Muslims. In all these efforts, the United States must demonstrate respect and support for the universal values that the vast majority of Muslims embrace. Though developing coordinated and effective "messages" about the United States and its intentions has a rightful place in a strategic communication strategy, the emphasis should shift to empowering credible voices outside of government and to building the relationships necessary to counter violent extremism.

As part of a new strategy to counter violent Islamist extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Invest the resources necessary to strengthen strategic public engagement in civilian agencies and let them take the lead whenever possible.[90]
- Create a new public-private organization to engage, fund, and amplify private activities that undermine extremists and promote positive relationships with predominantly Muslim societies.[91]
- Create bi-national centers that offer English classes, access to computers and libraries, and events with American speakers outside inaccessible embassy compounds.
- Ensure that words and deeds recognize the vast differences among Muslim communities and that communications do not reinforce a narrative of "us and them."
- Work with partners and allies to replicate and spread successful de-radicalization programs.
- Conduct rigorous testing to ensure that messages and programs that are appealing to Americans are also appealing to the intended audiences.
- Expand exchange programs, visitor programs, and other initiatives that build positive long-term relationships.
- Fund projects, preferably those led by civil society organizations or foreign governments, which improve access to high quality education in areas where schools with radical Islamist curricula are the only or most attractive option.
- Develop a new broadcasting and media relations strategy for predominantly Muslim countries; reform and streamline the Broadcasting Board of Governors that oversees U.S. government-funded broadcasting; close or repurpose the U.S. government-funded television station Al-Hurra and redirect resources to more effective broadcasting strategies.[92]
- Expand effort to get American officials on foreign media outlets, but also to get more credible and persuasive voices, including those of private citizens and foreigners, into the public eye.
- Provide education and training to public affairs officers to give them the skills and knowledge they need to engage effectively with a diverse range of Muslim populations; reward public affairs officers who develop productive relationships with local citizens beyond embassy walls.

MILITARY OPERATIONS

Even as the United States recalibrates its approach to marginalizing violent Islamist extremism, the use of force is still a vital component of success. The United States must continue to kill and capture terrorists, attack their sanctuaries, and destroy their capacity for action. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and

elsewhere, American forces will engage violent extremists directly for years to come. Yet in the campaign to defeat al Qaeda and suppress violent Islamist extremism, military force should be used judiciously.[93] The military response to the attacks of September 11th, particularly the invasion of Iraq, validated al Qaeda's narrative for many Muslims and increased the organization's legitimacy and support.

Treating the campaign against violent extremism as a global counterinsurgency campaign would lead the military to focus its efforts on providing security for the civilian population as the highest priority in areas where violence threatens core American national security interests. The focus of these efforts should be building the capacity of foreign armies, intelligence agencies, and police forces in order to transfer that responsibility to them as soon as possible. Once a mission relegated exclusively to Special Forces, the demand for more capable foreign partners is now so great that Foreign Internal Defense has become a core task for all elements of the U.S. military—one requiring broad changes in doctrine, organization, training, and mindset.

As part of a new strategy to counter violent extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Work closely with foreign militaries and civilian partners to deny operating space for violent extremists and protect populations from harm.
- Make strengthening and training foreign armies one of the U.S. military's primary missions in cases where American and foreign nations' interests align; consider building specialized advisory units to help host nations to deny operating space to violent extremists and to protect populations from harm.[94]
- Continue Department of Defense support for expanded civilian capacity to conduct post-conflict economic and governance development activities abroad.
- Use drone strikes reluctantly, reserving them only for the highest-priority targets and where the benefits clearly outweigh the long-term costs of alienating local populations; reduce the current use of drone strikes in Pakistan.
- Continue to increase the number of special operations forces available to conduct Foreign Internal Defense and train indigenous forces; strengthen the relationship between conventional and Special Operations forces engaged in this critical mission.
- Develop a defense budget that builds the force structure and provides the specialized training, education, and equipment necessary to support current and future counterinsurgency operations; in particular, focus more resources on developing the linguistic and advisory skill sets that play such an important role in building partner relationships.
- Train soldiers to better respect local cultural mores and to use techniques that minimize the use of lethal force.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Especially outside of war zones, law enforcement agencies should play a critical role in suppressing al Qaeda and marginalizing violent Islamist extremism. First-rate policing and intelligence work not only disrupt plots but also lead to the dismantling of terrorist organizations.[95] Law enforcement is central to capturing weapons, monitoring suspicious activities and following up on tips, providing security to local populations, and developing relationships of trust that lead communities to share valuable intelligence. There are no quick fixes; the law enforcement approach requires a sustained response with adequate funding and manpower. Much of the expanded policing efforts must focus on states such as Pakistan that lack robust law enforcement institutions. To be successful, policing methods must be imbued with legitimacy. If police and intelligence agencies do not uphold the rule of law in all endeavors, critical popular support and

cooperation will dissipate. As in all elements of the strategy, the engagement of broader populations is essential.

As part of a new strategy to combat violent extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Build the capacity of law enforcement agencies in partner states, especially in areas vulnerable to violent extremism, and provide them with adequate training and equipment. Providing such assistance to Pakistan should be the highest priority.
- Develop greater channels of collaboration, communication, and information sharing with partner law enforcement agencies.
- Inculcate respect for the rule of law and human rights in partner law enforcement agencies, while being ever vigilant to uphold those values in American agencies.[96]
- Develop new policies to handle detainees in ways that balance legitimate security concerns and the need for justice.
- End the transfer of suspects to foreign law enforcement and intelligence agencies that condone torture.

FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Extremist networks require more than just willing recruits and technical expertise to execute successful terrorist attacks; they also need money. The sums required to initiate individual attacks are not always large. As a point of comparison, the September 11 attacks cost between $400,000 and $500,000, the March 2004 Madrid bombing cost an estimated $10,000, and the July 2005 London bombings might have cost as little as $1,000.[97] Nonetheless, violent extremist movements require additional funding to pay for propaganda and communications, travel, training, recruitment efforts, and larger organizational logistics. Thus, depriving terrorist organizations of financial resources must be part of any strategy to suppress violent extremism.

This is an area where the U. S. government has excelled, freezing the assets of terrorist financers, crippling funding networks, and prosecuting individuals for funding terrorist acts.[98] In fact, the 9/11 Commission gave the government an "A-" for its initiatives to combat terrorism financing.[99] These efforts must continue, adopting new strategies as terrorists find alternative ways to move money around the world.

However, there are limits to how much the United States can accomplish on its own. Much terrorist financing emanates from the Middle East, sometimes through private donations, charities, and informal remittances called *hawalas*. The Obama administration must work closely with allies in the region to ensure they are tracking and shutting down these formal and informal revenue streams.

In addition to attacking terrorist resources, the United States must support the economic development of geographic areas susceptible to violent extremism. Though individuals are attracted to violent extremist movements for myriad personal, social, and ideological reasons, bolstering economic opportunities and increasing social mobility in these countries is nonetheless likely to help reduce the pool of potential recruits. There is no direct link between poverty and terrorism, but marginalized populations in economically distressed areas seem more vulnerable to extremist ideologies, whether those populations are in Algiers or in Liverpool.

As part of a new strategy to counter violent extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Build the capacity of foreign governments to disrupt financial networks that support terrorists.[100]
- Through public-private partnerships and USAID programs, prioritize job creation in areas where young people are economically marginalized and susceptible to radicalization; work with multinational companies and educational institutions to

offer education and training opportunities that prepare at-risk youth for jobs.

- Through nongovernmental organizations and chambers of commerce, encourage companies to invest in areas vulnerable to violent extremism.
- Develop economic and trade relationships that build stronger connections between American and Muslim communities and create mutually beneficial economic opportunities.

HOMELAND PROTECTION AND PREPARATION

A continuing pillar of America's counterterrorism strategy must be to safeguard the nation from terrorist attacks. This will require efforts to prevent terrorists from entering the country, to conduct surveillance of potential terrorists who are American citizens or residents, and to detect and disrupt terrorist plots.

Homeland defense will also require the United States to harden likely targets without overspending. The United States must recognize that terrorist groups will always have more targets than the government can defend.[101] America cannot protect every conceivable target from terrorist attack, but it can minimize the likelihood of attacks against highly symbolic structures such as the White House. And it can defend a carefully selected range of targets, including government buildings and vital infrastructure such as ports, landmark bridges, and transportation and cyber networks. It also necessitates a focus on preventing the most catastrophic forms of terrorism, such as those perpetrated through a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear attack.

Besides attacking a government's legitimacy, terrorists aim to produce fear in a society. To thwart this effort, the U.S. government should invest in rapid response mechanisms and foster a culture of resilience. The U.S. government, through rhetoric and action, should prepare citizens to respond to catastrophes, minimizing the impact of such events.

As part of a new strategy to minimize the effects of terrorism, the U.S. government should:

- Harden and protect only the most plausible and vulnerable targets.
- Ensure that resources are being spent wisely on homeland protection measures. Enhance border security while treating visitors to the United States with dignity and respect.
- Prepare the American public for possible attacks, take measures to instill resiliency and reduce the psychological impact of attacks, and encourage families and organizations to prepare themselves for emergencies.
- Work with the U.S. private sector to monitor suspicious activity involving biological agents.

Fortunately, the United States has not, like several European allies, experienced a successful terrorist attack from homegrown Islamist extremists. Muslims are generally well assimilated into American culture, and, unlike a large minority of Muslims in Europe, tend to be socially mobile. Yet Americans are not immune to violent extremism — and the threat of a terrorist strike perpetrated by a U.S. citizen is real. The July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on terrorism states that the "radical and violent segment" of the Muslim population in the United States is "expanding."[102] Several prominent homegrown plots have been foiled in recent years, including plans to bomb the Herald Square subway stop in New York. In 2009, intelligence agencies expressed concern about radicalized youth of Somali origin and their links to Somali extremists.

According to a May 2008 report by the Senate Homeland Security Committee, however, "the federal government has neither developed nor implemented a coordinated outreach and communications strategy to address the homegrown terrorist threat."[103] Both the FBI and Department of Homeland Security have initiated aggressive

outreach programs with Muslim communities while seeking to build trust and communication with key leaders. Frequently, however, not enough coordination occurs with local police departments—the front line of counter-radicalization efforts—and no sustained funding stream exists for community-initiated projects.

"There are limits to how much the United States can accomplish on its own."

As part of a new strategy to counter violent extremism domestically, the U.S. government should:

- Develop a counter-radicalization policy that recognizes the feasibility of a homegrown terrorist attack.
- Continue to speak out against anti-Muslim discrimination while publicly stressing the positive role that Muslims, like peoples of other religions and creeds, play in American society.
- Increase contacts between federal agencies and Muslim communities, while providing funding for communities to develop their own counter-radicalization programs.

ENSURING UNITY OF EFFORT

The threat from violent Islamist extremism is highly complex, with both global and local elements. It has no one cause, no one base, and no one solution. As a result, suppressing violent Islamist extremism demands a response that is equally varied, drawing on all appropriate instruments of national power, the capabilities of partner governments, and the cooperation of public and non-profit organizations and individuals in the United States and around the world.

Accomplishing America's long-term counterterrorism objectives must be the responsibility of the entire government, with the help of vast networks of private and non-profit organizations. Within government, the burden cannot fall solely on the shoulders of the intelligence community and the military. Law enforcement, diplomacy, strategic communication, financial controls, and foreign assistance are essential tools that the government must use more effectively, raising their importance relative to military and intelligence operations. Better coordination and communication among agencies will enhance effectiveness while making the most of limited manpower and resources. The need to develop better "whole of government" approaches extends far beyond the necessity to combat violent Islamist extremism. A coordinated interagency response, bolstered by strong partnerships with private actors, is required to address a wide range of other global challenges, from human trafficking to arms control.

The federal government is still coming to grips with the reorganization of the intelligence community and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Though these solutions are imperfect, further reorganization should be avoided. Reorganizations of this magnitude absorb precious time and energy; they should be undertaken cautiously. Instead, the new administration should focus its efforts on addressing critical weaknesses such as those in diplomacy, development, and public diplomacy. It should make existing institutions work better instead of shuffling organizational charts.

As part of a new strategy to counter violent extremism, the U.S. government should:

- Invest resources to improve interagency coordination, including joint training and education and mandatory employment rotations.

- Merge the Homeland Security Council and National Security Council.
- Create regional "hub" offices to serve as civilian counterparts to the Combatant Commands and ensure better interagency coordination in the field.
- Strengthen the central coordinating mechanism for strategic communication known as the Global Strategic Engagement Center.
- Create new mechanisms for public-private collaboration; streamline and clarify policies that unnecessarily inhibit collaboration with private corporations and non-profit organizations.

Ends, Ways, and Means: A Pragmatic Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism

The long struggle against violent Islamist extremism is likely to take many forms. Though insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan attract headlines today, new threats may emerge in Yemen, Somalia, or Western Europe. This is a global and complex threat that demands a global and complex response.

This response will call on the United States to engage a wide range of partners from around the globe: governments, militaries, religious institutions, civil society organizations, and private companies. All have a role to play, for their own reasons and in their own fashion. Wherever appropriate, the United States must have the courage to allow others to lead. In many venues, other actors — not the U.S. government or armed forces — will be more credible, more welcome, and more effective. Their success will protect American interests and American lives. Working with partners is a source of power, not a sign of weakness. As Anne-Marie Slaughter notes, "In the twenty-first century, the United States' exceptional capacity for connection, rather than splendid isolation or hegemonic domination, will renew its power and restore its global purpose."[104] Building the capacity to engage a multitude of partners — overseas and domestically, within and outside the government — will also help the United States address the full spectrum of national security challenges.

In a much smaller number of instances, such as countering the insurgency in Afghanistan, only the United States will have the capacity and will to lead. In these instances, the United States must be willing to use force, but it must avoid overly muscular responses that are ultimately counterproductive. Force is, and will continue to be, an essential part of American counterterrorism efforts. But it should be applied at the minimal level necessary to achieve a given objective, after a careful review of strategic costs and benefits, and out of calculated interest — not anger.

Countering violent extremism will demand agile American leadership. Domestically, the Obama administration must build a strong bipartisan consensus to invest in the institutions and policies necessary to minimize the chance of attacks on U.S. interests and to endure another attack on the homeland should such an event occur. At the same time, our nation must avoid the trap of overstating the threat in order to build domestic support and assemble needed resources. Internationally, the United States must lead forcefully at times and quietly at others, marshalling dispersed actors and information in pursuit of a common and principled cause. The United States is uniquely poised to exercise this new kind of leadership to forge a new domestic and international alliance against violent Islamist extremism. This is a conflict no single party and no single nation can win on its own.

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Strategy Papers

BALANCED RESPONSE: A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE PROTRACTED STRUGGLE AGAINST EXTREMISM

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Introduction

The Cold War had been running for seven years when President Eisenhower took office. Early Cold War strategy had emerged piecemeal, in an unprecedented security environment that combined new weapons, actors, and forms of warfare in ways that invalidated traditional approaches—going "above" them into high-technology systems like atomic weapons, ballistic missiles, intercontinental bombers, nuclear submarines and space systems; or "below" them into the realm of Special Forces, economic warfare, guerrilla movements, subversion, propaganda and that form of intelligence warfare which insiders delicately dub "special political action." The Truman administration's policies, despite some successes, had been of limited usefulness in handling an unpopular stalemated war in Korea, communist expansionism in Europe and Asia, and domestic controversy over civil liberties and subversion. So in May 1953, in the White House solarium, Eisenhower's advisors began a detailed strategic reassessment that affirmed several Truman policies, added other concepts, and ultimately set the foundation for a long-term national security consensus that guided U.S. strategy in the Cold War.

The project this paper supports—the Solarium II project of the Center for a New American Security—takes place in a strikingly similar policy environment. As in the early Cold War, today's security environment combines new actors with new technology and new or transfigured ways of war. New actors include transnational insurgent groups, global terrorist networks with unprecedented demographic depth, tribal and regional groups with post-modern capabilities but pre-modern structures and ideologies, micro-actors capable of massive impact, armed commercial entities and non-state information networks. New technology includes communications and media tools, high-lethality individual weapons systems, anti-access technologies, nano-engineering, genetic

manipulation, non-nitrate explosives and novel blast munitions. New ways of war include Internet-enabled terrorism, transnational guerrilla warfare, the insurgent media marketplace, distributed network attack, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or niche capabilities via non-state networks. All of this coexists alongside robust conventional threats from traditional state-based adversaries.

Post-1945 institutions such as NATO, the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the United Nations have proven ill-suited to the current environment; the United States, with national security institutions developed mainly under the Truman administration in 1945-1952 (the years of origin of the U.S. Air Force, RAND, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Agency, National Security Council, National Intelligence Council, National Science Foundation, NASA, and others) has struggled to adapt these institutions to post-9/11 threats. Policies like the invasion of Iraq, diplomatic unilateralism, comparative neglect of the Israel-Palestine peace process, renditions, secret CIA prisons and domestic surveillance have proven harmful to our international reputation and our wider interests. In particular, events since 9/11 have exposed the limits of the utility of force as an international security tool, while framing the problem as a "war on terror" has militarized key aspects of our foreign policy. So today, as in 1953, a tough-minded, pragmatic reassessment of U.S. national security policies is called for.

This paper obviously cannot, by itself, provide that reassessment. But it aims to provide one perspective on the nature of the threat environment, suggest one possible strategic approach to the problem, and thus contribute to a broader collective effort to rethink national strategy for the protracted struggle against extremism.

Definition of the Threat: The Nature of the Early 21st-Century Security Environment

Today's threat environment is complex and multi-faceted, making it nearly impossible to articulate through a single model. Therefore, the first section of this paper examines the environment via four conceptual frameworks to build a comprehensive picture of the threat, its characteristics, and implications. The four models are the globalization backlash thesis, the globalized insurgency model, the Islamic civil war and the asymmetric warfare model. These are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but taken together they form a basis for the strategic assessment and planning outlined later in this paper.

GLOBALIZATION BACKLASH

The many colonial insurgencies and irregular wars of the 1940s and 1950s appear in retrospect as a larger pattern of "wars of decolonization." The "globalization backlash thesis" suggests that, likewise, we may look back on today's conflicts as a series of **wars of globalization**. Globalization, defined as a process occurring over the past 30 years and enabling the freer movement of goods, people, technology, ideas, and finances across and within international borders, has aided the emergence of a (largely Western-dominated) world culture and global community, but has also prompted a backlash against it. This has had six principal implications for the international security environment.

1. Traditional societies across the world have experienced the corrosive effects of globalization on deeply held social, cultural and religious identities—prompting **violent antagonism to Western-led modernization** and perceived U.S. cultural imperialism. This antagonism takes many forms: at the nation-state level it includes reflexive anti-Americanism, economic and cultural protectionism, and a tendency to "bandwagon" against U.S. policy initiatives. At the non-state level it ranges from ethnic

chauvinism, through the sabotage and destruction of symbols of globalization, to violent internal conflict between communities divided by their response to globalization (as in parts of Indonesia and Africa), to the persecution of minorities associated with globalization processes (such as immigrant workers), to full-scale civil war and international terrorism.

2. Globalization has given the opponents of Western-led modernization unprecedented access to its tools, such as the Internet, satellite communications, electronic funds transfer, ease of transportation and trade, and low-cost, high-lethality individual weapons systems. Consequently, the opponents of globalization — ranging from protestors disrupting G8 meetings, to anarchist activists, to al Qaeda operatives — are paradoxically among the most globalized and networked groups on the planet, and the most adept at **using the instruments of globalization against it**. Unlike traditional societies, which represent an atavistic and xenophobic "anti-globalization" focus, some of these actors represent a sophisticated form of "counter-globalization" — a vision of a world that is just as globalized, but (as in the al Qaeda model of a global Caliphate) along radically different lines from its current form.

3. Globalization has **connected geographically distant actors** who could not previously coordinate their actions (for example, connecting insurgent and terrorist groups in different countries or connecting radicals in a remote area with immigrants from that area now living in the West). This unprecedented connectivity means that **widely spaced and disparate micro-actors can aggregate their effects**, enabling outcomes disproportionate to the size and sophistication of their informal networks. It also means that ungoverned, undergoverned or poorly controlled areas, which used to be significant for local governments but largely irrelevant to international security, are now more widely important: they are potential safe havens and points of origin for terrorist and insurgent attacks on many points of vulnerability in the international system.

4. The diversity and spread of globalized media has rendered "message unity" impossible for Western governments and open societies. Concepts like "the international media" are less relevant now than even a decade ago, since they treat the media as an actor or interest group, whereas under globalized conditions **the "media" is a domain or even a battlespace, not an actor**. This carries some negative consequences for Western governments — pursuing unpopular policies in the teeth of negative media coverage is harder, and state-based information agencies such the State Department's "R" Bureau have much less leverage in this environment than previously, for example. But it also creates a profoundly new and different media space in which individuals can communicate and form information networks that are innately free, democratic, non-state based and founded on personal choice. Even repressive societies like China, Iran, and many parts of the Middle East now have enormous difficulty in suppressing information and preventing communication between their citizens and the wider world. Freer globalized information systems therefore, on balance, favor the West but also carry new and sometimes poorly understood risks.

5. The uneven pace and spread of globalization has created haves and have-nots — the so-called **gap countries** in large parts of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and some areas in Southeast and Northeast Asia have benefited far less, and suffered far more, from globalization processes than core regions such as Western Europe and North America. Some gap countries (Burma, North Korea, Syria, Iran, Somalia,

or Pakistan) are actual or potential "rogue states" or safe havens for terrorist and extremist activity. But the United States has neither the mandate nor the resources to effectively police or directly govern these areas, nor would the American people likely support such a strategy. Hence a policy of international cooperation and low-profile support for legitimate and effective governance (broadly defined) is likely to be the most appropriate response.

6. The final obvious, but sometimes-overlooked implication is that globalization is a phenomenon over which, by its very nature, **governments have little control**. Its pace and direction are set by market forces and individual choices exercised through the connectivity globalization enables. This means that even though globalization has obvious negative security effects, governments are not able to channel or stop it. Thus, phenomena such as the anti-modernization backlash within traditional societies, or the ability of a networked counter-globalization movement like al Qaeda to exploit this backlash, are likely to be of long-standing duration regardless of Western policies.

This last observation also relates to the second main model for thinking about the environment, that of global insurgency.

GLOBALIZED INSURGENCY

The "global insurgency thesis" suggests that the "war on terrorism" is best understood as an extremely large-scale, transnational globalized insurgency, rather than as a traditional terrorism problem. This model argues that, by definition, al Qaeda and the broader neo-salafi jihadist movement it represents are **insurgents** (members of "an organized movement that aims at overthrowing the political order within a given territory, using a combination of subversion, terrorism, guerrilla warfare and propaganda"). Defining them via their use of a certain tactic (terrorism), which they share with every other insurgent movement in history, is less analytically useful than defining them in terms of their strategic and tactical approach. Like other insurgents, al Qaeda draws its potency from the depth of its demographic base (the world's 1.2 billion Sunni Muslims) and its ability to mobilize that base for support. Therefore, like other insurgencies the war on terror is **population-centric**—its key activities relate to protecting the world's Muslim population from al Qaeda intimidation and manipulation, countering extremist propaganda, marginalizing insurgent movements, and meeting the population's legitimate grievances through a tailored, situation- and location-specific combination of principally non-military initiatives. Clearly, this differs substantially from a traditional counterterrorism approach, which is **enemy-centric**, focusing on disrupting and eliminating terrorist cells themselves rather than on controlling the broader environment in which they operate. But, unlike other insurgent movements, the "given territory" in which al Qaeda seeks to operate is the entire globe, and the "political order" it seeks to overthrow relates to the political order within the entire Muslim world and the relationship between the Muslim community, or ummah, and the rest of world society. This has the following major implications for international security:

- The **unprecedented scale and ambition** of this insurgent movement, and the unprecedented connectivity and **"aggregation effect"** it has achieved through access to the tools of globalization, renders many traditional counter-insurgency approaches ineffective. For example, traditional "hearts and minds" activities are directed at winning the support of the population in a territory where insurgents operate. But under conditions of globalized insurgency, the world's entire Muslim population, and the populations of most Western countries, are targets of enemy propaganda and hence a potential focus for information operations. But such a large and diverse target set is, by definition, not susceptible

to traditional locally tailored hearts and minds activities. Likewise, traditional counterinsurgency approaches that use improved governance and legitimacy to marginalize insurgents may work at a local level with people in a given insurgent operating area, but have little impact on **remote sources of insurgent support** (such as Internet-based financial support or propaganda support from distant countries).

- This implies the need for **unprecedented international cooperation** in countering the threat. Since 9/11, such cooperation has in fact been excellent (especially in areas such as transportation security and terrorist financing). U.S. leadership has been central to this effort, but international support for U.S. initiatives has waned substantially since the immediate post-9/11 period, largely as a result of international partners' dissatisfaction with U.S. unilateralism, perceived human rights abuses (renditions, "torture," Guantanamo Bay, CIA secret prisons, deaths in custody) and the Iraq War. This implies that America's international reputation, moral authority, diplomatic weight, persuasive ability, cultural attractiveness, and strategic credibility—our "soft power"—is not an optional adjunct to our military strength. Rather, it is a **critical enabler for a permissive operating environment**, the prime political component in countering a globalized insurgency. This in turn implies the need for greater balance between the key elements (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) of U.S. national power.
- Al Qaeda acts as "inciter-in-chief," or as Dr. Zawahiri describes it, the "vanguard of the ummah," acting as a revolutionary party that seeks to build mass consciousness in the ummah through provocation and spectacular acts of "resistance" to the existing world order. It works through regional affiliates (al Qaeda in Iraq, AQI; al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP; Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, GSPC; Jemaah Islamiah, JI; Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, HIG; Taliban, etc.) to co-opt and **aggregate the effects of multiple, diverse local actors** in more than 60 countries. It is this ability to aggregate multiple players and point all their efforts in the same direction (via propaganda, technical assistance, broad strategic direction, and occasional direct intervention) that gives al Qaeda its strength. This implies that a **strategy of disaggregation**, which seeks to cut the links between al Qaeda central leadership and its local and regional allies and supporters, may be more successful than policies that lump all threat groups into the undifferentiated category of "terrorists."

"An indirect, highly localized approach, working by with or through local partners wherever possible, is likely to be much more successful than a policy of direct U.S. intervention."

- Fundamental to a successful counterinsurgency is an ability to undercut the insurgents' appeal by discrediting their propaganda, exposing their motives, and convincing at-risk populations to reject insurgent co-option and intimidation. In the context of a globalized insurgency this translates into diplomatic initiatives that **undercut al Qaeda's credibility** on issues such as Israel/Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Iraq. It also suggests the need for political initiatives to **construct credible alternatives** for the world's Muslim population, instead of the current

limited choice between support for al Qaeda or "collaboration" with the West. It also points to the value of **strategic information warfare** (or counterpropaganda) to discredit al Qaeda and inoculate at-risk populations—including Muslim immigrant populations in the West—against its appeal.

- The final major implication is that an **indirect, highly localized approach**, working with or through local partners wherever possible, is likely to be much more successful than a policy of direct U.S. intervention. This is because many governments in the world resent U.S. interference in their internal affairs or cannot, for reasons of domestic public opinion, accept direct U.S. assistance in counterterrorism operations, thus rendering overtly U.S.-controlled or U.S.-funded approaches unacceptable. On the other hand, virtually every government in the world has an interest in protecting itself against domestic terrorism and subversion inspired by extremist movements. Therefore, to the greatest extent possible, the United States should seek to build genuine partnerships with local government and non-state networks, operate behind the scenes, avoid large-scale commitment of U.S. combat forces, support locally-devised initiatives, and apply diplomatic suasion to modify local government behavior. There is thus a tradeoff between effectiveness and control, with local initiatives involving less U.S. control but more likelihood of success. In military doctrinal terms, countering globalized insurgency therefore looks less like traditional counterinsurgency, and much more like a very robust information and foreign assistance program, supported by stabilization operations and Foreign Internal Defense (FID) approaches only where absolutely needed.

The role of local governments is fundamental to the next model for understanding the threat, that of an Islamic civil war.

CIVIL WAR WITHIN ISLAM

The "Islamic civil war" thesis suggests that the current turmoil within the Muslim world, along with the spillover of violence from Muslim countries into the international community via globalized insurgency and terrorism, arises from a civil war within Islam. There are several variants of this model, but all see al Qaeda and its associated neo-salafi jihadist movements as posing a **primary threat to the status quo in Muslim countries** through activities directed initially at overthrowing the existing power structure within the Islamic world, and only then turning to remake the political relationship between the ummah and the rest of global society. A second component is the so-called **Shiite Revival**, involving the rise of Shiite theocracy under the banner of the Iranian Islamic Revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology of vilayet-e faqih, and the **empowerment of the Iraqi Shiite majority** as a side effect of the fall of Saddam Hussein. This revival is deeply disruptive of established structures in the Muslim world, especially in countries (such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, several Gulf states, and Pakistan) that have substantial but politically disenfranchised Shiite minorities, some of which (as in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province) happen to live atop extremely substantial oil and gas reserves, making political instability in these areas a global concern. The **role of Hezbollah**—as a Shiite oriented terrorist/insurgent/propaganda/charity organization with global reach, major political influence in the Levant, and a client-proxy relationship with the Iranian regime—is a non-state component of this phenomenon. A third element in the "Islamic civil war" thesis is the **geopolitical rise of Iran in its own right**, as a powerful nation-state, potential nuclear power and regional hegemon. Iran sits in a strategically unassailable position—astride the Gulf, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan—with a large population and territory, increasing regional influence, and the potential for a satellite proxy-state in miniature

Understanding al Qaeda Strategy and Tactics

Al Qaeda is the principal extremist adversary of the United States at this stage of the protracted struggle against violent extremism. Therefore an understanding of the specifics of al Qaeda strategy and tactics is helpful in framing a broader response to the extremist threat.

Basic strategy: Bleed the United States to exhaustion, while using U.S. provocation to incite a mass uprising within the Islamic world.

In a statement released on jihadist websites on December 27, 2004, Osama bin Laden outlined al Qaeda's strategic approach as follows:

> "All that we have mentioned has made it easy to **provoke and bait** this [U.S.] administration. All we have to do is to send two *mujahidin* to the furthest point East to raise a cloth on which is written al Qaeda, in order to make the [U.S.] generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic and political losses without achieving for it anything of note…so we are continuing this **policy of bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy.** Allah willing and nothing is too great for Allah." (emphasis added)

Other al Qaeda statements have indicated a strategic intent to provoke America into actions across the Muslim world that will destroy its credibility and that of the "apostate" regimes it supports, inciting the global Islamic population (the ummah) to rise up and reject these regimes, create a neo-salafist Caliphate, restore Islam to its rightful place within the Islamic world and then launch an offensive jihad to subjugate all non-Muslim peoples, in accordance with Muhammad's command to "fight them until they say 'There is no God but Allah'" [*ahadith* al-Bukhârî (25) and Muslim (21)]. From this it can seen that al Qaeda's strategy is fundamentally one of bleeding the United States to exhaustion, while simultaneously using U.S. provocation to incite a mass uprising within the Islamic world. Al Qaeda itself sees its own function primarily as a propaganda hub and incitement mechanism, mobilizing the ummah and provoking Western actions that alienate the Muslim world, in order to further this strategy.

Key tactics: provocation, intimidation, protraction, exhaustion

In support of this strategy, al Qaeda applies four basic tactics that are standard approaches in any insurgency:

- **Provocation** — commit atrocities that prompt opponents to react irrationally in ways that harm their interests.
- **Intimidation** — prevent local populations from cooperating with governments or coalition forces by publicly killing those who collaborate, and co-opting others.
- **Protraction** — draw out the conflict in order to exhaust opponents, erode their political will, and avoid losses by going quiet when pressure becomes too severe, emerging later to fight on.
- **Exhaustion** — encourage numerous, onerous, high-cost defensive activities that soak up the adversary's scarce resources while doing little to advance their strategy.

in Southern Iraq. Again, this increase in Iranian influence is threatening and de-stabilizing to regional players like the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Saudi Arabia in particular. This process of turmoil and internal conflict within the Islamic world has several major implications for U.S. national security strategy:

- In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 the United States opted for a **policy of direct intervention in the Muslim world**, recognizing that instability and conflict within Islam had the potential to spill over and inflict substantial damage on the West, and on the United States in particular. This policy sought to fundamentally restructure the Islamic world in order to remove the perceived causes of extremism. This activist policy approach was very understandable given the need to be seen to do something after the immense provocation of the 9/11 attacks, but its results (the enormous strategic, moral, and material costs of the Iraq War, the failure of the Middle East Democratization Agenda, the widespread unpopularity of the United States and a boost to al Qaeda recruitment and support) have proven contrary to our interests. The alternative option would have been to contain the problem, prevent spillover into the rest of global society, and encourage and support Muslim leaders to resolve the internal turmoil within Islam on their own terms. Going forward, we might choose to regard direct engagement and arm's-length containment as opposite ends of a **spectrum of intervention**, and to adopt a more balanced response that makes limited use of intervention within the context of a broader containment approach.
- One obvious implication is that, under current conditions, the United States is **fighting all sides at once** within the internal conflict inside Islam. Iran and al Qaeda are natural opponents, as are Shiite communitarian militias and Sunni rejectionist insurgents in Iraq. But we are currently fighting all sides, partly because we have stepped into the middle of an internal conflict, prompting all players to turn against our intervention, and partly because we have been insufficiently agile in **distinguishing different and contradictory forms of Islamic extremism** from each other. In some cases we have fought enemies who perhaps did not need to be fought, and in others we have chosen to fight enemies simultaneously who could have been fought in sequence.
- A further implication is that we are failing to exploit the ideological and interest-based differences between our various opponents (akin to the Cold War Sino-Soviet split). These differences exist not only between Shiite and Sunni groups, but also within Sunni extremist movements, which have a **strong tendency to fragment** along ideological lines into ever smaller and more fanatical groups. The *takfiri* extremist enemy is **naturally vulnerable to a disaggregation approach** that seeks to turn factions against each other and disrupt the overall effects of extremist activity.
- A final observation is that there is a certain amount of **irrationality in our Iran policy**, arising in part from the experiences of 1979-80. There is baggage on both sides, of course: some Iranians remember the U.S-led overthrow of the Mossadeq government in 1953 with vivid bitterness. This history sometimes makes American policy makers reluctant to accept Iran's importance in the region, and hence the legitimacy of Iranian aspirations to play a regional role, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. Distinguishing Iran, as a country, from the Islamic regime in Tehran (and from the Iranian people) is the key to developing an effective Iran policy. The youthfulness of Iran's population, and their widespread dissatisfaction with the only regime many Iranians have ever known, is a key advantage for the United States. But our lack of diplomatic representation in Tehran, and the

non-normalization of our relationship, severely limits our options and our situational awareness. This makes it hard for us to clearly discern the Iranian role in an Islamic civil war, or to formulate workable policy responses to it.

ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

The "asymmetric warfare" model examines the current security environment structurally rather than politically, from the standpoint of military capability. It argues that the underlying strategic logic of irregular and unconventional warfare (UW) arises from a fundamental mismatch (or asymmetry) between U.S. military capabilities and those of the rest of the world. The United States currently possesses a degree of military superiority in conventional warfighting capability that is unprecedented in world history. No other nation, or combination of nations, could expect to take on the United States in a conventional force-on-force engagement with any prospect of victory. This is underlined by the enormity of American defense spending: in 2003, the U.S. defense budget accounted for 49 percent of total global defense spending, with the other 51 percent representing every other country. In 2007, taking into account supplemental budget allocations for the Iraq War, the U.S. defense budget approached 70 percent of total global defense spending. This unprecedented investment in conventional military capability has created an asymmetry between U.S. capabilities and those of virtually all other actors (friendly or otherwise) in the international security environment, with the following major implications:

- Under these conditions, and regardless of ideology, **any rational adversary is likely to fight the United States using non-conventional means**. These may include propaganda and subversion, terrorist attacks against the homeland, guerrilla warfare, weapons of mass effect, or attempts to drag conventional forces into protracted engagements for little strategic gain, so as to exhaust political support for a conflict. Given overwhelming U.S. conventional superiority, **any smart enemy goes unconventional**—and most enemies are likely to continue doing so, until we demonstrate the ability to prevail in irregular conflicts such as those in which we are currently engaged.
- Because the United States has the capability to destroy any other nation-state on the face of the earth, **belief in the fundamentally benign intent of the United States becomes a critical factor in other countries' strategic calculus**. Intelligence threat assessments typically examine capability and intent, with a focus on capability because intent is subject to much more rapid and unpredictable change. But the destructive capability of the United States is so asymmetrically huge, vis-à-vis every other nation, that unless other countries can be assured of our benign intent, they must rationally treat us as a threat and take steps to balance our power, contain it, or defend themselves against it. Thus the widely observed phenomenon of countries "bandwagoning" or engaging in balancing behavior against the United States—along with countries seeking non-conventional means of attack and defense—may not necessarily be an indicator of hostile intent on these countries' part, but rather a rational response to our overwhelming military capability. Assuring other nations that the United States will exercise its power responsibly, sparingly, virtuously, and in accordance with international norms is therefore not an optional luxury, but rather a key strategic requirement in order to prevent an adversarial balance-of-power response to the unprecedented scale of American military power.
- This means that the tendency toward forms of warfare that combine terrorism, insurgency, propaganda, and economic warfare in order to sidestep U.S. conventional capability is **not solely a Muslim phenomenon** (despite this form of conflict being dubbed **Islamic resistance**

warfare by some analysts). It may be that Islamist groups such as al Qaeda and Hezbollah have been pioneers in applying this form of warfare. But Chinese analysts published a study of unrestricted warfare a decade ago, several far left and extreme environmentalist groups are known to have studied al Qaeda methods, and at least two other countries (in Latin America and Southeast Asia) have adopted warfighting concepts that seek to exploit asymmetric advantages against the United States and turn our very superiority in conventional warfighting against us.

- A key element of adversary advantage in confronting U.S. conventional superiority is **asymmetry of cost**. Currently the United States is spending in excess of $400 million *per day* in Iraq, a level of spending (drawn entirely from supplemental allocations and therefore representing un-forecast and borrowed funds) that is clearly unsustainable over the long term. By contrast, adversaries deliberately adopt low-cost methods in order to sustain their operations over a longer time period than America can, for an acceptable cost.
- Another key aspect of asymmetry in United States capability is the **mismatch between military and non-military elements of national power**. U.S. military capability not only overshadows the capabilities of all other militaries combined, it also dwarfs U.S. civilian capabilities. As an example, there are 1.68 million uniformed personnel in the U.S. armed forces. By comparison, taking diplomatic capacity as a surrogate metric for other forms of civilian capability, the State Department employs about 6,000 Foreign Service Officers, while the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has about 2,000. In other words, in personnel terms the Department of Defense is about 210 times larger than USAID and State combined. In budgetary terms the mismatch is far greater, on the order of 350:1. This represents a substantial asymmetry, particularly when it is realized that the typical size ratio between armed forces and diplomatic/aid agencies for other Western democracies is on the order of 8-10:1. The overwhelming size and capacity of the U.S. armed forces has a distorting effect on U.S. national power and on our ability to execute international security programs that balance military with non-military elements of national power.
- Even within the armed forces, there is a substantial mismatch between the capability types needed for the current international security environment and the capabilities actually held in the U.S. military inventory. This mismatch is starkest in terms of the **lack of capacity for stabilization and reconstruction** operations, and for counterinsurgency or FID. The vast majority of defense capability is oriented to conventional warfighting roles and tasks, while even within Special Operations Forces (SOF) the primary focus is on Direct Action rather than on capabilities that support an indirect approach. At a higher level of abstraction, the resources available for land force operations (including both Army and Marine ground forces and the air and maritime assets from all services that support their operations) are substantially overstretched in comparison to resources for conventional air and maritime warfighting operations that are far more expensive, but much less likely to be called upon. Thus the U.S. military exhibits both a **capability mismatch** and an **asymmetry of capacity**.

Despite all this, the United States has enduring requirements to meet alliance obligations, deal with the potential for conventional adversaries, and hedge against the threat of major theater conflict. In addition, because capabilities for irregular or unconventional conflict are much cheaper to acquire than those for conventional conflict,

they are paradoxically less likely to be developed, since a substantial portion of the American economy—and numerous jobs in almost every congressional district—are linked to the production of conventional warfighting capacity. This makes it highly unlikely that the United States would fundamentally reorient its military capabilities away from conventional warfighting, or divert a significant proportion of defense spending into civilian capacity. Hence, absent a concerted effort by the nation's leadership in both the Executive and Legislative branches, the pattern of asymmetric warfare—with the United States adopting a fundamentally conventional approach but being opposed by enemies who seek to sidestep our conventional power—is likely to be a long-standing trend.

"TOP 10" DEDUCTIONS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Based on the conceptual frameworks identified above, it is possible to draw the following top ten deductions from this analysis of the environment:

1. *This will be a protracted conflict.* Because the drivers of conflict in the current security environment (backlash against globalization, a globalized insurgency, a "civil war" within Islam, and a fundamental mismatch between our capabilities and the requirements of the environment) lie predominantly outside our control, our ability to terminate this conflict on our own terms or within our preferred timeline is extremely limited. The closest historical analogies we have for the current pattern of conflict are the European religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Cold War against communism from 1919–1989, and the Wars of Decolonization from 1945–1996. These analogies are not perfect, but there is no reason to suppose that the current cycle of conflicts will take a substantially shorter period of time to play out than did previous cycles. This would suggest a **likely duration of this conflict of between 50 and 100 years**, though within that time frame we might expect several phases of hot and cold conflict, relative peace, or acute instability. This is therefore a multi-generational conflict, with potentially dramatic consequences for the future of the entire human race.

> *"Lumping together all terrorist or extremist groups and all insurgent or militia organizations under the undifferentiated concept of a War on Terrorism makes the challenge substantially harder than it needs to be."*

2. *Need for a measured approach to national mobilization.* Given the extremely long-term nature of this conflict, there is a need for a degree of national mobilization to support its conduct. In particular, the American people need to be educated and convinced of the nature and seriousness of the threat, and they need to be convinced of the efficacy of the strategy applied to deal with it. But at the same time, because al Qaeda strategy is fundamentally designed to bleed the United States to exhaustion (see box, above) to the United States must impose tight spending limits and cost ceilings on the degree of effort applied to deal with the threat. **This is a marathon, but since 2001 we have approached it with spending policies designed**

for a sprint. A careful risk calculus is required, which determines how much effort and money can legitimately be spent in dealing with the threat, before the very level of expenditure and activity itself becomes self-defeating by playing into the enemy's strategy. This will be an extremely tough political sell, requiring high-level national political leadership and a high degree of consensus across party lines and between branches of government.

"A low-profile civilian presence will always be preferable to a military presence, and where a military presence is essential it should be as stealthy and unobtrusive as possible."

3. *Need to disaggregate and distinguish between enemies.* The United States faces an extremely diverse threat picture, with multiple adversaries who oppose each other's interests as well as those of the West. Lumping together all terrorist or extremist groups and all insurgent or militia organizations under the undifferentiated concept of a war on terrorism makes the challenge substantially harder than it needs to be. Instead, U.S. strategy should be to disaggregate adversaries, separate them from each other, turn them against each other where possible, and deal with those that need to be dealt with in sequence rather than simultaneously. This requires a more **calculating response to risk assessment** and a willingness to talk to, or deal with, players whose ideology we may reject or who may be past (or indeed future) enemies.
4. *Need to use military force extremely sparingly.* Because of the "antibody response" generated by deploying U.S. combat forces into direct operations against an irregular enemy within Muslim countries (especially those whose governments are undermined by appearing too closely associated with the United States), and because of the need to radically constrain costs in order to counteract al Qaeda's exhaustion strategy, the **use of U.S. military forces (ground, air, or maritime) in a direct combat role in this protracted conflict must be considered a last resort**. None of this means that combat forces will not be committed in large numbers from time to time: they undoubtedly will. But since the al Qaeda strategy is precisely to provoke such large-scale commitments and then use them to exhaust the United States while inciting resentment in the Muslim world, such commitments must be applied extremely sparingly.
5. *Limited role of government agencies.* Governments do not control processes of globalization, the rise of violent non-state actors, or the increasingly self-synchronized international economy and information domain to anywhere near the extent they did even a decade ago. For this reason, **government agencies have relatively limited leverage in certain key parts of the threat environment**, especially in the now heavily deregulated and diversified information and media domain, and in some aspects of economic and reconstruction activity. Private sector entities, working in partnership with governments and local communities, have a substantial role in these aspects of the struggle against extremism, and can often generate greater agility and better leverage than government agencies.

6. *The indirect approach*. Wherever possible, U.S. interests will be best served by working b**y, with, or through a local partner**, adopting an indirect approach that ruthlessly minimizes American presence. Where such presence is necessary, a low-profile civilian presence will always be preferable to a military presence; where a military presence is essential it should be as stealthy and unobtrusive as possible, and tied to strictly limited and defined objectives. This will assist in minimizing the resentment provoked by direct military intervention, while side-stepping the enemy's provocation and exhaustion strategy.
7. *Non-military means in national security*. Because of the overwhelming military superiority of the United States, which drives all rational adversaries to adopt asymmetric and irregular approaches, it follows that U.S. military superiority is a "given" in most strategic scenarios, especially those involving direct intervention. By contrast, the scarce assets within the U.S. government (USG) system are diplomats, appropriately qualified intelligence personnel, foreign assistance teams, information officers, humanitarian assistance teams, advisors, and civilian personnel trained in stabilization and reconstruction operations. This, in turn, means that the **success of a given intervention is likely to depend on the speed and effectiveness with which non-military elements of national security capability can be brought to bear**, and effectively coordinated with extant military capabilities.
8. *Primacy of virtue, moral authority, and credibility*. Al Qaeda and other opponents directly challenge the legitimacy of the United States through accusations that America supports, or itself inflicts, large-scale human rights abuses on the world's Muslim population; they argue that America exploits the rest of the world for its own purposes but applies hypocritical double standards to other countries. Because al Qaeda acts primarily as a propaganda and incitement hub, this narrative is strengthened every time U.S. actions in the war on terror can be plausibly portrayed as evil or hypocritical. Developing a "counter-narrative" that contradicts al Qaeda propaganda is necessary but not sufficient: the United States must also, as a matter of priority, **articulate and enact its own narrative** that explains and demonstrates to what end American actions are being taken, and why participation in the international community under U.S. leadership should be preferable to al Qaeda domination for the world's population.

"Developing a 'counter-narrative' that contradicts al Qaeda propaganda is necessary but not sufficient: the United States must also, as a matter of priority, articulate and enact its own narrative that explains and demonstrates to what end American actions are being taken."

9. *Need to rebalance capabilities.* There is a demonstrable need to achieve better **balance between the military and non-military elements of U.S. national power**, and to balance expensive but rarely-needed capabilities for conventional warfighting with cheap but frequently-needed capabilities for stabilization, reconstruction, and UW operations. Since this asymmetry is the only major driver of the current threat environment which lies within our control, addressing this imbalance would redress some of the impetus toward terrorist and insurgent activity on the part of U.S. adversaries, while better fitting the USG as a whole for the protracted conflict ahead.

"Counterterrorism cannot be the organizing principle for U.S. National Security Strategy: that organizing principle must be U.S. national interest."

10. *Need to rein in unsustainable spending and consolidate.* The level of activity and expenditure we have applied since 9/11 is unsustainable on economic grounds alone. It also involves enormous opportunity costs, as funds that could have been allocated to establishing sustainable long-term approaches to the problem have been spent instead on large-scale or wasteful high-profile projects. Because the enemy's strategy is to exhaust and bankrupt the United States, sharply limiting expenditure and adopting a **focus on small, local, low-cost programs** is likely to be much more effective. In addition, because of the overstretch and exhaustion suffered by the U.S. military—especially general-purpose ground forces—as a result of the conflict in Iraq, there is arguably a medium-term requirement to consolidate, rein in activity, and refurbish military capabilities while building new and complementary civilian capacity before again engaging in large-scale intervention operations.

Having examined in detail the threat environment and its implications, it is now possible to discern the outlines of an appropriate strategy for dealing with it.

Key Assumption

Rather than list in detail a series of obvious assumptions, such as the need to build effective international partnerships, create a bipartisan consensus for a sustainable long-term approach, or ensure the support and understanding of the American people for whatever strategy is adopted, this section describes a single, but important and somewhat counterintuitive assumption: that counterterrorism cannot be the organizing principle for U.S. national security strategy. That organizing principle must be U.S. national interest.

Terrorism is not the only threat or foreign policy issue we have to deal with. Others include WMD proliferation, rogue states, the real possibility of wars between nation-states, global warming, resource conflict, managing the rise of major powers and integrating them effectively into the international community. Therefore defeating terrorism **cannot be the organizing principle** for our foreign or national security policy. Moreover, organizing a national security strategy primarily around counterterrorism (as was the case with the June 2002 national security strategy) carries the risk that agencies will execute the strategy without due attention to the need to minimize cost and limit activities so as to avoid being drawn into the "provoke, exhaust, and bankrupt" strategy adopted by al Qaeda. This, to some extent, is what happened in the aftermath of the 2002 strategy.

Rather than countering terrorism (and hence, rather than framing national security policy around a construct such as a "war on terror" or some semantic variation of that term) the appropriate organizing principle for U.S. national security policy is the preservation of U.S. national interest. Our interests might include (but are not limited to):

- Prevention of further major terrorist attacks on the United States (especially those potentially involving WMD).
- Protecting our territory, population, and key infrastructure.
- Preserving our way of life as a free, open, and liberal democratic society under the rule of law.
- Containing the spillover from turmoil within the Muslim world into the rest of global society.
- Promoting the effective integration of Arab and Muslim countries into the modernized world as responsible and prosperous members of the international community.
- Maintaining the stability of the international system and the global economy.
- Preserving the moral authority and credibility of the West.

Since 9/11, the first two of these interests (preventing further attacks and protecting the homeland) have received almost all our attention; indeed, our actions to further these have arguably undermined the others, especially the last. With this assumption in mind, the next section describes a strategy designed to protect the full range of U.S. national interests outlined here.

The Strategy of Balanced Response

This section describes the strategic concept of Balanced Response in outline; subsequent sections provide additional detail.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this strategy is to preserve U.S. national security interests over a long-duration (30- to 50-year) protracted struggle against extremism, by transitioning the war on terror onto a sustainable long-term footing, in such a way that the enduring support of the American people and key U.S. allies can be ensured.

METHOD

The strategic approach proposed is a four-stage process, as follows: (1) consolidation, (2) containment, (3) rebalancing, and (4) reengagement.

Phase 1: Consolidation — 2009–2010

The initial stage of the strategy, between January 2009 and December 2010, is designed to regain the initiative by consolidating efforts into key geographical and functional areas, recovering assets to the continental United States (CONUS) as they become available, and initiating a comprehensive process of refurbishment and refit across the military and civilian agencies of the U.S. government. This approach is effective in regaining the initiative because it ceases the ongoing series of operations in which we react to enemy activities, and begins a series of proactive operations that gradually force the enemy to react to us. During this phase, we accept the strategic risk that some areas may suffer increased terrorism activity. Key actions are as follows:

- **Transition the campaign in Iraq to a FID approach**. The aim of this activity is to reduce the U.S. military footprint in Iraq to half the current level by late 2009. This would be achieved by creating a U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) theater reaction force and regional Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs) within Iraq, expanding Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) to approximately 50 personnel per team, retraining MiTTs to operate semi-autonomously in a manner similar to Special Forces Operational Detachments Alpha (ODAs), restructuring

Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams to partner with MiTTs (rather than brigades, as currently constituted), establishing a new and expanded logistic support element for the Iraqi Security Forces, reallocating ODAs from direct action to UW in partnership with tribal and local community forces, and retaining the existing Counterterrorism Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF). Once these preliminary steps are in place, Brigade Combat Teams would be progressively withdrawn from major combat operations into overwatch and QRF roles, then extracted to CONUS via Kuwait.

- **Reorient NATO forces in Afghanistan to counterinsurgency roles.** The aim of this activity is to improve performance in Afghanistan without increasing the U.S. military footprint. U.S. forces in Afghanistan currently bear the brunt of counterinsurgency operations, alongside a limited number of effective NATO and non-NATO allies. Other NATO partners have engaged to only a limited extent in counterinsurgency operations against the Taliban. The campaign in Afghanistan is currently at a tipping point and could go either way; diplomatic efforts to reorient NATO partners to a more effective counterinsurgency approach, combined with training activities via an expanded Afghan Counterinsurgency School and a comprehensive Government of Afghanistan-led campaign plan will assist in preventing major backsliding in this area during the consolidation phase.
- **Focus intelligence and diplomatic effort on Pakistan**. Pakistan is currently the main locus of al Qaeda-linked activity, along with very significant insurgent activity linked both to the Afghan Taliban and to local warlords and "home-grown" Taliban. This is arguably the most dangerous theater in the entire war on terrorism, in terms of its ability to directly affect Western interests. State Department-led civilian counterinsurgency programs in Pakistan, supported by intelligence activity to support local government counterterrorism programs, and diplomatic pressure to restore democratic government and resolve regional crises in Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are key activities in gaining a measure of control over the situation.

Phase 2: Containment — 2009–2014

Concurrent with phases 1–3 of the strategy, containment is designed to prevent a major eruption of terrorist activity and insurgent violence during the consolidation and rebalancing stages, when U.S. forward-deployed presence would be reduced and substantial effort made to reorient USG capabilities, thus limiting the availability of military forces for contingency operations. The intent is to limit the threat from al Qaeda, Iran, Hezbollah, North Korea, and other major threat actors by disrupting or constraining their activities. Key actions are as follows:

- **Contain the Iranian regime by driving a wedge between the regime and the people**. Initiatives to bomb Iran in order to disrupt progress toward a nuclear device are extremely unlikely to succeed. Via the "9/11 effect" such activities would most likely consolidate the people on nationalistic grounds behind the regime, however unpopular, and might buy the regime an extra ten years in power. Instead, in order to contain Iran during the consolidation phase, the United States should make the regime a series of diplomatic offers that it could not accept, but which the Iranian people would see as extremely positive, thus driving a wedge between the regime and its people. Such a move would force the regime to expend significant "bandwidth" in internal control and repressive activities that would limit its resources for external disruption, while further weakening its grasp. These diplomatic offers could include access to a substantial number of light water nuclear reactors without

the capacity for fuel rod reprocessing, major fuel import and trading concessions, removal from the "axis of evil" list, opening of diplomatic relations with the United States, relaxation of visa restrictions, a large-scale educational exchange program and, potentially, a presidential visit to Tehran. This set of offers, if made publicly, would be extremely unlikely to be accepted by the regime, but their non-acceptance would probably create widespread dissatisfaction with the regime among the Iranian people.

- **Conduct a major diplomatic offensive in support of the Israel-Palestine peace process**. Because of its importance as a major propaganda cause and popular grievance within the Muslim world, energetic and serious action to reinvigorate the Israel-Palestine peace process (which has experienced a degree of neglect since 9/11) could have a substantial mollifying effect on public opinion in the Islamic world. This would undercut the appeal of al Qaeda and Hezbollah propaganda and help contain turmoil and violence in the region and in the Muslim world more broadly. This phase therefore includes a major multilateral diplomatic offensive, conducted in coordination with European and UN leaders to move the peace process towards a supervised two-state solution with effective governance for Palestinians and secure borders for Israel.
- **Contain bleed-out from Iraq**. Once major military operations begin to wind down in Iraq, we expect an outflow of foreign fighters returning to their countries of origin, leading to an increase in internal unrest and jihadist subversion and terrorism across North Africa, much of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, and parts of Europe. This phase therefore includes a series of diplomatic and intelligence initiatives to track, intercept, kill/capture, de-radicalize, and reintegrate returning foreign fighters from Iraq.
- **Partner with European governments and Muslim populations to contain the spread of jihadist propaganda**. Muslim immigrant populations in the West are not a "fifth column" or source of threat, but rather a target of enemy subversive activity and extremist propaganda. Europe is currently the area most at risk of terrorism and political destabilization as a result of such propaganda within immigrant populations. Therefore this phase includes an effort to partner with European governments and leaders of Muslim immigrant communities in the West to improve community cohesion and make it easier to detect, deal with, and de-radicalize individuals affected by extremist propaganda.
- **Build tribal and local allies to contain Taliban and Iranian cross-border activities**. Working with tribes on the Afghan-Pakistan, Afghan-Iranian, and Iraqi-Iranian border, build local alliances to detect and contain Iranian and Taliban cross-border raiding, infiltration, and economic warfare activities. The same local alliances will be used in phase 4, reengagement, to facilitate disruption of these activities.

Phase 3: Rebalancing — 2009–2014

The third phase of the strategy begins concurrently with phase 1, but lasts longer due to the requirement to rebalance forces as and when they are released from current operations. The intent is to rebalance U.S. civilian and military capabilities, reorient and retrain existing organizations, and refit the USG for subsequent operations during the reengagement phase. This phase exploits the breathing space created by the "operational pause" of consolidation, to develop new instruments of national power better suited to current conditions. Key activities include:

- **Refit general-purpose forces for stabilization, reconstruction, counterinsurgency, and FID**. This includes development of key personnel streams (such as linguists, cultural advisors, infrastructure specialists. etc.), changes to

organizational and unit structures, acquisition of some major new systems including capabilities for protected urban mobility and distributed networked operations, major training and education programs, and development of new doctrine, including joint and interagency doctrine. Some capabilities that currently reside primarily within SOF (such as FID and some forms of advisory missions) would be proliferated into the wider general-purpose force. A limited number of units (approximately 15 percent of all ground forces and the air and maritime assets that support them) would be retained in a major conventional warfighting role; the remaining 85 percent of ground forces would be reoriented to the current operational mission set of stabilization, reconstruction, counterinsurgency, and FID.

- **Re-invigorate SOF capabilities for UW.** Currently the majority of deployed SOF elements are tasked with direct action, a situation that, over time, has led to the deterioration of some UW skills and capabilities. To compensate for the proliferation of FID and advisory missions to some general-purpose forces, SOF will be retrained, reequipped and provided with additional personnel, funding, and equipment for UW, with a focus on building local and tribal alliances and working more effectively—and on a larger scale than at present—with surrogate forces.
- **Develop early-entry civilian capabilities**. This would primarily focus on creating "hardened" diplomats, aid officials, and other civilian specialists capable of embedding with military forces, entering a theater alongside combat units and commencing political, economic, and governance operations early in a campaign before the environment is completely secured. Such teams would have their own mobility and communications assets, and would be self-protecting under conditions short of high-intensity ground combat. A limited number (up to 1500, including rotation base) of personnel would be developed initially, with an option for subsequent expansion of the program.
- **Expand the American Presence Post and Transformational Diplomacy initiatives.** Existing State Department initiatives to create single-diplomat American Presence Posts as an aid to situational awareness and political influence have progressed well to date but would be expanded under rebalancing. The State Department's Transformational Diplomacy initiative would also be expanded, with additional funding provided for a significantly expanded Foreign Service (growing by 50 percent in the first five years of the strategy) and for incentives management tools to enable increased volunteer service in Transformational Diplomacy posts.
- **Enact the Civilian Reserve Corps**. The Civilian Reserve Corps initiative, a Bush administration activity, would be funded, established and put into operation as part of Rebalancing.
- **Expand USAID field-deployable permanent staff**. Rebalancing would include a substantial expansion of USAID conflict mitigation and management staff, and a change in the USAID business model to incorporate a greater number of permanent staff (as distinct from individual contractors) in field positions. Over the initial period of rebalancing, an expansion of 50 percent of permanent AID staff would occur, with the option of further expansion later. This would be supported by a substantial augmentation, on the order of $10 billion, in the foreign assistance budget, with these funds to be offset against military supplemental expenditure currently allocated to operations in Iraq in FY09.
- **Create a national police force**. A federal uniformed police force with constabulary capabilities and a mandate to train, equip, and mentor foreign police and constabulary forces would be established. This would initially be small (less than 2000 personnel) and would

draw on former members of state and local police forces, military police, and private sector security organizations for its initial pool of recruits. It would then operate in conjunction with the military and foreign police organizations in an investigative, enforcement, capacity building, and operational policing role. The force would include capabilities for community policing, paramilitary constabulary operations, and police intelligence.

- **Rebuild strategic information warfare capabilities**. A key element of rebalancing is the creation of effective capabilities for strategic information warfare, including public information, counterpropaganda, strategic influence operations, counter-ideology and counter-subversion. Given the current media environment, such capabilities would be managed by government agencies and overseen by an independent ethical and legal regulatory body, but would mainly execute their activities through public-private sector partnerships.

Phase 4: Reengagement — by 2014

The final phase of the strategy would begin as soon as sufficient rebalanced assets are available, rather than after rebalancing is fully complete. It will involve selective reengagement in key theaters of terrorist and insurgent activity, using a tailored combination of military and civilian assets and a minimal U.S. combat presence whenever possible. The intent is to selectively respond via direct intervention only to the most threatening elements in the extremist landscape, while working elsewhere through an indirect approach via local partnerships. The key to success in this phase is the rebuilding of American moral authority and credibility through successful diplomatic and informational initiatives during previous phases. Due to the contingent nature of this phase, specific actions will not be described in detail, as these will depend on a strategic assessment of the threat situation at the time.

END STATE

The desired end state is that the United States regains the initiative in the conflict against extremism, rebalances capabilities to better match the current threat environment, rebuilds alliance relationships, moral authority, and strategic credibility, and is positioned — with key allies and partners by 2014 — to selectively reengage and respond in a balanced manner to extremist threats.

MAIN EFFORT BY PHASE

The main effort during phase 1 (consolidation) is to successfully disengage major U.S. combat forces from Iraq without a catastrophic deterioration in the security situation, a major humanitarian disaster, or the collapse of the Iraqi state.

The main effort during phase 2 (containment) is to neutralize al Qaeda armed propaganda activity and contain Iranian expansionism, in order to buy time for re-balancing.

The main effort during phase 3 (rebalancing) is to build sufficient field-capable civilian capacity to deploy balanced civil-military intervention teams for a major intervention by 2014 if required.

The main effort during phase 4 (reengagement) is to successfully retain strategic freedom of action by successfully applying an indirect approach to the threat environment.

INTERNATIONAL/DOMESTIC SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

The critical international support requirement is for diplomatic assistance from major powers (EU, China, Russia, India, Japan) and multilateral institutions in maintaining a high degree of international collaboration against the terrorist threat (including transportation and infrastructure security and terrorist financing). Secondary requirements are for combat forces, police, and civilian political and development agency personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq, and for support in diplomatic efforts to contain Iran and make substantial progress toward a settlement of the Israel-Palestine peace process.

The critical domestic support requirement is bipartisan consensus on the fundamentals of the strategy, which will take more than a single term to execute and, if successful, should set the direction of U.S. strategy against extremism for a decade or more. Secondary requirements are for a mobilized and resilient population, educated about the nature of the threat and the risks, and committed to the preservation of American interests (including a free, open, and democratic society).

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

The strategy can be considered successful if the following indicators are in place:

By December 2010: U.S. forces in Iraq are reduced to approximately 80,000; the campaign is successfully transitioned to a FID model; NATO forces are bearing a greater proportion of the coalition counterinsurgency burden in Afghanistan; there is improved Pakistani counterinsurgency and counterterrorism performance, in the context of a more broadly-based democratic government; forces initially extracted from Iraq are refitting in CONUS.

By December 2012: Iranian expansionist and disruptive tendencies in the region are effectively contained; civilian capabilities are established to initial field-capable level; sufficient forces are refitted and rebalanced to allow a tailored interagency civil-military intervention in one regional incident; a national police force is established; diplomatic initiatives in relation to Israel-Palestine, Iran, and Pakistan are on track with sufficient international support; 40 percent of U.S. ground forces have commenced the rebalancing program.

By December 2014: re-balancing is complete; effective partnerships are in place with local communities and government in Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East; support for American diplomatic and political initiatives in multilateral fora is restored to pre-Iraq War levels; civil-military capabilities are readied for reengagement in one major intervention campaign if needed.

ASSESSMENT

This section provides a concise preliminary assessment of the strategy and its main characteristics.

- **Benefits.** This strategy has the following key benefits:
  - It transitions the "war on terror" onto a politically and financially sustainable footing, thereby countering al Qaeda's strategy of provocation, exhaustion, and bankruptcy.
  - It rebalances U.S. civil and military capabilities, redressing the imbalance in national power that is one key driver of the current conflict environment.
  - It recognizes the protracted, multi-generational nature of the struggle and focuses on an indirect approach through partners wherever possible, in order to minimize costs and limit U.S. exposure to political opposition.
  - It disaggregates and distinguishes between threat actors, playing them off against each other where possible and dealing with each in sequence rather than simultaneously.
  - It treats violent extremism as primarily a form of armed propaganda, and acts to undercut its appeal and discredit its proponents, marginalizing them from the broader global Muslim population.
- **Costs.** The financial, human, and political costs of this strategy are arguably substantially less than those involved in the current approach to the war on terror. There is potential for domestic political opposition to the strategy from some interest groups, and for negative reaction to certain initiatives (for example, engagement with Iran) from allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia. These costs can be minimized by effective diplomatic engagement with these allies and interest groups.
- **Risks.** This strategy accepts the risk of deterioration in the international security environment during the consolidation and containment

phases. It seeks to mitigate risk by adopting a measured approach to drawdown in Iraq, and by retaining powerful air-ground-maritime strike forces forward-deployed in the CENTCOM area of responsibility in case of a sudden deterioration in the situation. However, the strategy frankly accepts a degree of risk as the price that must be paid in order to pull back sufficiently and generate enough of an operational pause to allow effective rebalancing and subsequent reengagement.

- **Challenges and obstacles.** Key challenges are:
  - The slim but real chance of a catastrophic collapse of the security situation in Iraq following a U.S. withdrawal, leading to the unpalatable choice of either re-intervening before refitting and rebalancing is complete, or watching a major humanitarian disaster play out on the international media stage, with inevitable loss of credibility and moral authority for the United States.
  - The possibility that Iran will acquire nuclear weapons at some point during the next five years, and that some allies may seek to launch military action to prevent or preempt this. Such action would buy the regime in Tehran another ten years, while destabilizing the wider region and potentially leading to widespread terrorist action by Hezbollah.
  - Domestic opposition to rebalancing based on the economic benefits accrued within key congressional districts through spending on conventional warfighting capability.
  - The possibility that efforts to adopt an indirect approach will fail in Pakistan, leading to the requirement for a large-scale intervention in an area that is arguably the most dangerous and unstable in the world.

Conclusion: Re-Framing the "War on Terrorism"

This briefing paper has outlined one possible assessment of the threat environment, and supported it with one potential strategic approach to dealing with that threat. In doing so, the paper has suggested that the threat environment is too complex and rapidly changing to be fully understood through a single conceptual model, and instead applied four (the globalization backlash thesis, the globalized insurgency model, the concept of a civil war within Islam, and the asymmetric warfare model) to explain the key drivers and characteristics of the contemporary conflict environment.

The paper concluded that counterterrorism is insufficiently comprehensive to serve as an organizing principle for U.S. national security strategy, and that preservation of U.S. national interest was a more appropriate conceptual tool. To support the national interests identified, the paper suggested a strategy of Balanced Response, involving four overlapping phases of consolidation, containment, rebalancing and reengagement as a means to transition the protracted struggle against extremism onto a sustainable, long-term footing.

This implies that the notion of a "war on terrorism" is markedly inappropriate for the current environment, and that the challenge would be better framed as a protracted multidimensional struggle against extremism, which requires a balanced response executed, wherever possible, through an indirect approach.

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY: A KEY ELEMENT TO COMBATING RADICAL ISLAMIST TERRORISM

By Larry Diamond

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More than seven years after the September 11 attacks, the United States, Europe, and most of the rest of the world still face the serious threat of deadly terrorist violence from the current manifestations of al Qaeda and other radical Islamist networks loosely affiliated with it, inspired by it, or emanating from similar ideological origins and political and social grievances. These groups pose a fundamentally political challenge that can only be effectively contained and ultimately defeated with a political strategy that undermines their ideological-cum-religious challenge to the existing order, their countries, and the world.

Defining the Problem

The problem is not just a military or security one. Political, social, cultural, and economic grievances are driving mobilization by and recruitment to Islamist terrorist networks, as well as encouraging the broader milieus of sympathy and support that enable terrorist cells and leaders to survive and operate. Broader geopolitical grievances and stresses in the Middle East certainly feed the climate of anger, frustration, humiliation, and insecurity. The geopolitical dimensions of the problem cannot be addressed here in great detail, except to state that the United States cannot get dramatic traction on the radical Islamist terrorist challenge without breakthroughs on the geopolitical front, particularly in the Middle East. These breakthroughs must involve a viable peace between Israel and the Palestinians based on a two-state solution; a broader peace between Israel and its neighbors; and stabilization of Iraq in some way short of disintegration or the establishment of an Islamic state or mini-states, followed by the gradual withdrawal of U.S. military forces from most or all of Iraq and much of the rest of the region. Eventually, it will need to involve a transition in Iran from the current decrepit Islamic state, which is gasping for legitimacy, to a pluralistic democracy that will substantially separate religion and politics. European countries will also need to find ways

to more effectively integrate their Muslim populations and to give them dignity and a voice.

These challenges must be addressed, but doing so will not be enough. To blunt and reverse the radical Islamist challenge, change is needed within the conservative, authoritarian Muslim states, particularly in the Arab world, that now breed the social and political frustrations that feed violent extremist Islamist ideologies and movements. So many Muslim countries and societies, particularly in the Arab Middle East but also in countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, fail to provide development, social justice, political voice, and human dignity to their citizens.

"The challenge is not just one of rising frustration and alienation, but also of increasing capacity and resolve from below to do something about it."

Geopolitical factors and internal domestic problems feed into a broad sense of humiliation, subordination, and shame that seeks psychological release and political vindication. A grasp of this element of psychological affliction is essential to understanding why prosperous middle-class professionals, many of them residing in Europe and even in the United States and some of them second-generation immigrants and therefore citizens, are recruited to the terrorist cause. The terrorist cause is not just about immediate tangible grievances such as the lack of dignified jobs, decent education, and housing. It is also about intangible feelings of failure, inferiority, and powerlessness, which result in a burning, angry determination to show the West and the world that "I am somebody, I can be powerful, and I will show you how in a way you won't forget."

The underlying problems of humiliation, hopelessness, disempowerment, and marginalization are likely to intensify in many of these countries over the next few decades unless governance radically improves and development sharply lowers birth rates. Countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Pakistan have bulging youth populations (with the majority of the population under 25 years of age and fully one-third under the age of 15) that generate massive demands for education, jobs, and social services. Egypt must generate more than one-half of a million jobs per year just to keep its economic nose above water. Moreover, its population of 80 million people will double in the next 40 years if birth rates do not decline much further.

The challenge is not just one of rising frustration and alienation but also of increasing capacity and resolve from below to do something about it. These young Arab (and other Muslim) populations are better informed—or at least more independently informed—about what is happening in the world than they used to be. They are better able to organize outside of government control, most of all in the deep social interstices between Islamic religious and social welfare networks and the intimately related political underground. Regime opponents are using the Internet with great energy to challenge the old order politically and intellectually. They are not going to sit back and take it anymore: that is one message of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

To the extent that the regimes of the Arab world do not reform politically and economically so that they become more open, dynamic, just, and democratic, they will erupt in one form or another over the coming years. What Thomas Friedman calls the "global supply chain" of suicide bombers

is one form of eruption. The wave of venomous anti-Americanism is another, as is the rising threat of radical Islamist terrorism inside Saudi Arabia. Sclerotic regimes that cannot generate jobs and hope at a faster rate than the population is growing cannot persist indefinitely. Moreover, the market-oriented economic reforms necessary to unleash growth are unlikely to occur adequately, or at least to cumulate to something serious and sustainable, without democratic change. Unless governments have much greater political legitimacy, they will not have the nerve and the autonomy from the decades-long accumulation of vested interests to take bold and difficult steps. A demographic time bomb is ticking in the Middle East, and it is going to sweep away a lot of Western-leaning regimes sooner or later unless real reform begins.

Of course, later could be a long time later. Knowing that—knowing how efficient, cunning, and ruthless the state security apparatus is in many of these countries; knowing the opportunism and insecurity of middle-class opposition groups that do not want to rock the boat; and understanding that change always carries short-term risks—U.S. policy makers have tended to opt for the devil they know and leave the longer-term future to the next administration.

Normatively and conceptually, we are at a historic juncture in which moral imperatives to support human rights and promote peaceful democratic change and security imperatives converge as never before. After September 11, the political transformation of Middle Eastern regimes toward greater freedom, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, and participation—and therefore a real capacity to achieve broad-based human development—has become not just a moral imperative but a necessary foundation for the security of Western democracies as well. Creating a new climate in the Middle East that is much less conducive to hatred and terrorism requires a sweeping improvement in the character and quality of governance.

How can the United States promote these changes in such a way that the search for an Arab Kerensky does not yield an Islamist Lenin instead? That is the core challenge, and there is no obvious and easy answer, because we cannot even be sure who among the Islamists is a Lenin—or bin Laden—and who is a potential Erdogan. We have to find out. The United States has to change its analytic and political paradigm. Just kicking the problem down the road while clinging to the immediate repressive stability that the Mubarak regime provides may be a short-term option, but it is not a long-term option. Either Egypt is going to find its way to much better governance, capable of generating real development, or at some point it is going to explode.

Key Assumptions

The United States is once again engaged in what President John F. Kennedy termed, when speaking of the Cold War battle against communism, "a long twilight struggle" against the enemies of freedom. Truly prevailing in this struggle, not to mention essentially eliminating this threat, must be considered a project that will run across decades, not years. As during the Cold War, the current global challenge involves a great contest of ideas and values and a struggle for hearts and minds. The United States cannot overcome a clear, morally passionate, ideologically intense challenge based in the more consummate legitimating cloth of religion (which communism was certainly not) without an alternative that addresses, and ultimately redresses, the grievances that have given rise to this challenge.

The alternative that blunts, contains, and ultimately saps and defeats the radical Islamist challenge must meet that challenge in its multiple dimensions: moral, political, economic, social, and religious. It must be seen to be morally more appealing and practically more achievable than the radical Islamist alternative. Politically, it must afford voice and dignity to people who have been

marginalized, repressed, and silenced; it must offer basic democratic freedoms of expression, organization, contestation, and self-determination. Economically, the alternative must offer rewarding jobs and opportunities for people who have been left on the margins, have no dignity, and see no hope. Socially, it must implement reforms to achieve greater inclusion and justice—a fairer, more decent society with a sharp reduction in corruption and economic inequality. Finally, it must come to grips with and accommodate the renewed search in predominantly Muslim societies (as well as in many others) for a religious frame of reference for the moral, and even to some extent political, order.

"We cannot prevent another terrible tragedy and ultimately prevail with hard power alone. Unless we prevail politically, we will fail."

No one strategy—political, economic, social, diplomatic, or military—will be sufficient to address the overall threat addressed in this project. As during the Cold War, every element of the United States' national purpose and power must be effectively deployed. The United States needs better intelligence; a more nimble, careful, but effectively deployable military; comprehensive and vigilant policing; and other hard-power elements. Yet, it cannot prevent another terrible tragedy and ultimately prevail with hard power alone. Unless the United States prevails politically, with a better alternative, it will fail.

The political alternative is a constitutional democracy that will deliver much greater social justice, political responsiveness, and more vigorous and broadly distributed economic development than has been achieved to date in most predominantly Muslim states. To put it somewhat crudely or stereotypically, the objective should be to move most Muslim-majority countries, particularly in the Middle East, toward a democracy with some of the characteristics of Turkey today, where an Islamist-oriented party may rule, but with significant constraints on its power and respect for the rights of those with different religious (or even non-religious) orientations.

One other orienting assumption implicit in the above is to question the language of a "war on terror." Does the concept of "war" do adequate service to the multidimensional nature of the threat and to the crucial political, economic, and social elements of the response that must be mobilized? Is it possible to achieve victory in any kind of military sense (or analogy), or might it be the case that the United States will have to face the threat for decades to come, while gradually shrinking it back to a more and more marginal, illegitimate, and defensive posture?

The Objective: Promoting Democracy and Good Governance in the Muslim World

If the United States wants anything that would look like "victory" in the long twilight struggle against radical Islamist terrorism, it must achieve lasting change in the way that Muslim-majority countries are governed, especially in the Arab world. The goal is not simply democracy but democracy with good governance, or a relatively liberal democracy that controls corruption, protects freedom, and affirms the rule of law, in part through real independence of the judiciary and other institutions of horizontal accountability. Such regimes could—as the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has done in

Turkey—secure greater political stability, draw marginalized and alienated people into the game of peaceful politics, and create a more inviting climate for investment, therefore generating more vigorous economic growth, distributing that growth more fairly, and responding more effectively to the agenda of unmet social needs.

Such regimes in the Arab world, at least in their early stages, would likely be more illiberal in some respects, with less freedom for individuals to drink alcohol, watch pornography, express affection in public, express unconventional sexual roles and identities, and so on. These could result in some significant losses in dimensions of freedom, and there would also be broader threats to the freedom and dignity of women—although these rollbacks would be couched in the language of "protecting" women from threats to their dignity.

The dangers of illiberal cultural impositions by Islamist governments, which might come to power democratically and observe democratic political rules while passing laws that diminish personal freedoms, should not be minimized. And, understandably, some middle class, secular liberals in countries such as Egypt and Morocco may prefer to stick with the authoritarian devil they know because at least they can live their personal lives the way they want. But it is necessary to accept that banning alcohol from public sale and consumption, for example, would be a small price to pay for getting to a more legitimate, just, and responsive form of government. It is easier to challenge the injustice of a government that denies its people ready access to alcohol or open sexual freedom down the road than to challenge the greater injustice of a government that denies its people freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to change their leaders in the next election.

The danger, of course, is that democratization would bring to power a much more fundamentally illiberal and undemocratic alternative, even one that would become an enemy rather than an ally in the global struggle against terrorism. This legitimate concern will be addressed later in the paper. For the moment, it is critical to be clear about the goal: not just electoral democracy, but a democracy that respects basic political and civil liberties, the rule of law, and the constitutional procedures and principles that would check the government's power and enable the people to remove it if it does not perform.

"Does the concept of 'war' do adequate service to the threat we face and to the crucial political, economic, and social elements of the response we must mobilize?"

WAYS AND MEANS

Promoting democracy in the Arab world means taking some calculated risks. There is no way around this. The United States can either take calculated risks by its own design to get at the source of the problem in the coming years, or face bigger risks, feeding a much more formidable terrorist threat in a much less friendly geopolitical situation, some years further down the road. It was political inertia and apathy—clinging to corrupt status quos—that helped bring about 9/11. The United States needs a new approach.

Part of the irony and tragedy of the impasse in U.S. national security policy is that President George W. Bush was substantially right in framing the problem, but has been disastrously wrong in

the unilateral, blunt, and blundering means with which he has tried to implement his vision. Bush was right to identify the nature of politics in the Arab and Muslim worlds as a core source of the problem. He was absolutely correct in declaring a "forward strategy for freedom in the Middle East:"

> Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe—because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.[1]

The problem is that the Bush administration set about implementing this vision in an arrogant, ignorant, and inept way, and then when the going got rough, it essentially bailed out of its rhetorical commitments, leaving democrats in the region abandoned and disillusioned. This is exactly the opposite of what the United States should be doing.

Clearly, the United States is trapped between two seemingly contradictory imperatives: the need to preserve the short-term stability of Arab regimes that have been friendly—or at least not explicitly and intractably hostile—to the United States, and the need to promote a deeper, more organic stability in the region through democratic reform, as Bush recognized and pledged repeatedly. Since the September 11 attacks and Bush's identification of political stagnation and authoritarianism as a root cause of the terrorist threat, there have been a host of initiatives: some organizational, such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI); some subtle, such as quiet diplomacy; and one as unsubtle as a war and occupation to try to implement Bush's vision of promoting democracy in the region.

"The goal is not simply democracy but democracy with good governance."

For a while, the Bush administration could claim that it was succeeding: there were elections in Iraq, with heavy turnouts that defied the terrorists' threats; the Cedar Revolution and democratic elections in Lebanon; democratic elections and electoral alternation in Palestine; and a historic concession by Egypt's authoritarian ruler, President Hosni Mubarak, allowing a contested presidential election and a seemingly more open and competitive race for parliament. Then came the results—the blowback. Radical Islamists won or made deep inroads in all four elections. It seems that the administration then woke up and said, "Oh no—where is this taking us?" Afterward, there was not much triumphalist rhetoric about the democratic credentials of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or even the Shiite Islamists in Iraq. Since then, Mubarak has kept his presidential opponent Ayman Nour in prison and disgrace, thumbing his nose at the United States, while Washington has chosen to focus on bigger strategic issues such as trying to stabilize the mess in Iraq and the Middle East.

A discussion of ways and means must then begin with the reality created by this sense of betrayal in the region and the deep suspicion of U.S. motives and capacities among social and political forces in the region that want democratic reform—albeit with widely differing ideological agendas. The United States should not promise (or threaten) more than it can deliver, and it has to remain flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and learn from mistakes. Yet, once the president promises to advance the cause of freedom in the region, the United States cannot walk away from

these commitments and have any credibility left. Bush was never more eloquent in his embrace of freedom and democracy than when he addressed a conference of democratic dissidents and activists from 17 countries in Prague in June 2007. Freedom, he insisted once again, is "the most powerful weapon in the struggle against extremism." Echoing the theme of his groundbreaking speech to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) almost four years prior, Bush reiterated, "The policy of tolerating tyranny is a moral and strategic failure."

Yet, tyranny crept along with expanding U.S. support in much of the Arab world, including extensive covert ties between intelligence agencies in the war on terrorism. Mubarak entrenched himself in power and victimized his opponents while the United States simply stood by and watched. After the speech in Prague, Egyptian civil society leader and former political prisoner Saad Eddin Ibrahim, one of the dissidents in the audience, told journalists, "I feel disappointed and betrayed by George Bush. He said that he is promoting democracy, but he has been manipulated by President Hosni Mubarak, who managed to frighten him with the threat of the Islamists."[3]

To get at a crucial root of the problem that is threatening the nation—bad, corrupt, unjust governance in the Arab world—the United States needs to have strong nerves, sophisticated analysis, and a long-term approach that is more consistent over time. Because the agenda of promoting freedom and democracy in the region will inevitably run up against other geopolitical imperatives—including the need for security cooperation with these regimes to track and apprehend genuine terrorists—Washington will have to lower its rhetoric a bit, be careful about what it promises, and craft a strategy for gradually encouraging and promoting democratic change that can be sustainable for the long haul. Yet, it needs to recognize that not all Islamists are the same, that many of them are evolving in their thinking and practice politically, and that if it does not engage and encourage this evolution, the United States will not be able to achieve anything else good and sustainable politically.

"Promoting democracy in the Arab world means taking some calculated risks."

Talking to Islamists

This then leads to one of the most important new initiatives needed by the United States. A number of Islamist political parties, movements, and leaders in the Arab world have been evolving toward greater pragmatism, moderation, and acceptance of nonviolence, pluralism, and constitutionalism. For the first time, it is possible to envision Arab Muslim democratic parties, on something of the model of the Christian Democratic parties in Europe, that are inspired by religious faith and values but do not seek to impose religious law or doctrine on society. In the Middle East, the ruling AKP in Turkey has been the harbinger of this transformation. The challenge now, politically and intellectually, is to test the more moderate Islamist political formations and to press them—as Carnegie Endowment scholars Amr Hamzawy, Nathan Brown, and Marina Ottaway have urged—to clarify where they stand on ambiguous issues such as the weight and imperative of Sharia (Islamic law), peace with Israel, tolerance for non-Islamist options, and the rights of women and religious minorities. This can only be done through serious and sustained dialogue between Islamists and the state, Islamists and other non-state political groups, and Islamists and the United States.

The United States should introduce a new policy of vigorously encouraging political dialogue with Islamist parties and movements that have rejected violence as a tactic and signaled a desire to commit to the game of peaceful, democratic politics. These dialogues should take place in a variety of official, semi-official, and unofficial forums. Beyond the usual think tank and academic conversations, they should involve U.S. diplomats on the ground in these countries, and once some degree of understanding and common ground has been established, high-level officials from Washington as well.

Expanding Exchanges

If the United States is going to engage democratic or potentially democratic Islamists and others in these societies who will be crucial in shaping the country's political future, more U.S. diplomats and informed interlocutors need to be in the region and more people from the region should come to the United States to study and visit. Washington has to confront a serious constraint that is damaging its ability to engage the region while adding to the frustration, and at times humiliation, that people feel at the hands of the United States. This frustration is caused by the vastly increased difficulty of getting a U.S. visa since 9/11 and the rude, undignified, and at times shameful treatment that foreigners sometimes confront upon entry into the United States, even if they have a visa. To be sure, the nation must keep terrorists and their active sympathizers from entering, but it needs to do a better, fairer, and more expeditious job of vetting people and making distinctions. This will probably require a significant increase in the number of consular personnel available to process visa applications and interview applicants, as well as some reorientation of U.S. gatekeepers. Immigration officials need to understand that keeping out terrorists and criminals is not the only way in which their work serves or affects U.S. national security. They also have a more subtle effect on the opinions that people form of the United States as a result of their first engagement with it upon entry.

Waging the War of Ideas and Values

On the plane of ideas and information, the battle can be fought at multiple levels. Direct personal exchanges and contacts represent one level, but the United States needs a broader public diplomacy front. If this front is going to be effective, it has to be credible. The independence and integrity of Voice of America must be restored. International broadcasting and programming must be refashioned to appreciate that the more open, pluralistic, and even at times self-critical U.S. public diplomacy efforts are, the more credible they are and the more the nation opens doors to dialogue and begins to restore its shattered image in the region. The United States needs to not only do much more on the public diplomacy front, but with a vastly different attitude than the political control and self-justification of the Bush administration.

Standing Up for Human Rights

One element of greater consistency that is sorely needed in the region is U.S. defense of human rights, especially the right of people to speak, publish, organize, and mobilize in pursuit of peaceful and democratic political agendas—whether those people are secular liberals or Islamists who profess a commitment to democracy. If the United States is to have credibility in the region and impact in addressing the social and political breeding grounds for terrorism, it cannot have two drastically different standards of concern. It is not only the Islamists who must clarify where they stand. The United States must also clarify its position and whether it is sincere in saying—as Bush did in his second inaugural address—"The United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty, we will stand with you."[4] The United States must therefore stand with Islamists fighting for freedom, even if these Islamists are critical of U.S. policies, so long as the United States determines that

they are fighting for real freedom and not just the freedom to win power and impose a new and more dangerous form of authoritarianism. Every U.S. ambassador in the region has to keep pressing the case for easing repressive laws and practices and the release of political prisoners. Moreover, these issues must be prominent on the agenda when top U.S. officials from Washington meet with their counterparts in the region.

Utilizing Leverage

The United States cannot have a single strategy and set of tactics for all countries in the region (and beyond). Some countries, such as Morocco, are much further along the path of political opening, and thus more advanced initiatives could be possible in the short term. Monarchies have the option of a soft landing to constitutional democracy while retaining, at least for a time, significant control of some strategic arenas of power such as the courts and the military. Mubarak and the Egyptian ruling elite do not have this option, at least not so neatly. The United States has significant leverage over some countries through its relations of aid, trade, and investment, while others—most especially Saudi Arabia—are clearly holding the aces as a result of their vast oil resources. With the vast amounts of U.S. (and, it is important to stress, European) aid that flow to countries such as Egypt and Jordan comes real leverage. Where there are high levels of security dependence, as is the case with Kuwait, there are also potential levers of influence. Yet, the most delicate aspect of this proposed strategy is that with every friendly government in the region the levers of influence work both ways. The result is that when oil prices rise or terrorist chatter intensifies, the United States opts for the low-risk, short-term course of surrendering its leverage in order to win cooperation from the regime. Washington needs a more forward-leaning strategy.

There are three key principles to bear in mind. First, U.S. economic relations of aid, trade, investment, and tourism (not to mention annual military assistance) provide important foundations for the stability of some Arab regimes, such as those in Egypt and Jordan as well as the Pakistani regime, which is now the third largest total recipient of U.S. aid. Second, the EU is also a major provider of economic aid, and U.S. leverage will be much greater if the United States seeks to provide aid in concert with the EU. This is not an easy path because the EU is much more wary of pushing democracy and more nervous about the near-term risks of political change than the United States. Nonetheless, Washington needs to engage its European partners in the quest for a common strategy of trying to move the region out of its longstanding, debilitating stagnation. To succeed, any such strategy must have some teeth in it. This means communicating to Mubarak and others that there will be serious and painful consequences—such as reductions in economic and military aid and possibly the incremental application of some targeted sanctions against regime elites—if they do not ease repression, release political prisoners such as Nour, and begin a serious dialogue with their own civil societies and opposition forces on a path of real political reform.

Thinking Creatively About Transition Paths

Promoting genuine democratic reform in the Arab world requires creative thinking about the possible parameters and paths of political transition. Opening up power does not necessarily require giving up all power, and the United States should not press for immediate transitions to full democracy throughout the region. In Turkey, the military and the constitutional court have retained the power to restrain what the Islamists can do to reverse the country's historic secularism. In Thailand, the monarchy has had significant informal power as a check on elected governments. Both of these checks diminish democracy—and at times have been utilized to topple democracy—but this type of constraint can be a useful crutch, enabling

politically crippled Arab establishments to hobble out of stalemate. In some Arab states, especially in monarchies such as Morocco, Islamist parties committed to the rules of the constitutional game could take office and be checked by unelected centers of power. Initially, this would be less than full democracy, but it could build up the mutual trust and restraint that would eventually enable democracy to take hold in the Arab world.

Different countries in the region will be able to move at different paces, with different sequences of steps toward the necessary elements of democracy and good governance: free and fair electoral competition for control of parliament and government; societal freedom of expression and organization; a genuine rule of law, enforced and defended by a politically neutral and independent judiciary; and effective (therefore truly independent and professional) mechanisms of horizontal accountability to constrain corruption and abuse of power, including a counter-corruption commission, a human rights commission, an ombudsman, and auditing agencies.

Aiding Democratic Organizations and Institutions

The United States can strengthen democratic civil society organizations, independent mass media, and formal institutions of democracy and good governance through financial and technical assistance as well as training. These forms of assistance through the NED, MEPI, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and similar vehicles need to be generously funded and professionally staffed. Washington needs to have a long-term strategy of building up the civic and institutional pillars of a free and democratic society. Yet, this cannot be done effectively if the United States has to get permission from the host government before it can make a grant to an organization. Moreover, aid to official institutions of government is not going to amount to much unless there is the political will to use the financial and technical assistance (for example, to electoral commissions or the court system) to generate serious, independent institutions that will advance democracy and good governance and not necessarily serve the ruling elite or party. The United States thus needs to be tough-minded, independent, and creative about what it is funding, and needs to use its leverage to lean on the government to give these recipients the space to function without fear or serious constraint.

Promoting Economic Reform, Opening, and Dynamism

Simultaneously laying the foundations for a more pluralistic, competitive, and dynamic economy that provides sources of power and influence and significant opportunities for advancement outside of the state will be incredibly beneficial. Wherever possible, the United States should encourage and empower this process to move forward with technical assistance, diplomatic encouragement, and specific inducements. There is a fundamental tension, however, that is difficult to resolve. To the extent that the United States promotes free trade agreements as a means to encourage reform, it risks losing an important dimension of leverage for serious political reforms. Such trade agreements tend to be seen by authoritarian regimes as a gesture of political embrace and legitimization. It is therefore better to hold back on these agreements until a significant threshold of political reform has been crossed, while instead pursuing specific projects to enhance economic competition, encourage new export-oriented sectors of production, and promote better corporate governance.

IMPLICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

This is not a strategy that is going to turn the corner within a few years. It is a 10-20-year project of societal and political transformation. It will require some measure of bipartisan support in the United States and consensus across U.S. government departments and agencies that the nation must begin to promote positive long-term democratic change in the Middle East to get to the root of the threat. The strategy will be much more effective if it is transatlantic, winning real

cooperation and coordination from the EU, so that Washington can maximize its leverage on regimes that will otherwise be very difficult to move. It is going to require more diplomats (quite literally, a larger foreign service, which is needed generally in any case), more aid officials (with a significant ramping up of USAID career staff), more democracy and governance assistance funds, and more speakers of Arabic and other languages of the states in question in government career tracks.

In other words, it requires the same kind of comprehensive approach taken during the Cold War, when the United States ramped up its entire international engagement in response to a diffuse global ideological and security threat and invested heavily in developing the foreign-language and area expertise that could advise and administer the forms of engagement that the country envisioned. More than seven years after 9/11, the United States still lacks a coherent national strategy, as well as a program of financial assistance and inducements to universities and students, to accelerate the development of needed expertise.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

If the strategy were to bear fruit, we would see improved Freedom House scores for Arab countries, sustained over periods of time. Arab countries would make transitions to democracy, beginning with real and lasting opening of political space, easing of political repression, and entry of Islamist forces into the political game as those Islamists evolved to accept the democratic rules of the game. Failure could come in the form of collapse of these political openings in one way or another: into renewed status-quo dictatorships, the norm; with an Islamist movement gaining power and then shutting down pluralism while it moved to establish an Islamic republic; or the Algeria scenario, with the security apparatus panicking late in the day of political opening and the situation descending into bloody civil war. There is also the possibility that increased electoral competition could lead to polarization and violence between competing political and sectarian forces, as in Palestine. Therefore an incremental approach is advisable, and careful attention must be paid to the design of the electoral system and other institutional rules and constraints that might limit polarization and induce power sharing and confidence building.

Conclusion

Every strategy has risks, as does the drift into a dangerous future with no real strategy at all. The military and security responses to radical Islamist terrorism can only take the United States so far. These approaches must be paired with a long-term strategy that gets at the roots of grievance and alienation, which can only be done by transforming governance in the region. It is very unlikely that ruling elites are going to opt for painful and difficult reforms that reduce their own power and privilege out of a statesmanlike sense of vision for the country's future. Rulers will have to be pressed to negotiate democratization, and they will only do so when they judge that they have no choice—that the rising pressures inside their country and the decline of U.S. and European support for the status quo really leave them no option. Once one or two Arab countries make transitions to democracy that achieve a soft landing, with physical security and economic protection for existing elites and stability in the society, other regimes will have somewhat less anxiety about following suit. Every country is different, however, and each one needs its own strategy of reform and its own set of international actors engaging for reform.

The United States remains the most important international actor in the Middle East. If it does not press intelligently, carefully, and seriously for democratic reform, it will not happen, and eventually the opportunity to steer the region away from a deepening radicalization will be lost. That would be a disaster for U.S. national security well exceeding the more limited risks of the strategy proposed here.

ENDNOTES

[1] Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," (6 November 2003), at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/print/20031106-3.html.

[2] Ibid., "President Bush Visits Prague, Czech Republic, Discusses Freedom," (5 June 2007), at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/06/print/20070605-8.html.

[3] Robin Wright, "Bush is Losing Credibility on Democracy, Activists Say," *The Washington Post* (10 June 2007), at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/09/AR2007060901469_pf.html.

[4] Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "President Sworn-In to Second Term," (20 January 2005), at http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/print/20050120-1.html.

RETHINKING THE "WAR ON TERROR"

By Camille Pecastaing

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Al Qaeda is a cultural icon. It has surpassed all other Islamist resistance organizations—including Hamas and Hezbollah—in terms of name recognition, and stands in an exclusive league with global products such as Coca-Cola and Starbucks. Al Qaeda has achieved this notoriety through a focus on high-publicity transnational targets, particularly American targets. This public relations campaign, which began tentatively in 1993 with the first World Trade Center attack, combines inflammatory public statements (such as the 1996 "Declaration of War" and the 1998 "Fatwa against Jews and Crusaders") with "meta-operations"—multiple, simultaneous, and at times multi-country attacks against oversized targets.

Al Qaeda had to leverage its operational capacity many times over to project its image worldwide, and its jihad is global in reach much more so than in depth. The meta-operations were executed by transnational microstructures assembled by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The small operational scale, which made it possible to elude detection, was not simply a necessity but an advantage. In hindsight, it is apparent that various intelligence agencies picked up all of the pieces of the September 11 puzzle at one point or another, but no collaborative structure existed to assemble the picture until after the attacks. Imagination too was lacking; locks on cockpit doors may have been sufficient to thwart the 9/11 attackers.

Al Qaeda never had the legal or financial means to exercise central control over a global organization. The outfits most closely associated with al Qaeda and located outside of its immediate base of operations in Afghanistan were small in scale and somewhat autonomous. Al Qaeda relied on a networked structure of personal rather than institutionalized connections. Throughout the 1990s, the group ran training operations in a few countries, spaces in which sympathizers could cross paths with al Qaeda cadres, acquire procedures and tactics, integrate social networks, and raise

seed money. Yet, many left those camps to set their own course, to make their own journey to jihad.

Global jihad is rooted in the Islamist tradition, which has defined itself from its birth in the 19th century in opposition to Western hegemony, keeping that central character to this day. In addition to self-determination for Muslim people, Islamism demands social justice in the form of political rights, in other words consultation, as well as economic rights—in particular, an end to corruption. The instrument of social justice, in the Islamist worldview, is the application of Sharia law. This claim, incidentally, is based in Islamic tradition, as Sharia has often served historically as a damper against the absolutism of sultans.

Across the decades, violence occasionally flared at the fringe of the broad Islamist revival. From the late 1970s, Islamist radicals in a number of countries embraced distinctively modern forms of violent political protest. This marked the beginning of neo-jihadism, a complex phenomenon that saw the latest revolutionary doctrines, such as urban guerrilla warfare, articulated in classical Islamic terms.

Neo-jihadism acquired a uniquely transnational dimension in Afghanistan due to global networks established during the 1980s to support the mujahedin. The successful struggle against Soviet occupation thus became the crucible for global jihad. The idea was to bring local conflicts into a transnational struggle that would federate all Muslims against a common foe: a system of neocolonial exploitation that worked through the agency of corrupt Muslim regimes, which were all clients of a hegemonic "far enemy."

Global jihadists framed this belligerent agenda within a visionary call for the mythical trinity of the ummah (Muslim community), Sharia, and the Caliphate. But a vision is not a project; it is simply a cognitive vehicle to help the articulation of common interests. In that regard, al Qaeda has been far more successful at convincing non-Muslims of its totalitarian ambition of world domination than it has been at convincing Muslims that it has a viable project for them. Muslim militants with a local agenda have not been overwhelmingly receptive to the notion of jihad as a single, all-encompassing struggle.

For most of the 1990s, Kashmir was the only sectarian conflict in which global jihadists came to play a central role, as a result of Pakistan's efforts to recruit far and wide for the struggle against India. Elsewhere, local and global objectives, styles, and priorities often clashed, and foreign jihadists remained secondary guest actors in local struggles. In Bosnia, discredited foreigners were expelled after the 1995 Dayton Accord. In Algeria and Egypt, global paradigms appeared only after local insurgents had been crushed by local governments and had no one to turn to besides al Qaeda. Global jihad has remained markedly absent from the Palestinian and Lebanese theaters, despite the high symbolic value of the Levant as a zone of Islamic resistance against imperialism. The intolerance for Shiites and Sufis and the behavioral Puritanism (improperly referred to as Wahhabism) sometimes apparent among global jihadists has hindered al Qaeda's attempts to be a federator and clearinghouse for all armed Islamists.

Yet, for all of its limitations, al Qaeda did strike a chord across the Muslim world with the 2001 attacks, because for the second time—the first being the Shiite Iranian Revolution in 1979—it focused the West on the message of political Islam. Political Islam, or Islamism, is a vehicle for the articulation of decades of accumulated grievances, which manifest themselves through a general Muslim malaise vis-à-vis modernity and a sense of victimization at the hands of a foreign hegemony. It is not a cultural inadequacy, but rather a cultural insecurity, a lack of ownership. Autocracy in Muslim countries, and the appalling levels of

human development that comes with it, contribute to that feeling. The exploitation of Muslim oil is another pet peeve of Islamists, as is the United States' seemingly unconditional support for Israel, and foreign military presence in Saudi Arabia following the 1991 Gulf War. The list goes on, and the United States beckons in the distance as the neo-imperial source of all these frustrations — it is the new face of the "far enemy."

Ironically, it is also the United States, with its formidable power to project its culture globally, which made al Qaeda famous. Without the U.S. obsession with al Qaeda that followed the 9/11 attacks, the Muslim (and non-Muslim) world would never have been submerged in global jihadist discourse. In that respect, al Qaeda worked like a virus, infecting the American body politic and using the war on terror to exploit U.S. soft power for its own purpose.

The Problem: The War on Terror

The "war on terror" has been the U.S. government's reaction to the series of provocations that culminated with the 2001 hijackings. Rather than a simple program to inhibit more attacks by al Qaeda and its affiliates — the only Islamist militants to ever really target the United States — the war on terrorism was designed in the heat of the moment as a multi-layered, universal undertaking of "democracy" and "freedom" to eradicate all forms of violent extremism everywhere. This undertaking was backed by a political commitment — from the U.S. government to the American people and the world — to end terrorism by placing counterterrorism ahead of other policy agendas, both domestic and international, until "victory" is achieved.

Thus defined, the war on terror has had far-reaching, if unintended, consequences. In the United States, civil liberties have been eroded, fiscal responsibility jettisoned, and human rights violated. "Allied" governments such as Russia and Egypt have been able to use the counterterrorism imperative to curtail internal democratic processes and violate human rights. Substantial military operations — the cornerstone of the war on terror — have placed the U.S. government under intense domestic and international scrutiny. The heavy cost of those missions, and their limited success at building state capacity and instituting democratic procedures, have raised doubts about the United States' real military strength and the quality of its leadership. The paradox that Washington placed the promotion of freedom and democracy at the center of its counterterrorist strategy, while at the same time tolerating or encouraging violations of the rule of law for the same purpose, resulted in a loss of legitimacy for these policies and for the U.S. government in general.

"The paradox that the U.S. government placed the promotion of democracy at the center of its counterterrorist strategy, while at the same time tolerating or encouraging violations of the rule of law for the same purpose, was not lost on global audiences."

The extensive objectives adopted to rally global support for U.S. endeavors backfired as they

created confusion and alienation. Although there was little sympathy globally for al Qaeda and the Taliban in 2001, the same was not true of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Chechen resistance, or Somali Islamic militias. Lumping all groups and organizations together in the same "terrorists/enemies of freedom" category has compelled audiences worldwide to pass judgment on U.S. motives.

The far-reaching goal set by the war on terror was ill-conceived for another reason: it pawned, at least to a point, the credibility of any future U.S. (and British) government against the fulfillment of the promise to eradicate violent extremism and spread democracy. It would have been far easier to limit the target to al Qaeda and appropriate the necessary resources to inhibit its potential. Instead, the U.S. government set itself up for failure by announcing an objective that it could never meet. Not only are the means unpalatable, but the end will never be reached. There will be no sweeping democratic revolution in the Middle East, no democracy in Central Asia, no democracy in Russia, less civil liberty everywhere, and there will still be extremists ready to take down civilians *en masse*.

"It would have been far easier to limit the target to al Qaeda and appropriate the necessary resources to inhibit its potential."

The whole exercise of the war on terror thus appears to be pointless militaristic posturing by shortsighted British and U.S. leaders. Permanent alterations of the physical space—at least with regard to air travel and identification procedures—are constant reminders that the threat is irreducible. The public did notice that President George W. Bush's wars have managed to get more Americans killed than all of al Qaeda's attacks combined, and sanctioned the administration during the 2006 midterm congressional elections. At first, the ability of U.S. consumers to bear the heavy burden of the war remained untested, as the country borrowed its way through the first years of conflict. But the loose monetary policy fed a huge speculative bubble; by 2008, growing public and private debt, misallocation of public funds, the decline of the dollar against a barrel of oil, and the credit crunch are tangible signs of an era of crisis. A protracted economic meltdown, or a single successful domestic attack, could trigger a profound political crisis.

Finally, recourse to the concept of war in the formulation of policy is fundamentally problematic. "War" evokes urgency, an existential threat that requires the appropriation of all resources available to bring about full resolution as promptly as possible. Yet, the risk and cost-benefit analysis to determine which level of mobilization would be justified against violent extremism in general, and against al Qaeda in particular, has never been performed in this case. The war on terrorism has been proclaimed on the basis of inspiration rather than on the basis of reflection.

By triggering a U.S. overreaction, al Qaeda successfully undermined trust in the world system as it existed in the 1990s—in particular, the paradigm of the "globalization" era: that U.S. stewardship would lead to general progress on the basis of trade, prosperity, and democracy. From a fundamentally strategic point of view, the U.S. government's loss of domestic and international legitimacy suggests that the terrorists have achieved half of their objectives. Yet, this success was of the United States' own making. Al Qaeda never stood a chance of achieving that on its own,

just as it does not stand a chance of ever completing the full strategy and reaching the mass mobilization and social revolution phase that would bring about the mythical Caliphate. The war on terrorism is aimed at windmills.

Key Assumptions

The first assumption underlying this strategy is that the threat presented by al Qaeda and global jihad has been poorly assessed by the U.S. government, leading to an inadequate response. The notion that al Qaeda's nature is unprecedented, that its operations mark a rupture with the past and present uncharted challenges, is unsupported by evidence. From the birth of modern terrorism in the 19th century to the present, the data tell a story of radical extremism enduring at the margins of mainstream human activity. There has been little variation in terrorism's toll on established societies. If the casualties of a single terrorist attack are higher today, it is a function of technological progress and human density rather than ideological innovation. Moreover, al Qaeda has claimed far fewer lives than other contemporary armed movements. One should question whether radical extremism deserves to be treated as an existential threat to the human way of life or as a mere nuisance in the background of social change. If the latter, the methods for its containment have to be measured against other objectives (such as civil liberties, respect for human rights, public debt reduction, and other funding priorities), and the parameters of choice have to be markedly different.

The United States' failure to exploit the diversity in the Islamist and jihadist arenas has made al Qaeda an inescapable brand name and has helped publicize its ideology. The pedigrees of radical Islamist groups and militants are as diverse as the manifestations of the Islamist revival itself. However, Western analysis often fails to represent the complexity of the phenomenon, using instead passionate, all-encompassing terminology such as "al Qaeda" or "Islamo-fascism" to describe diverse people and ideas. Poor generalizations of that sort only serve to position al Qaeda at the forefront of the global psyche, inspiring unrealistic expectations about the movement's character, objectives, and reach within the Islamic world.

This publicity repelled many but appealed to some and, to share the limelight, several movements across the Muslim world have claimed an (at least patronymic) affiliation to the ever-elusive "al Qaeda." By now, in addition to the remnants of the original group ensconced in the Hindu Kush and the Pamir Mountains, we have heard of an "al Qaeda in Mesopotamia," "al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," "al Qaeda in the Levant and the Kinanah," and "al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." Although the international al Qaeda phenomenon remains far from integrated — not to mention that it is widely different from other manifestations of violent Islamism — al Qaeda-type outfits will not stop attracting new recruits until the global jihadist ideology appears obsolete

"From a fundamental strategic point of view, the loss of legitimacy experienced by the U.S. government, both domestically and internationally, suggests that the 'terrorists' have achieved half of their objectives."

and irrelevant. Overvaluing its potency is not the way to make it irrelevant.

Second, repression, to be effective, should be well calibrated and not designed as a comforting but counterproductive display of strength. Governments often act from the assumption that terrorists are ontologically different from other humans, and as such exist in finite supply and can be eradicated. Repression will, at some point, meet their breaking point. Yet, terrorists are to some extent average people made belligerent by a social experience, by acute perceptions of iniquity. When the "cause" has enough depth to reverberate across society, there will be no breaking point. Unless the entire society is "broken," terrorists will replenish their ranks at an equal or faster rate than the rate at which counterterrorism depletes them; the greater the repression, the greater the differential rate between recruitment and attrition.

The effectiveness of repression follows a J-curve. Defiant responses are weaker when punishment is perceived as reasonable, equal, and fair. Limited, well-targeted repression that manages to affect violent activists without disturbing their potential support base is generally effective, especially when paired with political concessions that redress the main collective grievances. Broader, indiscriminate repression often has the counterproductive effect of radicalizing a population not necessarily committed to political violence. Extremely harsh repression, such as a regime of terror that denies the population any capacity to organize or communicate beyond small circles of trust, becomes effective again. However, regimes constrained by some form of rule of law cannot step up their counterterrorism operations to the last level. Repression in democracies therefore has decreasing marginal utility and negative rates of return. Excessive repression will fuel armed resistance while failing to rise to the level of intensity that would effectively suppress it. A rule-of-law-oriented society embroiled with a somewhat legitimate cause contemplates the necessity to cohabit *ad infinitum* with armed, violent opposition.

Third, while underlying social conditions and genuine grievances give depth to political Islam, U.S. interference brings distortion that often hinders rather than facilitates reform. U.S. policy with regard to Islamism has been inconsistent because of contradictory understandings of the origins of Islamist militancy. On one hand, harsh punishment for terrorists reflects an individualistic paradigm whereby guilt results from the exercise of free will, and Islamists and jihadists are lumped together as deviants and criminals. On the other hand, with repeated calls for political reform in the Muslim world, the United States all but conceded that grassroots causes, rather than individual proclivities, were the source of radicalization. As for which grassroots causes were the source, the United States has shown selective responsiveness. By embracing "democracy promotion" as a panacea for all the social ills that afflict the Muslim world, Washington conveniently laid the blame at the door of local governments, sidestepping a more thorough evaluation of its own responsibility, if any, as a global power.

Certainly, the United States is not responsible for social conditions in the Muslim world, but nor does it have the sovereign right to pursue its foreign policy in the region at the expense of local populations. The Muslim world has to assimilate modernity on its own terms, and Islamism, however disturbing to many, is helping in certain ways. The United States should not seek to micromanage social and political transition in the region. Its interference creates severe distortions, and those distortions foster resentment. When local election after election favored parties that were neither very liberal nor particularly pro-American, autocrats received a new lease on power from Washington. Grievances cannot simply be willed away by the application of ill-conceived democratization strategies. They require a more genuine response.

The State of the War on Terror

Tactically, the war on terrorism is in much better shape now than it was in 2006. The decision making process has become less dogmatic and more receptive to the input of mid-level personnel better qualified to conceive counterterrorism and counterinsurgency programs than the ideologues of the early years. Pressure from the judicial and legislative branches of government has also helped rectify the course of U.S. policy. The paradigm shift initiated after the 2006 congressional elections provides a sound basis for the Obama administration to build upon.

Strategically, so many resources have been committed to the war on terrorism already that the United States has little room to maneuver. Policy is by now very much path dependent. These constraints were apparent in the political programs of the presidential candidates in last year's election, between which there appears to be little significant variance regarding the prosecution of the war on terrorism.

By now, the war on terrorism essentially operates in three dimensions. The first is the global intelligence effort to identify terrorist cells as they form and to inhibit the international networks that support them. There is no real debate about the importance of intelligence gathering or about the methodologies to do so (infiltration and human intelligence and the exchange of information across domestic and foreign agencies). Results of this strategy are clearly visible in terms of the diminishing quantity and quality of transnational operations attributed to global jihadist assets. As for the legal limits to be respected, it has become all but evident that counterterrorism cannot trump civil liberties and human rights, that habeas corpus should be respected, and that torture should be absolutely banned. The Obama administration has to complete the realignment of intelligence work with the basic principles of the rule of law that have governed the United States since the Revolutionary War. Whatever points of contention remain will be mostly technical: for instance, the duration of preventive detention in cases of suspected involvement in terrorist activities, the level of integration of various agencies, and the classification of information.

The second dimension is the Iraqi theater of operations. The main problem with the Iraq effort has been the gap between expectations, discourses, and reality. The Iraq War was fought and won by the United States in the spring of 2003. The Iraq insurgency, by and large a consequence of strategic shortcomings during Rumsfeld's tenure, ended in 2007 on a stalemate. The United States and its adversaries, both having failed to meet their original objectives and exhausted by the violence, reached a compromise. Demographics, resilient sectarian networks, and the location of natural resources firmly established the oldest and most competent Shiite outfits in power. As for global jihad, it was the victim of its own excesses: the graft was largely rejected by Iraqi society, as had happened in previous conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus. This outcome, if durable, should satisfy the United States. The pace and form of the United States' withdrawal from Iraq is more a matter of American pride than a variable capable of affecting developments in the country. There is no need for Washington to micromanage the future of Iraq, as this would inevitably distort the natural political process, further delaying the establishment of a mature regime.

Closing down the Iraqi theater should have no impact on the region, other than the risks posed by the ongoing relocation of surviving global jihadists in search of a new base of operations. The Middle East as a whole promises, for the foreseeable future, the same "unstable stability" that has prevailed for decades. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the challenge from Iran, stifled democracy in Egypt, the Syrian destabilization of Lebanon, frustrated Kurdish national aspirations,

Saudi exceptionalism, and Yemen's weak state are nothing new. With luck, improvement could occur in any of those issues, but it is more likely that stasis will prevail all around without adverse consequences. For all its limitations, the region as a whole has actually been remarkably effective at containing global jihad—mostly through repression, which also is nothing new.

There are a few remaining hot spots such as Algeria and Somalia. Those countries are special cases, however, and not indicative of a resurgence of global jihad in the Middle East and North Africa. Developments there are deeply rooted in local circumstances, as is the ongoing violence in Sudan, which also has an Islamic dimension. It would be grossly inappropriate to lump those issues together, and U.S. support for an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in late 2006 to prevent the establishment of Islamic para-state structures allegedly sympathetic to al Qaeda was misguided. The United States will not reap benefits from taking sides in a tribal conflict as enduring as the one in Somalia.

The Obama administration would be well advised to stay aloof from and avoid entanglement in the Middle East's pet issues. The U.S. treasury would be put to much better use if applied to research in new energy sources that would make the global economy less susceptible to the volume of oil flowing from the region. Moreover, without large oil revenues, most regional states would have to come to terms with a different financial reality and adopt reforms that the oil bonanza has so far postponed. By contrast, the small statelets of the Gulf, whose hydrocarbon resources are running out, are deeply committed to large-scale investment and economic reforms. If there is a regional dynamic to monitor, it is the success or failure of their developmental model in the years to come.

The third dimension of the war on terrorism is the South/Central Asian theater of operations. This is the most important locus of global jihad, in part because of the presence there of the remnants of al Qaeda's historical leadership and in part because of the malignancy of politics and ideologies in the region. Afghanistan is a collapsed state, and Pakistan and the Central Asian republics are failed states. They are all sandwiched between three nuclear, emergent superpowers: China, India, and Russia. The region is also rich in hydrocarbons, although instability has prevented their full exploitation.

After losing many years to learn the ways of Iraq, Washington seems poised to lose many more figuring out Afghanistan. The obsession with the al Qaeda-Taliban nexus is missing the point that while al Qaeda regroups vulnerable interlopers, the Taliban were always more than an overbearing militia of fanatics, and that they are adapting quickly to what is their native milieu. From their beginnings in the refugee camps of Pakistan in the early 1990s, the Taliban were not only the expression of an extreme form of Islamic fundamentalism, but also the incarnation of a rural Pashtun identity raised against the cosmopolitanism of Kabul, and the ascendancy of Tajiks in government. Following the American invasion in 2001, many Pashtun rallied in short order against the alienness (and limitations) of a Karzai government backed by occupation forces, and joined the new Taliban. Sanctuaries across the border in Pakistan and a lucrative opium trade made them grow more formidable over time.

Meanwhile, the relationship of convenience between the U.S. government and local tyrants stokes the fires of anti-Americanism—a pattern that has numerous antecedents in the Cold War. Wisely, the United States has distanced itself from egregious characters such as President Islom Karimov of Uzbekistan. However, support for former President General Pervez Musharraf's emergency rule weakened the rule of law in Pakistan and its liberal supporters, alienated a popular base sympathetic to the Islamist discourse

and jihadist action, yet failed to deliver al Qaeda's top leader. The détente between Pakistan and India about Kashmir, welcomed by Washington, has cooled since 2006 when native Islamist groups erupted on the Indian scene. The situation in Pakistan and the relations between Washington and Islamabad are more volatile than ever. Notions of pursuing the war against the Taliban there are fanciful. Given the strategic importance of Central Asia, regional states under threat can find alternate sponsors in China and Russia. It would be paradoxical if U.S. efforts to secure the region from radical Islamists allowed Vladimir Putin, who has shown his true imperial colors with the invasions of Chechnya in 1999 and Georgia in 2008, to reestablish Russian influence in Central Asia.

The best hope for now is that battle fatigue in Afghanistan has the same effect that it has had in Iraq, allowing the United States to reach out to segments of the Taliban in order to craft a *modus vivendi* before the situation further degenerates.

A New Frame for the War on Terror: Attitudinal Change

Given the tactical improvement and strategic inertia discussed above, the Obama administration should focus its efforts on the conceptual aspects of the war on terror. More specifically, it should promptly bring the war on terror to an end. Success should be defined as a return to normalcy within acceptable levels of risk of a terrorist attack.

Al Qaeda and similar movements will not go away—nor should they be expected to. The goal for the U.S. government should not be to pursue a futile extermination campaign against jihadists, but to redesign the counterterrorism and homeland security programs in order to reduce the virulence of anti-Americanism, relieve public finances, and return the country to normalcy. In this case, normalcy does not mean the nonexistence of terrorism—an impossible objective—but the ability to operate both domestically and internationally within the parameters that existed before 2001.

Normalcy includes the environment of daily existence, economic activity, and the policy process. It should be noted that society is already by and large in a postwar mode. The intense political debate about homeland security and terrorism often seems out of touch with the daily preoccupations of Americans. Economic indicators such as employment, inflation, and the housing market affect peoples' lives much more than terrorism, and social issues such as gay marriage, stem cell research, and global warming mobilize them more than jihad. The war on terror may resonate with the family members of combat personnel deployed overseas, but their limited numbers are not enough to bridge the gap between a society at peace and a government at war.

Specific measures of normalcy should include at least the following four elements. First, the public should concede an acceptable risk of being the victim of a terrorist attack (in any case, an extremely low probability), which would essentially shield the government from a political crisis in case of a successful operation. Second, active and passive counterterrorism should be relegated to the background of the social and political space. Homeland security should be as unobtrusive and invisible as possible. Alerts should be exceptional. Communications about threats should be muted and made routine . Third, the focus of political life should be on action and progress rather than centered on forced reaction in defense of the status quo. That is, the policy debate should be focused on improving the future—with economic growth, better healthcare, etc.—rather than on preserving an embattled present. Finally, the U.S. government must restore its domestic and international legitimacy. Dismantling the war on terror will be key in rebuilding the capital of trust in the presidency.

Dismantling the war requires neither obtaining a tactical or strategic victory nor conceding defeat, but instead affecting a conceptual paradigm shift. It is about attitudinal change. Until now, the hysterical discourse about the threat of terrorist attacks has skewed the political process toward an allegedly existential issue that does not accurately represent existing risk factors and that turned out to be far removed from people's daily experiences. Admittedly, the human agency associated with a terrorist attack gives an extraordinary weight to the outcome, however insignificant it may be in comparison to other causes of suffering and death. But demagogic political leaders and media alike find it difficult to resist the electoral support and audience ratings that can be obtained from fear mongering. Whatever the reason, the ruckus about Islamist terrorism has negatively affected the quality of the policy debate and the allocation of public resources. Over time, overestimation of the threat has become apparent to the public, made the government synonymous with ineptitude and dissimulation, and provoked a legitimacy crisis.

Unfortunately, there have been few brakes to apply to the system. Mass news media are complicit in peddling fear and sensationalism. Many think tanks have become vehicles for lobbying. Academic competence is similarly too politicized to be trusted offhand. A compartmentalized intellectual space allows politicians (and media) to pick and choose the so-called specialists that would best support the policy they favor. As a result, expert sources have little more credibility than political sources, and the most extreme positions are allowed to compete on an equal basis with meaningful discussions. To a point, this hodgepodge of ideas is a by-product of U.S. democracy, an appreciable freedom, and a source of creativity. Yet, the fragmentation and polarization of expertise has exacerbated rather than limited groupthink, as opinions now live in distinct bubbles and are never really directly tested against each other or against hard facts. Information is processed through mental filters and interpreted in ways congruent with deeply entrenched assumptions. There is no debate or definite conclusion, only a cacophony of self-congratulation.

To a large extent, the hysterical narrative about the threat of global jihad has been a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is the American public discourse on al Qaeda that has made al Qaeda what it is. A Google search in English returns more than 18 million entries for "al Qaeda" and more than 20 million for "jihad." Al Qaeda's message has been dissected ad nauseam by U.S. "experts," relayed and amplified by U.S. technology (the Internet), U.S. media, and even by U.S. popular and public culture (the sanctification of 9/11 and the heroism of the war on terror, expressed in countless commemorations, memorials, and movies). Many Muslims first learn about jihad from Western or Western-like sources before turning to actual jihadist sources when hooked.[1] Reducing the iconic appeal of al Qaeda goes through educating the population about the real risks of Islamist terrorism. Demystifying global jihad will improve the political debate and help recalibrate counterterrorism to the reality of the threat.

EDUCATING THE POPULATION

The first step in educating the population is to abandon zero-risk paradigms. The American psyche seems to have a very low tolerance for tragedy, even when it occurs within acceptable risk levels. Zero-risk paradigms are not only unrealistic, they are also dangerous. They inspire totalitarian mindsets in which errors are not permissible, risk is unacceptable, and everything, including freedom, must be surrendered to the imperative of absolute security. Boarding a plane can never be safe. It involves risks that are offset by the advantages of traveling by air. The same is true of homeland security. It is essential to educate the American public about the real probability of being victim of a terrorist attack and about

tradeoffs — for instance, that a small probability of death in a terrorism-related event is an acceptable price for living in an open society that is as free as possible. The Obama administration must show leadership in denouncing false paradigms that distort the policy process.

Second, the United States must restore discrimination in the quality of expertise. Nonpartisan technocratic sources, some public, some private, have managed to keep producing valuable assessments of the global jihad phenomenon. Their output, however, when not silenced by elected officials (until leaked by opposition media), has often drowned in the ambient noise. A key priority for President Obama should be to help restore neutral and valid expertise at the front stage of the political debate. The administration and Congress can achieve that by being explicitly more selective about the quality of the inputs received and about the basis on which policy decisions are considered. Currently, incentives for political actors to depoliticize the policy process are lacking. Former presidents such as Dwight Eisenhower have warned against the manipulation of information by vested interests, and have tried, if unsuccessfully, to restrict demagogues and lobbyists from the political space. Popular fatigue with partisanship may afford the Obama administration a window of opportunity to show leadership in that respect.

Third, Washington needs to increase transparency and declassify information. To educate the public about the real risks and costs of terrorism requires making as much information available as possible. The shroud of bureaucratic secrecy concerning intelligence about terrorists and plots facilitates the articulation of hysterical, demagogic discourses. A culture of secrecy may have been appropriate to the nature of the Cold War, but al Qaeda is not a nuclear superpower-cum-totalitarian state. The benefits of secrecy should be weighed against its political costs, and information should be automatically declassified unless confidentiality is absolutely necessary to protect a source. The nature of the work of intelligence gathering should also be explained to the public to prevent the crystallization of public fantasies about covert and illegal operations such as rendition and torture. Those fantasies find their supporters as well as their detractors, but what matters is the political cost: the perception that the state routinely operates beyond any legal boundary and that counterterrorism is never accountable to any greater principle. Transparency will improve the quality of the public debate about terrorism and bring legitimacy to the actions undertaken by the state.

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

To develop independent institutions, the government should first establish a formal instrument to evaluate risks and costs. Neither the National Security Council nor the Department of Homeland Security seems well suited to providing the administration with neutral, risk-benefit analysis because their missions are to execute counterterrorism rather than to quantify its cost-effectiveness. The Obama administration should establish an unbiased, independent instrument tasked with providing hard estimates of the probability and cost in relation to possible terrorist events. It should also be tasked with assessing the returns on past and current counterterrorism and homeland security expenditures. This information should be publicized and used to instruct future policy choices. It should also be disseminated in a comprehensible way to the American public.

Second, counterterrorism must be depoliticized. Technocratic institutions such as the Federal Reserve or the Supreme Court have been particularly successful at what they do because they were designed to accomplish a specific task and shielded from excessive political interference. Rather than the unwieldy Department of Homeland Security, a leaner structure, open to external expertise, free

from a culture of secrecy, and accountable to—but not micromanaged by—the executive should be set up to execute counterterrorism policy. To ensure continuity and consistency, its leadership should be appointed for a set period and spared the vagaries of the electoral cycle. Appointments should be based on merit and expertise, in order to shield counterterrorism work from interference from ideologues and demagogues. The dramatic improvements observed after Condoleezza Rice and her team took over the direction of the war on terror show what a difference competence can make. The performance of the new structure would be monitored by the actuarial and financial structure described above. A special court system, described below, will pick up where counterterrorism ends and process captured operatives according to the appropriate law.

In France and Spain, most terrorism-related cases are treated by a single investigating magistrate—a sort of specialized prosecutor. The advantages of this system are numerous. First, all related intelligence is eventually reviewed by one actor who works closely with numerous agencies and ministries and centralizes decades of information. Second, the investigator is to some extent independent from both the legislature and the executive, and therefore from the electoral cycle. Third, as a member of the judiciary, this investigator is better equipped (than, say, the military) to prosecute suspects within the boundaries of the law. The Italian experience, with the trials of the members of the Red Brigades, is also rich in teachings. In trials of terrorists, European juries are often composed of other magistrates in order to shield participants from the risk of reprisal. In the United States, a federal, civilian investigator/prosecutor could be appointed to present all terrorist-related cases to an ad hoc federal court. The court should be under the direct supervision of the Supreme Court, with limited triangulation with the Department of Justice and appropriate Congressional committees. An extended jurisdiction for this court trumping state jurisdiction would bring consistency to the repression of terrorism.

RESTORING THE STATUS QUO

To restore the status quo, the U.S. government should first reduce the counterterrorism budget and calibrate expenditures to probable costs. Terrorists enjoy considerable financial leverage over states, as the operational cost ratio is in their favor by an extraordinary degree of magnitude. A poorly planned, poorly executed terrorist attack may nonetheless lead the state to impose an important regulatory—and therefore financial—burden on the national economy. A case in point is the summer 2006 liquid explosives plot, which forced an overhaul of airport security worldwide. Out-of-control counterterrorism expenditures can bring public finances and a national economy to the brink of collapse, as was the case with Turkey in the late 1990s, and the United States in the summer of 2008. The financial meltdown that closed the Bush era was in large part the result of the monetary policies of the previous years necessary to prosecute the war on terror without raising taxes. It is preposterous that "protecting the homeland"—which, at most, means preventing a few hundred casualties from terrorist events—led the government to mortgage the country for trillions of dollars. It should be emphasized here that terrorism has won a fantastic victory by contributing significantly to derailing the U.S. economy.

High counterterrorism expenditures also help increase corruption and misallocation of resources, which undermine the legitimacy of the state—a main strategic objective for terrorists. The budget for homeland security should be reduced in the coming years, not increased, and appropriations should be focused on areas with high returns, such as infiltration of terrorist organizations and the acquisition of human intelligence.

Second, the freedom of the public space must be preserved. In Paris, following terrorist attacks, trashcans were removed from popular areas such as Champs Elysées, which resulted in garbage piling up where the bins once stood. In London, during the period of "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, systematic security checks were set up in public places, including those open to tourists. During periods of alert, going into a movie theater or a department store meant going through a bag search. Visible modifications of the environment are tributes to the power of terrorism. In the United States, this power is illustrated at airport security and in government buildings. Outside of those areas, however, the public space remains open and vulnerable, and it should remain so. One can imagine the effect that one single suicide attack in a shopping mall or a cinema could have: more guards, more detection equipment, and more waiting lines.

The U.S. government should preempt that outcome by affirming that public spaces will remain fully open, even in the case of a successful attack. The counterterrorism work should be done as upstream as possible, and passive security measures should be invisible. The color-coding system, abstract and permanent, was leveraging rather than inhibiting the psychological effect of terrorism. It should be abandoned for a single alert mode, declared sparingly and without drama. Checkpoints and similar impediments to the free movement of persons should be exceptional and temporary measures, not a norm, even if that increases the risk of a successful attack. The vulnerability of aircrafts justifies permanent security measures, but efforts to streamline the process, such as vetting passengers ahead of time, should be expanded.

Third, the government should restore and reinforce civil liberties. Any change to the political system of a country in response to terrorism is a victory for terrorism. The U.S. government should commit forcefully to restore the situation *ex ante* with regard to civil liberties, or even better, commit to improving on the past to secure freedom against the prying technologies of the Information Age. If it is not feasible to repeal the Patriot Act immediately, at the very least the administration should set benchmarks against which, when met, the Patriot Act would be rolled back until it is fully repealed. It would also be fitting for the Obama administration to add freedom-related amendments to the U.S. Constitution as a mark that the spirit of the American Revolution is revived in the face of a challenge such as terrorism.

TAKING THE WIND OUT OF GLOBAL JIHAD

The United States must embark on a campaign to disaggregate and de-publicize al Qaeda. A better-educated public will be cognitively equipped to process more sophisticated information about global jihad. As mentioned earlier, al Qaeda is in large part a myth fabricated by an American discourse as the administration endeavored to give a single face to a great variety of phenomena. The same comment applies to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was artificially made the ubiquitous master of the Iraqi insurgency by the United States. The Obama administration should abandon monocausal explanations and, without creating a taboo, eliminate references to al Qaeda in communications to the public. Somali Islamists should be described as what they are, and not as al Qaeda stooges in Somalia. The Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat should be referred to as such—especially when it so transparently changed its name to refer to al Qaeda in order to achieve greater publicity. Inflating the risk and nature of the enemy in public discourse affects the perceptions of Muslim radicals as well, and they come to believe in the power of al Qaeda just because U.S. sources say this is so.

Second, Washington should work to increase the transparency of its foreign policy toward the Muslim world. The virulence of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world is due in part to inflated

expectations about the agency of the United States. False assumptions that the United States is imperial, omnipotent, and calculating feed abundant conspiracy theories, and Washington gets blamed for many unfavorable local developments—as the previous regional hegemon, the United Kingdom, had been. There is another aspect to this problem. Empires are highly visible—they have a face and a universalist message—and they are attractive. For the United States, the message is democracy, participation, and consultation. By this logic, if the United States is so powerful in deciding outcomes for Muslims, it should agree to consult them. Anything else is hypocrisy and double standards.

"The next president should do his best to be transparent, straightforward, and consistent in explaining U.S. policy toward the Muslim world."

A common problem for empires, from classical Rome to the more recent French and British cases, has been to rule in the name of a universal principle while preserving decision making for the imperial center. Individuals smitten with the idea of U.S. hegemony and confronted with the fact that their voice will not be heard will often resort to violence to make a difference—often successfully, as was the case in Beirut in 1983 and Somalia in 1993. Although it is difficult to imagine how President Obama could extend consultation outside of the country, he should do his best to be transparent, straightforward, and consistent in explaining U.S. policy toward the Muslim world. The White House's public diplomacy operation is a step in that direction, but what is needed is more than propaganda. What is needed is a genuine social contract between the United States and the Muslim world—a contract that can include democracy promotion, but that first and foremost should be clear and consistent.

Finally, the United States should embrace moderate Islamists as part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Washington has worked itself into a corner with its objections to engaging numerous Islamist organizations. The political landscape of the Muslim world is complex and includes a great variety of Islamist elements. Some are reformists, such as the Moroccan and Turkish Justice and Development Parties, and others are more radical. The U.S. Department of State's list of terrorist organizations looks too much like the indiscriminate product of tit-for-tat deals with allied governments and vested interests. For the United States to snub Hezbollah and Hamas or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is not only futile but also counterproductive. Drawing a social contract for the Muslim world will entail bringing in those constituencies. The more mainstream Islamism becomes, the more marginal jihad will be.

REFINING COUNTERTERRORIST POLICY

The United States needs to build localized expertise and design localized responses. While it is always good to observe phenomena from a distant vantage point, too much distance is reductionist. The U.S. government should not have a one-size-fits-all policy toward jihad. Policies should be tailored to local circumstances and based on indigenous criteria of success. The prosecution of the war in Iraq has compelled the military to develop a culture of compromise and accommodation and impose it on the Iraqi government, which then had to moderate its absolutist inclinations. This culture

should be extended beyond Iraq, and the United States should pursue a foreign policy not on the basis of generic domestic preferences, but on the basis of the popular legitimacy of state and non-state actors at the receiving end of those policies. The unbiased government instrument described above should be tasked with bringing together all forms of knowledge, whether from government or private, domestic or foreign sources. Area specialists should coordinate with network specialists to cover all grounds and map out the multiple facets of jihad.

Washington should also shift focus from people to operations. Success is not to prosecute or kill all terrorists, but to eliminate motivations to organize operations. Rehabilitating former jihadists will help significantly to achieve that goal. The majority of terrorists are not criminal and sadist types, bound to an existence of violating the law and hurting innocents. Terrorists are not all compelled to violence by their nature. A motivational change, induced by a modification of the incentive structure, may be all it takes to rehabilitate them. The life-cycle process will also produce maturity and moderation. Amnesty programs have been successfully tested in a number of conflicts. Not only are they relatively safe, but they also have a strong impact in reducing the appeal of further violence. Countries such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia have interesting programs to rehabilitate jihadists through religious reeducation. The United States should explore sending detainees to reeducation camps in Muslim countries, where the emphasis will be on cognitive therapy rather than punishment. Care should be taken with a population that has been abused and psychologically wounded during internment; revenge could be a prime psychological driver for years to come, and it is essential to rebuild inmates' sense of self before their release.

Finally, the United States should extend channels of communication to active global jihadists. Venues for dialogue should remain open to all jihadists, in particular those still currently involved with the original al Qaeda, and a reconciliation process should be possible. The United States should also avoid the personalization of enmity and the creation of martyrs. Osama bin Laden is more useful alive and free than killed or captured. He should be left to slip into irrelevance, like Napoleon in St. Helena or Fidel Castro in Cuba—living testimonies to the failure of their projects. A dead bin Laden could be seen as a torchbearer, tempting others to pick up where he left off. But the global jihad paradigm would be terminally deflated if a deal could be made whereby bin Laden and Zawahiri would publically denounce armed struggle in return for some kind of house arrest.

"The U.S. should not have a one-size-fits-all policy toward Jihad. Policies should be tailored to local circumstances, and based on localized criteria of success."

Early Course of Action

With the change in administration, a window of opportunity will arise to close the war on terror and set U.S. foreign policy toward the Muslim world on a different course. This window will be narrow and of short duration, however, as Muslim

expectations for change are low. In 2000, Arab and Muslim voters in the United States generally favored Bush, because Democrats appeared too close to Israel.[2] It is also possible that jihadists will seek to test President Obama early on with a provocative attack. In any case, the urgent and high profile nature of U.S. policy toward the region means that there will be no time for reflection. Observers will expect President Obama to impart a direction early on. Any delay in doing so will mean broadly endorsing the policies of previous administrations. Inertia will then bind the president to defend the early months of inaction as part of his legacy, and any later alteration will be interpreted as a sign of indecision or failure.

The president should make a fundamental foreign policy speech on the issue of the Muslim world in general and the war on terror in particular within months of his inauguration. Since continuity is likely to predominate in the content of the new policy, attention should be paid to style. For maximum impact, this speech should be delivered on the front line of jihad, possibly Islamabad, in a way reminiscent of President John F. Kennedy's Berlin speech. The tone should be distinctive enough to surprise local audiences and give the impression that a new era has begun. Since double standards and hypocrisy are often denounced as the cardinal sin of the Unites States, candor about American objectives, and a balanced *mea culpa* about past U.S. missteps in the region, could buy some legitimacy for the initiatives of the president. For a cash-strapped administration, legitimacy will be indispensable to cut the heavy expenditures related to coercion and security.

U.S. initiatives toward the Muslim world should be guided by the principles of transparency, consultation, and consistency. The diplomatic corps will be tasked to thoroughly explain aspects of U.S. foreign policy as they may affect the life of the local population. Diplomats should be open to feedback and should not discriminate between interlocutors, engaging local Islamists when appropriate. The United States should apply consistent criteria in devising its policy toward foreign nations in general and Muslim nations in particular, and should resist double standards and expediency.

The United States should not decide what form of government Muslim nations have, but should only engage with governments perceived to be legitimate in the eyes of their constituents (a way to dodge the issue of "democracy"). The United States should not impose policies on the governments of Muslim nations, but should put some conditions on trading with them, such as good governance, expanded rule of law, nonaggression toward neighbors, and guarantees that exchange will benefit human and economic development. (In the context of energy scarcity, this would be a difficult but necessary conditionality clause in bilateral and multilateral agreements.) Finally, the United States should clearly declare that it does not wish to control Muslim populations in any way, least of all by force, but that it hopes to examine with them how American objectives in the region can be reconciled with their aspirations for peace and prosperity.

Much of the above is not new. Some of those statements have been made, and some of those principles and criteria have been applied, or at least considered (notably with the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative and the Middle East Peace Initiative). However, most are ignored by local populations, which tend to have a monolithic vision of the United States as a hegemonic power bent on controlling oil fields. This tendency points to the need to deliver a fundamental, inspiring speech early on to break through the prejudices. The impact of this speech would be heightened by the introduction of striking new elements such as conditionality in trade and aid to help raise local expectations of real change. Aggressive public diplomacy must follow the speech, and first results should become apparent within one year.

Crucially, the speech should announce the closure of the war on terror and the United States should immediately take unilateral steps to make that pronouncement a reality. As a mark of the new era, the United States should invite its adversaries to begin negotiations to bring resolution to jihad and the war on terror. The highlight of this process should be a comprehensive trial, akin to the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials at the end of World War II, in which convicted terrorists would have the opportunity to reconsider the validity of jihad and their commitment to armed struggle.

The president could continue with the trials of detainees by military courts started in mid-2008. This process has showed positive results in affirming principles of the rule of law against the expediency of counterterrorism. Moreover, assessments by military tribunals of the threats posed by defendants have so far been more realistic than those of the various civilian courts that handled similar cases in the early 1990s. Alternatively, the president could accelerate and further rationalize the process by establishing a permanent federal court for crimes of terrorism, as described above, inspired by the existing military courts but with a broader jurisdiction and a more explicitly rehabilitative mandate. This court should process all detainees held at Guantanamo and similar locations within a couple of years. It would even be desirable as well to retry jihadists already condemned in state courts—especially the many cases for which sentencing was out of proportion with the crimes committed. The guiding principle should be to reward sincere, public denunciation of jihad with lenient sentencing. Those who never committed or ordered violent crimes and denounce the use of force should receive a full pardon.

Former detainees should not be released without a specific function to occupy within their community of origin. A condition for release/amnesty should be religious reeducation in specialized camps as described above, followed by service to the community in the form of social work. Former jihadists should be encouraged to maintain an active role as social workers, local leaders, and educators, as long as they explicitly renounce violence and commit to peaceful political action.

In parallel, the recantation of former jihadists should be leveraged to marginalize active militants who still advocate armed struggle. A declaration by historical leaders of global jihad that violence was a mistake and that there are other ways to achieve the goal of improving Muslim life brings no guarantee that the younger generation will listen. Yet, seeds of doubt will have been planted that can be exploited. Ways should be explored to have top al Qaeda personnel currently in hiding contribute to this message.

It should be clear to the administration, and made extremely clear to global audiences, that any increase in violence following this process would be a sign of success. The message should be that desperate radicals faced with the new direction that makes armed struggle obsolete are trying to spoil the peace to avoid irrelevance. Each new attack should reinvigorate, rather than hinder, the reconciliation process.

Active and widely publicized diplomacy is an important component of this process. The success of reconciliation and the end of jihad and the global war on terror should be repeated insistently through all media, including Arab and South Asian outlets, over time. Occasions such as meetings between U.S. officials and Islamists should occur frequently and be given prominent coverage. The goal is to overwhelm radical jihadist discourse with a discourse of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The credibility of the discourse will depend on the quality of the interlocutors and the frequency of exchanges. The participation of Iran's top leaders, as well as that of Islamists and jihadists with excellent credentials, will be essential.

Implications

The purpose of this strategy is to streamline the U.S. counterterrorism effort, restore the parameters of social and political life (including fiscal responsibility), and reverse the loss of legitimacy suffered by the U.S. government. It is also designed to improve the international standing of the United States in relation to non-hostile nations, and to help make potential adversaries such as al Qaeda and associated movements irrelevant. It aims to defeat terrorists not just tactically, on the ground, but strategically, by denying them success in changing the society that they attacked.

This strategy was designed to require few international or domestic contributions — only executive leadership. This strategy is fundamentally about attitudinal change. The time horizon can be relatively short; much can be accomplished within a couple of years. Admittedly, it may be challenging to convince the public to accept a paradigm shift in relation to terrorism. Yet, there are historical precedents, such as the U.S.-Chinese rapprochement under President Richard Nixon and the U.S.-Soviet reconciliation under President Ronald Reagan. It could also be challenging to convince the public, for years fed fantasies about an epic struggle to make the country safe, to accept an inherent, if small, degree of risk. Yet the American people often show more maturity and realism than their politicians and media.

Although there are no pressing capacity shortfalls to execute this strategy, the rationalization of the war on terror would be facilitated by the establishment of three complementary, independent, technocratic instruments: an agency charged with executing the counterterrorism program and free to assemble expertise from various sources in an open, transparent fashion; a highly technical agency charged with calculating risk and assessing returns on expenditures; and a special prosecutor office and an ad hoc court responsible for processing captives.

It would be possible to add many far-reaching objectives to the list of necessary steps to conclude the war on terror. One could think of successfully concluding the Arab-Israeli peace process and establishing a sovereign Palestinian state or of rebuilding the secular public education system in Pakistan. There is little sense, however, in chasing impossible odds. It would be absurd, and ruinous, to remain on a war footing until Iraq and Afghanistan enjoy mature democratic regimes and developed economies. The war on terror was conceived by a U.S. president, and ending it is clearly within the purview of his successor. It is either that or national bankruptcy.

ENDNOTES

[1] See, for instance, the work of Olivier Roy and Marc Sageman.

[2] "The 2008 Election: How Arab Americans Will Vote and Why," (Washington, D.C.: The Arab American Institute, September 2008); also James J. Zogby. "How Arab Americans Voted and Why," *Jordan Times* (19 December 2000).

RECOGNIZING OUR ADVANTAGES

By Harvey M. Sapolsky

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In devising a new security strategy for America we have to begin by recognizing our important security advantages. No matter how often politicians and commentators tell us that we live in the most dangerous of times, we should count our many security blessings. We are protected by two big oceans, two passive neighbors, the world's most powerful military, a thriving economy, and a growing population. We have never been safer, healthier, more prosperous, better educated, and stronger as a nation. When it comes to military power, no one can outspend us or out invent us. More than most nations, America uses the talents of women, minorities, and immigrants. We know that we have many faults and limits, but we constantly debate them, which in itself is a strength.

We have recently been attacked by an enemy who cannot defeat us. Radical Islam cannot conquer America. On the contrary, America was attacked because its values and culture are on the march. Materialism undermines the tenets of most religions, Islam included. There is within the Muslim world a violent struggle between traditionalism and modernization. Just as communism was

"We have been attacked by an enemy who cannot defeat us."

pressed by the material success of the West, so too is traditional Islam undermined by a focus on earthly consumption and freedom of modern life. Satellite television brings images of high average incomes, the liberation of women, and the right to question civic and religious leaders enjoyed in the West and now in Eastern Europe and most of Asia. Although the Muslim world is rich in oil, much of its population is poor and disenfranchised. The

contest becomes one between the rewards of the next life and the temptations of this one.

America epitomizes both the materialistic temptations and the power of the West. American movies, television, and music dominate the global airwaves, upsetting parents in Cairo as well as Cambridge. It is America that takes it upon itself to maintain global stability. When children stray from tradition, it is usually American culture that is blamed. When something goes wrong for a people, it is usually said to be because of America's action or inaction. We cannot do much about our culture; it is after all a blend of who we are and what we value. But we can and ought to change our grand strategy. By creating unachievable expectations about our ability and intent to manage regional conflicts, to bring democracy to where it is lacking, and to calm security fears across the globe, we stimulate conflict and jeopardize our own security. It is time for America to come home.

America's power is vast, but not unlimited. Its power depends on exhaustible human and capital resources. Attempts to impose our will on others have to be very selective in order to husband these resources and prevent the formation of counterbalancing alliances. We have vital interests and should seek to advance them, but we have neither been elected to rule the world nor been given license to bring enlightenment to others. We would not tolerate other nations that demanded we adopt their way of governance and sought to police our region, and thus we should not be surprised that even our best intentions are met with skepticism and resistance. The way to preserve our power is to practice restraint in its exercise.

Finding Our Way Back

We saw forward deployment of U.S. forces as an advantage during the Cold War. We wanted to contain the Soviet Union and saw the possibility of Europe and Asia's military resources combining against us as a significant threat. We worried that without our military presence, those nations closest to the Soviet Union would lack the strength or will to block its desire for regional dominance. If there were to be a fight for that dominance, better to have the fight in Europe or Asia than here. Better that such a fight be conventional rather than nuclear. To those ends, we ringed the Soviet Union with bases and protected the borders of our allies in both Europe and Asia from Soviet expansionism.

Today, America's security situation seems totally different. By continuing the forward deployment of our forces both in practice and by treaty obligation, we stand between what are now only our former enemies and their neighbors, most (but not all) of whom are our friends. Russia may continue to deviate from the path of democracy, but it has yet to show signs of reverting back to either communism or imperial expansionism. China, though clearly a rising economic power, is still defining its international role and has not stepped much beyond occasional verbal abuse in its relationship with the United States. Both Russia and China have disputes with their neighbors and each other that do not concern us. Why then do we need to stand between them and their neighbors?

Treaties left over from the Cold War obligate us to do too much. An expanded NATO makes us the guardian of the eastern frontier of Germany and its eastern neighbors; we no longer have reason to worry about these borders after the end of the Cold War. It is a mistake to champion NATO's eastward expansion. The Russians, just as surely as we would have been if we had been on the losing end of the Cold War, must resent their former satellites signing up to be members of the other team. Why poke them in the eye after their humiliation?

Our security treaty with Japan puts us between a too-little repentant Japan and the nations it abused during World War II. China and others occupied by Japan resent our failure to force Japan to face its

angry neighbors, as it would have had to do if we had not continued to protect it after the Cold War ended. It was to our advantage to protect Japan from advancing communism. But why should Japan be protected from its past when communism has been discredited?

When does Japan, as did Germany, acknowledge its war crimes? Why not now when nearly all of Asia is enjoying a surge in prosperity and the likelihood of war is slim?

Japan and Germany are the world's 2nd and 3rd largest economies. When do they take on the obligations for their own defense? When do they come off parole? The transition to a more restrained foreign policy will be difficult both for our friends abroad and for us at home. We have created significant dependencies: nations who have forgotten how to fish and prefer not to relearn. Some, most likely Japan, may wish to acquire nuclear weapons. We should aid them in developing such weapons in order to calm their fears. Without our automatic protection, they will have the need to offer reassurance to their neighbors, but will surely be fearful of their own ability to defend themselves without our direct assistance. Many nations find it less taxing to comment on how poorly America leads than to be responsible for their own security. If we offer a decade for them to adjust, we will be told in the middle of the 10th year that more time is needed. Better to limit a transition to two or three years for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops and security guarantees.

More problematic will be the adjustment at home. We have trained several generations of our diplomats and senior military officers to believe that everyone else's regional issues are our own. We stand between the Taiwanese and the Chinese, the Arabs and the Israelis, East Europeans and Russians, the Albanians and the Serbs, and so on. Our military has a combat command for every region, including the recently established Africa Command. The officer-students at our war colleges learn more about globalization, climate change, cultural conflicts, and economic development than they do about war. The world has become our empire, and they are our future viceroys. Our power has blinded them and us to the dangers that lurk not far from our interests. Our political leaders also believe that their responsibilities extend beyond our borders. They happily say we are obligated to right wrongs that we know little about and whose repair surely exceeds our abilities, material resources, and patience.

What we need to do is regain our strategic depth. There is no benefit in confronting countries that are no more than possible enemies. We should not wish them to believe that we take sides in their disputes with their neighbors. Those neighbors will have incentive either to defend their interests or to find compromises if we do not intervene. Their fate should be their own choice, and their encounters with expansionary, aggressive powers will provide warning of likely threats for us.

We have many neglected problems of our own. For the many decades since the beginning of World War II, we have been preoccupied with international security issues. Others, including our allies and even our former enemies, found the resources and time to rebuild their civil infrastructures and invest in their citizens. Significant segments of our population have not prospered under these priorities. They continue to fall behind while our government and many of our most talented people focus on the problems of others. Coming home will likely give us the opportunity to reprioritize. Detroit is not Darfur, but it is clearly our responsibility.

Advocating the adoption of a strategy of restraint is not a call for a return to isolationism. America benefits greatly from international trade and the freest possible flow of people and ideas. Protectionism is neither good economics nor

good politics. What needs to be restrained is not trade, but rather the temptation to use our power to manage global security. Our power and our fortunate geography cannot protect us from strategic hubris. We surely want a peaceful and prosperous world, but we cannot make that happen as the self-appointed global police. The American public cannot be expected to pay the required price in soldiers' lives or dollars, nor will others trust our judgment in this role. Global peace and prosperity requires that others share the burdens we have assumed as our own. *Only* when we do less will others find the will to do more. In the meantime, we should reclaim the advantages of our natural strategic depth and our large, free trade-oriented economy.

Coping with al Qaeda

The hardest aspect of the terrorism problem is gaining agreement on its scale and direction. It is easy to exaggerate the danger. As a free and open society, we have many vulnerabilities and

"The hardest aspect of the terrorism problem is gaining agreement on its scale and direction."

little taste for restricting individual freedoms. With millions of box cars, tractor trailers, and ship containers always in transit and hundreds of thousands of miles of railroad track, pipeline, and electrical grid to protect, it becomes a twisted academic game to do the terrorists' work for them and identify the many ways in which devastating disruptions to normal life can be imposed upon us. Will it be the liquefied natural gas tanker exploding in Boston Harbor, the derailment of a train carrying toxic chemicals near downtown Chicago during the morning commute, or the radiation bomb detonated at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena that exposes the weakness in our homeland security planning? For all we know, al Qaeda has a dozen such plots underway using its network of sleeper cells long implanted through our porous borders. Or perhaps it has none and works more on public psychology by making threats via video releases and the Internet. It is impossible to know how many, how well coordinated, and how smart the terrorists are when they lead hidden lives. It is also worrisome to give up the openness of our society for a threat whose shape is amorphous, whose size is unclear, and whose deterrence is highly difficult.

Moreover, there are definite domestic political advantages to hyping the threat. For some politicians, frequent tough talk about terrorism implies their opponent's supposed indifference to America's security vulnerabilities. The public does perceive important differences between the major political parties in terms of their willingness to use force to protect the nation's security. These differences are politically exploitable. For other politicians, pointing out holes in homeland defenses is a way to promote larger budgets for first responders back home and their suppliers, thus securing at least the votes of these potential beneficiaries if not the nation's security. The grants/contracts economy looms large in the background in most discussions of homeland security, as does the potential for shifting the costs of local functions such as police and fire protection in the United States to the federal government.

Seven years have passed without a major domestic incident of terrorism since the attacks of 9/11. Some domestic plots have been thwarted, while a few individuals have taken it upon themselves to pursue the jihadi cause by attempting violent acts here, but basically it has been quiet. Overseas there have been more attacks, but most of them as well have been carried out by uncoordinated

individuals or groups seeking martyrdom on their own. Some of the important leaders of al Qaeda have survived the hunt, but apparently only by living in the wilds of Pakistan. Unless the terrorists acquire nuclear weapons, the challenge to America is a moderate one.

The hunt for al Qaeda has to continue. None of its leaders should expect a safe night for the rest of their lives. No nation should expect to shelter al Qaeda cells or training camps without risking a U.S. attack. Any nation's failure to assist in the apprehension of known al Qaeda suspects should be considered an invitation for direct U.S. action against these individuals, with or without the cooperation or consent of local forces. There can be no safe haven for those who have attacked us and continue to threaten U.S. citizens and interests. Religious belief or imagined political wrongs offer no excuse.

In fact, the cooperation that the United States has received in the search for al Qaeda leaders has been quite good. Most people recognize the great evil of the 9/11 attacks and volunteer their assistance. Few nations want the risks involved in trying to protect al Qaeda's leaders or its plans. Cooperation has come from nations that favored our intervention in Iraq as well as those that opposed it. Muslim-majority nations have helped at least as much as have our long-time NATO allies that are solidly Christian.

A policy of restraint does not exclude the use of significant military force abroad in the furtherance of U.S. security interests. If a nation harbors a fundamentalist movement or installs a fundamentalist government intent on striking the United States, it cannot be left alone. On the other hand, the experience in Iraq shows the problems that can follow from intervention that leads to occupation, even on the appealing grounds of promoting democracy and religious tolerance. In fact, the occupation seems to provide confirming evidence for the oft-made claim that the United States intends to steal the resources of Muslim nations. The problem then becomes one of using force without creating a larger jihad.

The answer, I believe, lies in what could be called the punishing raid. To retaliate for an attack or to destroy a very threatening capability, the United States can launch a major ground force incursion that would exact a significant price by both eliminating the immediate threat and destroying infrastructure in its wake. Air attacks may be able to accomplish the same destructive missions. Instead of attempting to rebuild infrastructure and reform governments, we will likely find that the punishing raid achieves the more obtainable goals of making threats or attacks against us very costly for nations where they are initiated. We have no obligation in every instance to replace losses or improve conditions for those who attack us or indicate that they are contemplating one. The message should be simple: harbor al Qaeda and risk having your country destructively visited by U.S. forces.

The Lessons of Iraq

As we have rediscovered in Iraq, even great powers have their limits. The Iraq experience offers important lessons about democratization, nation building, and counterterrorism—and our capacity, or lack thereof, for any of them. There was a persuasive reason to intervene in Iraq, but there was none to stay beyond the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. The argument about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) was both misleading and not a justification for invading. After all, nuclear weapons are the only true WMD, and there was no belief among Western intelligence agencies that Iraq possessed them or was close to acquiring them. There are defenses against chemical and biological weapons and natural factors that assure their ineffectiveness as weapons. Moreover, there was no evidence that Iraq either had large quantities of these weapons or was about to transfer its stores to terrorist groups.

It is indeed noble to wish for others to live in a democracy, but it is not possible to provide democratization as a gift. Nor is it demonstrably transferable by its mere presence in a region dominated by oppressive regimes. Offering democracy to Iraq and the Arab world may have been a wonderful gesture, but one that was beyond our capacity to deliver.

There was a need to depose Saddam Hussein, but it had less to do with Iraq's system of government than with regional politics. The U.S. troops necessary to contain Hussein were based in Saudi Arabia. The United States had to leave Saudi Arabia after 9/11: the withdrawal of "Crusaders" from Saudi Arabia, the site of the two holiest mosques of Islam, was one of the key demands of al Qaeda. The United States had stationed forces in Saudi Arabia beginning in 1990 to protect the Kingdom and the world's oil supply from an attack by the Iraqi dictator. The contingent, more than 10,000 mostly Air Force personnel in 2003, moved out of Saudi cities but stayed in-country after the Khobar Towers attack in 1996. Operation Southern Watch and Operation Enduring Freedom (the Afghanistan fight) were run from an air operations center at Prince Sultan Air Base in the Saudi desert. The fact that Christians guarded Islam's sacred sites, if only indirectly, grated on Saudis. Al Qaeda also objected to UN sanctions on Iraq, apparently accepting Saddam's claim that the sanctions were starving Muslim children. The United States was the prime advocate for the sanctions, and thus the nation blamed for all their negative consequences, even those that Saddam himself caused by diverting humanitarian revenues for his own use.

As much as we had to chase al Qaeda, we also had to address its grievances, if only tacitly. The way to end sanctions, withdraw our forces, and still protect Saudi oil from a Saddam takeover required a regime change in Iraq. The invasion of Iraq began in March 2003. We were providing food for Iraqis almost immediately upon entering the country. We withdrew our forces and closed all of our facilities in Saudi Arabia by the end of August 2003. There are now no U.S. troops or aircraft stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Getting out of Iraq has been more of a problem than getting out of Saudi Arabia. The Bush administration first sought to avoid any long-term commitment to rebuilding Iraqi society and government, and then became entangled in an expanding mission to bring stability, economic progress, democracy, and religious tolerance to Iraq. The invasion force was explicitly limited to avoid the unwanted task of nation building. This force was unable to bring order to a society that, once free from its oppressive government, collapsed into a near-Hobbesian world of looting, violent crime, and sectarian score settling. Exacerbating the situation were Iraqi expectations about the value of losing a war to the United States. Visions of America providing 24-hour-a-day electricity, sewerage, clean water, limited corruption, and excellent medical care were both widespread and unrealistic.

The initial unwillingness to contemplate nation building responsibilities reflected in part Bush administration war advocates' belief that the invading force would be greeted as liberators, thus clearing the way for early UN and EU involvement in Iraq's reconstruction. That happy prospect also coincided with the U.S. military's desire to avoid peacekeeping and nation building tasks, which it viewed as appropriate only for lesser militaries like those fielded by the Europeans.

The one mission that the American military likes even less than nation building is counterinsurgency operations. These efforts are usually brutal affairs, famous for the atrocities conducted by both sides. The enemy hides among civilians, does not obey the laws of warfare, and does not wear uniforms. It tests the will of government supporters, causing chaos through horrific violence

against civilians and ambushes of military convoys. Invariably soldiers are drawn into initiating retaliatory massacres and using torture to gain information on likely attacks and terrorist networks. Western sensibilities are offended by such acts, and reporters are eager to uncover them. The untested assumption is that torture and brutality are counterproductive, serving to enlarge insurgencies rather than helping to suppress them. Strangely, however, they are almost always a central part of the counterinsurgency effort, which implies some efficacy for these tactics. Technology, the strong card of the American military, is of little value in counterinsurgency operations. Instead, these are manpower-intensive conflicts that tax Western militaries' ability to supply willing soldiers and wear away domestic support as the casualties mount.

Iraq may or may not be a lost cause. It is not clear that there is a strategy available to us that will assure long-term success. Iraq is a seriously divided country where religious sects, tribes, and regions compete for power. The situation is further complicated by al Qaeda elements, obvious interference from Iran, and many jihadists infiltrating from abroad. A better coordinated interagency process will not turn things around for us in Iraq. It seems appropriate that U.S. government agencies, including the armed services, cooperate and pool their different talents, but for what purpose? Sharp differences are likely to persist about the ways to defeat insurgencies. It also is unlikely that diplomatic conversations with the neighboring countries will tame the situation. Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia each want to shape Iraq's direction, but differently. We cannot easily increase the level of our forces, which number close to 300,000, if contractor support is included. New schools, hospitals, and power stations may be needed, but they are unlikely to solve the political crisis or even reduce the level of violence in Iraq.

Many warn of the risks of leaving Iraq quickly. Some say that the war or the terrorists will follow us home. Others believe that Iraq's civil war will engulf the region, threatening oil supplies and the survival of our friends. But why would anyone involved in the insurgency follow us home? Would not the ensuing escalation of the civil war in Iraq absorb all of their energy? And assuming a Shiite victory, would not the Sunni neighbors be determined to block the expansion of Shiite power? Experience argues that oil will be available for sale because its value lies in pumping rather than in hoarding. The region is so divided, as is all of Islam, that the chance of one group or one nation dominating is very unlikely. Israel is motivated to protect itself and so are the regimes in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. American forces staying in the caldron that is Iraq guarantee none of these outcomes—that one country will not be the dominant power, that Israel will carry the direct burden for its own defense, or that nearby Sunni regimes will survive.

Finding Their Self Respect

More certain is that al Qaeda and its supporters will claim a huge victory if the United States leaves Iraq. Driving America out of the region is an al Qaeda goal. But after our departure, the war within Islam between the modernizers and the radical traditionalists will continue. It is notable how many al Qaeda members have middle-class backgrounds and a Western education. The turn to fundamentalism that these relatively privileged individuals have taken, one could argue, is the result of the humiliation they felt in their dealings with the West. Islam was once the most advanced civilization in the world. But now commerce, science, engineering, and politics are controlled by Western ideas and values. Western firms and technicians extract the oil, design the power plants, and train the medical specialists. Humiliation stems from always being dependent. Muslim states do not win many wars or build many cars.

Those adherents who know their history must be overcome by feelings of resentment and inferiority. A U.S. departure will help them regain their self-respect.

There will be dancing in the Arab street if the United States leaves Iraq, but only for a short time. Soon the divisions that exist within Arab societies will be clear to all. The civil war over Islam's future will continue. The decolonalization of Asia has produced an economic and political revolution. Japan, China, India, South Korea, and a half dozen other countries have discovered the benefits of capitalist economic development. Even Asian Muslim countries are beginning to take the path toward consumerism. At some point the Arab people will stop accepting claims that the United States and the West are the cause of their relative backwardness. Great wealth has not brought significant change in Arab societies because of the unequal distribution of income, and the ability of those who are favored in the distribution to blame the Great Satan and his assistants for all the problems their less-favored fellow citizens face. If the United States is much less involved in the Middle East, the shameful failures in Arab development are more likely to come to the top of national agendas there.

American influence will remain high in the region even if our military presence is non-existent. American culture has an appeal independent of governmental action. Our movies, celebrities, values, and fashions will penetrate Islamic barriers just as they did Soviet barriers. The power of materialism does not flow out of the barrel of a gun. Instead, it is flows out of satellite dishes, internet connections, and jet planes. The attraction—and irresistibility—of liberty is the knowledge that others, born to no higher status than you, can fulfill their material desires while the authority of officials over you is limited.

Arabs themselves will fill the power vacuum created by our withdrawal. Russia is too weak and too distrusted to enter the region. China is too distant and too self-absorbed to be much of a factor. The Europeans know that there is no benefit for them in increasing their involvement in the Middle East once again. The world is primarily interested in the Middle East for its oil. The security of that supply of oil will grow as the region gains the self-confidence that flows from being truly independent. Moreover, oil is the region's dominant source of income. Cutting off its export would be self-defeating.

The Caliphate (al Qaeda's goal of uniting all Muslims in a single state) will not return. There are too many divisions within the Muslim world and among the Arabs for that to happen. Modern weapons make military conquest very difficult, and resistance by populations in place is likely to be high to Muslim attempts to reclaim lands once held. In the short run, conflicts for primacy within the Middle East will absorb the political energy that will likely develop with our withdrawal. In the long run, one must assume that the conquering power of materialism, which has taken firm hold of the rest of the globe, will reach the Middle East.

Intractable Problems

A strategy of global restraint must acknowledge a few intractable problems: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the proliferation of nuclear weapons chief among them. Israel is located in the wrong place politically, if not biblically. Better the homeland for the Jews were in Bavaria, where the crimes against them in the 20th century were conceived, than in the Middle East where a non-involved population was displaced. Nearly all the policy advice offered on the Middle East argues that in order to control terrorism, prevent the fall of Arab governments to extremists, and avoid nuclear war, we must make significant progress in solving the Arab/Israeli conflict. But how can that be done? The Palestinians who fled at Israel's creation have not been absorbed in the neighboring Arab lands and have built their national

and individual dreams on the right of return. Demographically, Israel cannot accept them back and retain its identity as a Jewish state. Creating a separate Palestinian state in the West Bank will not end, or even tame, the conflict. Extremists on both sides reject a compromise land deal. It is all or nothing for them. An acceptable agreement for the Israelis means holding on to defensible boundaries and religiously significant sites regardless of Arab claims. An acceptable agreement for Arabs will not permit the maintenance of a Jewish majority state.

We must recognize that the demise of Israel would cause havoc in American domestic politics. Neither American political party could survive the costs of allowing a second Holocaust or anything remotely similar to happen on its electoral watch. The assumption that America can control world events is held equally strong here as it is abroad. The responsiveness of our domestic politics will force action to protect Israel in order to avoid charges of indifference to its fate and that of its Jewish population, charges that European politicians can escape on claims of national powerlessness as well as indifference. Thus, a strategy of restraint cannot realistically be absolute. A requirement to be Israel's ultimate protector will remain, tempting Israeli and Palestinian extremists to behave dangerously.

Fortunately, the Arab/Israeli conflict is not as central in Middle Eastern politics as many assert. The Palestinians are not well liked by large segments in the Arab world. They sided with Saddam in his invasion of Kuwait and demand special subsidies in most places they live. Their value as a symbol of Western intervention for political mobilization purposes declines with the American presence. Those tempted to act against Israel will both confront the implicit American guarantee and risk losing ground to more immediate rivals.

Nuclear proliferation is another intractable problem. The bomb is nearly 70-year-old technology. Its secrets have been discovered by Israelis, South Africans, Pakistanis, North Koreans, and Indians as well as the French, British, Chinese, and Russians. Many others no doubt could build bombs if they wished. Some can be persuaded or bribed to give up the quest, but it remains a valuable protector of sovereignty for nations fearful for their security. As masters of conventional warfare, we wish nuclear weapons would disappear. Nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists, Muslim extremists or not, is a frightening prospect because terrorists are so difficult to locate and deter.

"Those smuggling technology or raw materials must fear the hunt. Nations that trade in nuclear components must expect punishment."

Anti-proliferation efforts have to be continued. Those smuggling technology or raw materials must fear the hunt. Nations that trade in nuclear components must expect punishment. Alternative redress to security problems needs to be explored. The arms control game has to be played, but in the end we must recognize it is only a modest barrier to the very determined. Because nuclear weapons are a good way to assure independence and fend off attacks, there will be nations determined to acquire them.

Even with proliferation, a restraint-based strategy has advantages. The less we are involved in distant conflicts, the less significant we are as a target. The

global spread of bases adds to our vulnerability by creating pockets of Americans dependent, in part, on the uncertain protection of host nations. We need to reduce our global footprint, but not for climatological reasons alone.

Stop Meddling

We should stop meddling overseas. Most international disputes do not involve American vital interests. The idea that we are in a global struggle is left over from the Cold War. The idea that our failure to intervene in overseas conflicts will lead to ever greater conflicts that will inevitably challenge our ability to respond is left over from World War II. Our success in both wars changed the structure of international relations. We stand alone as the world's great power. Other nations are at best regional powers. Because of our success the world is safer for them as well as for us. But we need wisdom in using our power.

It is beyond the interest or capacity of the American people to provide security for the rest of the world. Our empire offers us not riches but costs. There are no galleons full of gold and silver returning to our shores from our overseas adventures. On the contrary, we have now taken the watch on failing states on the unproven premise that they are the breeding or training grounds for terrorists. It happened once, in Afghanistan. It is not enough to chase those who have attacked us, we are told: their potential hosts will turn against us unless we provide them with all-weather roads, reliable electricity, steady employment, and a honest government: things they have too long been denied. The costs of this surely exceed the tolerance of the American taxpayers.

Our capacity to supply soldiers for overseas policing is also limited, especially when there is intense resistance to our presence. A professional military, which is what the All-Volunteer Force creates, can fight short wars of varying scale. But as the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan has shown, a volunteer force is exhausted by a long war of moderate or greater intensity. Reserve forces and contractors cannot make up the gap that grows between the need for soldiers in the field and the ability to recruit volunteers. Frequent combat rotations wear on a force that is largely married and aging, as professional militaries tend to be these days. The restoration of conscription in the United States for the global security mission seems out of the realm of possibility. We simply do not have the volunteer soldiers to cover every possible intervention.

Our eagerness to be the uncompensated manager of global security has had several serious consequences. First, it has encouraged free-riding on the part of many mid-sized nations otherwise capable of helping contain regional conflict or responding effectively to humanitarian crises. With few exceptions, these prosperous and industrialized nations have left the task of maintaining global order entirely to the United States. Their militaries are under-funded and are always on the edge of losing vital capabilities. The only burden they happily share is that of judging our performance in the work they choose to avoid.

A second consequence is that those nations, to which we directly provide security assistance—including the commitment of combat forces—consistently fail to achieve the security independence that we state is our goal. South Korea, for example, buys naval capabilities that have little to do with the central threat it faces from the North. Despite nearly 60 years of partnership, the South Koreans have not yet established the command relationships and the troop dispositions that U.S. commanders believe are needed if the South is to be prepared for an onslaught from North. Thirty-five years ago, the South Vietnamese forces crumbled once it was clear that U.S. aid would be withheld—though the South had a larger force and better equipment than the North. More than a decade of U.S. presence had created a dependency that could not be overcome. Now in

Iraq we wait in vain for the Iraqis to stand up so we can stand down. We stay too long and do too much for locals to gain security independence. This is a trained incapacity for which we have done the training.

A third consequence is our unrealistic expectations about our ability to fight bloodless wars. Few Western countries allow their soldiers to engage in combat. When their troops are attacked, the response is often to withdraw. Thus, they do not encounter determined foes, problems of prisoner management, and the other tasks of war are not their experience. When the fog of war leads to poor battlefield judgment or stray bombs, as inevitably will happen, there is little understanding among the publics of our friends because they live the sheltered lives that we help provide them. Our attempts to limit civilian casualties only increase the expectations that the horrors of war can be eliminated.

Finally, we end up with an undeserved martial image. The world's view of America has become that of a nation permanently mobilized for war. The Cold War did indeed require a heightened state of military preparedness that continued for four decades. But our face to the world should not be a combatant commander or a carrier battle group. We are safer for our Cold War sacrifices. But when do we get to enjoy feeling safer? And why do we need to patrol off every coast? The willingness, some would say eagerness, to carry global burdens is not appreciated globally. In fact, it is assumed by many others that there are sinister motives and large benefits behind our global military engagement. It is time for us to recalculate the cost/benefit ratio by counting the costs correctly.

We should do less patrolling. We need to reclaim the advantages of our location, our natural strategic depth. If we do less, others will do more to provide for their own security and develop the capability to share meaningfully at those rare times when collective action is needed. Our war with al Qaeda and like-minded groups will continue, but most of our success will come from our near-irresistible culture rather than from our military actions in Muslim lands. It is hard to heed the constant advice that we should learn more about other cultures, when we know deep down that they learn ours, whether or not we individually care to recommend it.

STRATEGIC COUNTERTERRORISM

By Daniel Benjamin

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Introduction

Terrorism is a real and urgent threat to the American people and our interests; a threat that could become far more dangerous if terrorists acquire nuclear or biological weapons. An effective counterterrorism policy must go beyond uncompromising efforts to thwart those who seek to harm us today — we must engage other countries whose cooperation is essential to meet this threat, and we must ensure that new terrorist recruits do not come to take the place of those we have defeated.

The policies pursued by the Bush administration have too often been counterproductive and self-defeating. In the name of an "offensive" strategy, they have undermined the values and principles that made the United States a model for the world, dismayed our friends around the world and jeopardized their cooperation with us, and provided ammunition for terrorist recruitment in the Middle East and beyond.

To achieve our long-term objective we must go beyond narrow counterterrorism policies to embed counterterrorism in an overarching national security strategy designed to restore American leadership and respect in the world. This leadership must be based on a strong commitment to our values and to building the structures of international cooperation that are needed not only to fight terrorists, but also to meet other key challenges of our time: proliferation, climate change and energy security, the danger of pandemic disease, and the need to sustain a vibrant global economy that lifts the lives of people everywhere. We need to demonstrate that the model of liberty and tolerance embodied by the United States offers the best hope of a better life for people everywhere and that the terrorists, not the United States, are the enemy of these universal ambitions. We must pursue an integrated set of policies — on non-proliferation, energy and climate, global public health, and economic development — which reflect

a recognition that in an interdependent world, the American people can be safe and prosperous only if others share in these blessings too. Our policies must demonstrate a respect for differences of history, culture, and tradition while remaining true to the principles of liberty embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This kind of enlightened self-interest led others to rally to American leadership in the Cold War and offers the best hope for sustaining our leadership in the future.

The Threat

The world is filled with terrorist organizations. While the State Department's list of designated groups includes almost four dozen, numerous well-known organizations are still omitted because of issues related to the designation process.[1] Yet of the many organizations, only one subset currently poses a serious and sustained threat to the United States and its allies: the Sunni jihadist organization known by the shorthand "al Qaeda." The group merits this special status because it is the only terrorist organization with the ambition and the capability to inflict genuinely catastrophic damage, which can provisionally be defined as attacks that claim casualties in the four digits or higher.

"Viewing the Muslim world solely through the prism of counterterrorism is counterproductive."

The group is also unique in that it may eventually be able—if it is not already—to carry out a campaign of repeated attacks that would have a paralyzing effect on American life and institutions. Its ability to foil fundamental U.S. strategic goals—as it did in Iraq and as it threatens to do together with the Taliban in Afghanistan—has been amply demonstrated. As the turmoil in Pakistan has demonstrated, its capacity for upsetting the geopolitics of major regions of the world today is also unrivaled among non-state actors. The evidence provided by September 11, 2001 is sufficient to demonstrate the group's capability and determination. Unlike most terrorist groups, it eschews incremental gains and seeks no part of a negotiation process; it seeks to achieve its primary ends, including mobilization of a large number of Muslims, through violence.

It should not be ruled out that other terrorist groups may one day develop capabilities comparable to al Qaeda's. Hezbollah, for example, could likely carry out attacks as devastating as those of al Qaeda (and perhaps more so) if activated by its masters in Tehran, a possibility that would loom large if the United States attacked Iran. Nor can we rule out the appearance of apocalyptic cults that are more effective than Aum Shinrikyo in carrying out mass killing. For now, though, the Sunni jihadists are in a class by themselves.

How great is the threat? Was 9/11 a one-off? The questions allow for no certain answer. In a series of National Intelligence Estimates and briefings, the intelligence community has made clear its belief that the aggregate threat is growing.[2] On the other hand, it has become common to hear critics say that the terrorist threat is not existential, and some argue that even including the casualties from 9/11, the likelihood of an American dying from a terrorist attack is minuscule—less than it would be from slipping in the shower, for example. But much the same could have been said of the chance of dying in a nuclear attack at the height of the Cold War. Terrorism is not an existential threat in the sense that 150 million Americans could be wiped out in an afternoon. But the possibility of a devastating attack or series of attacks—perhaps including weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—is real.

We should not lose sight of the fact that al Qaeda has aggressively sought nuclear materials since its earliest days and biological weapons since the late 1990s. Such an event would have profound consequences for the United States in terms of the lives lost and the shaken confidence in our political system.

Framing the Response

The Bush administration has fundamentally misunderstood the nature of the jihadist movement and its actions have made the threat considerably worse. The administration has hyped the threat and subordinated virtually all of our foreign and security policy into the "global war on terror" (GWOT). It has relied on the wrong tools — principally the military — and has vastly overemphasized tactics at the expense of strategy. To the extent that it has a strategy for reducing the appeal of jihad, it is the "Freedom Agenda," which has backfired.

Putting aside the issue of tactical counterterrorism — the catching and killing of terrorists and disruption of their operations — which must continue for obvious reasons, setting matters aright at the strategic level will require a significant departure from current policy. Perhaps the most critical step is in the framing: the United States must shift away from a foreign and security policy that makes counterterrorism the prism through which everything is evaluated and decided. As long as the global community perceives that our actions are meant to advance our security narrowly defined, then we will continue to alienate precisely those we need to draw into our camp.

Radical Islamism is a by-product of a number of historical developments, including the social, political, and economic dysfunctionalities of Muslim societies that have blocked these nations from satisfactory development. The shortcomings of these societies — and for Muslims living in diasporas, the discrimination they have faced — created an opening for extremists to exploit a sense of civilizational humiliation with a re-reading of Islamic history and doctrine that places blame on "the West." Some grievances are legitimate; many are not. But the fact remains that addressing these human needs, whatever their causes, will reduce the appeal of the jihadists' "single narrative." A long-term strategy that will make Muslim societies less incubators of radicalism and more satisfiers of fundamental human needs is in our deepest interest. Carrying out such a strategy will require an understanding that America takes the actions it does because they are right in and of themselves, not just because of our security concerns.[3]

"Prosecuting the effort… requires some wisdom and restraint when it comes to the choice of tools."

To put it another way, what the United States has lacked in recent years is a viable concept of strategic counterterrorism — a doctrine that will guide our actions, help undermine the recruitment of terrorists, and make their environments increasingly non-permissive. Deterrence, as most agree, does not work well against terrorists who are prepared to sacrifice their lives. But it is possible to at least inhibit some terrorist action if the operatives find their world increasingly hostile, new initiates harder to find, and the likelihood that they will be turned in to the authorities great. To achieve this goal requires creating facts that contradict the jihadist account of the world, effectively jamming their narrative. That is, the United States must visibly reposition itself so that for millions of Muslims

from different regions and societies, radical anti-Americanism has less purchase. In some circles, there has been a belief that our problem was "messaging" and "public diplomacy," that we could undermine anti-Americanism through effective rhetoric. That hope is misplaced: what counts now are not words but deeds. The United States has spent five years trying to craft a public diplomacy strategy to recoup ground with Muslims and others around the world. But public diplomacy works only when deeds and words are mutually reinforcing, not when they are contradictory. From the point of view of many Muslims, America's principle form of engagement with the Muslim world centers now on killing terrorists—and, all too often, innocent Muslims—and occupying historic Arab lands. For a substantial number of these people, Osama bin Laden's description of the universe has essentially been validated.

"What the United States has lacked in recent years is a concept of strategic counterterrorism—a doctrine that will guide actions to undermine recruitment of terrorists and change the environments they inhabit into increasingly non-permissive ones."

What principles should guide the policies to create those facts? If we understand the radical Islamist challenge as one of narrative, it is not difficult to imagine what our counter-narrative should be: the United States is a benign power that seeks to help all those who wish to modernize their societies, improve their conditions, participate in the global economy, and create a better future for their children. Nations that play by the international rules of the road will receive our assistance and support in the global community. We harbor no enmity for any religion or race or ethnic group. We recognize that our future depends in no small measure on continuing improvements in conditions around the world. We know that we cannot swim as others sink. Few, if any Americans, will find this account objectionable. Few Muslims would believe it.

Can we make that case? One frequently heard counterargument is that we cannot—that the structure of attitudes among most Muslims is so hardened that any effort to change "hearts and minds" will fail, and that any U.S. action will be reinterpreted into the framework of Muslim grievance. Unfortunately, this is not a frivolous objection. Among some Muslims, it is accepted that the United States stood secretly behind the killing in Bosnia and Kosovo and only intervened when events threatened to get out of hand; that the 1991 Gulf War was not about liberating Kuwaitis and safeguarding other neighbors of Iraq so much as humiliating the one country in the region that stood up to Washington—and so on.

But there is no evidence that a sustained American effort to rehabilitate its image would bear no fruit—and surely much would depend on how the case was made.[4] The fact remains that America was once viewed as the great anti-colonial power in the Middle East and elsewhere, and just a few years ago, polls showed that Muslims were enamored of American freedoms and American society. Moreover, the degrading conditions in many

Muslim countries as depicted, for example, in the Arab Human Development Report—together with the projected demographics of the region, mediocre economic performance, and environmental decay—suggest that the pressure for change will only grow, and that the inclination to blame the United States for the current situation may increase.

Prerequisites for Repositioning

Three major efforts must be undertaken for the United States to regain the minimum level of trust necessary to improve our image, counter the jihadist narrative, and pursue a policy that brings positive change.

DRAW DOWN U.S. FORCES IN IRAQ

As long as the United States is seen as an occupier, any kind of constructive engagement with most Muslim societies will be extremely difficult. The departure of U.S. troops should not be precipitous, but it also should not be held hostage to moderate fluctuations in the level of violence. Ideally, the withdrawals will be carried out in the context of a broader political agreement involving the parties within Iraq and Iraq's neighbors, though this too cannot be a hard requirement for removing troops. A limited troop presence with the specific mission of conducting counterterrorism operations—with the agreement of the Iraqi government—should be acceptable and desirable.

Some, especially on the right, will see troop withdrawals as being at odds with our counterterrorism goals, since a U.S. departure will only strengthen the jihadists' argument that the United States is a paper tiger. There is an element of truth to this—our opponents are good at constructing a story that can cast us in the worst light no matter what we do. But we will be better off getting out of Iraq and buttressing our support elsewhere in the region than allowing our enemies to continue bloodying us and enhancing their own standing. Withdrawal will also reduce the terrorists' ability to advance their more central claim that the United States is a predatory power that is determined to occupy Muslim lands, steal Muslim wealth, and destroy Islam. In addition, the United States must stop talking about a long-term "Korea-like" presence in Iraq—a refrain that lends further confirmation to the argument that Americans are both predators and liars, given all our earlier denials of interest in a long-term occupation.

> *"The international community requires a revalidation of America's moral character and mission. Our allies need to be convinced that the U.S. has not jumped the rails for good."*

RESTART MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS AND SUPPORT THE PALESTINIANS

The United States must launch a sustained effort to restart the Middle East peace process and ameliorate the plight of the Palestinians. No issue is higher on the list of concerns for Muslims.[5] Six years of neglecting the peace process have done enormous harm to America's standing in the region, and the efforts that emerged from the hastily assembled Annapolis Conference have hardly mitigated that damage.

Given the extraordinary decay in the socioeconomic conditions in the Palestinian Territories, more will also be required. Hamas' control of Gaza complicates matters greatly, but the United States must work to change the perception that it is indifferent to the sufferings of the Palestinians.

As a concomitant to reenergized negotiations, an economic package that strengthens job growth, infrastructure, and education in the West Bank—and, if Hamas makes appropriate concessions, in Gaza—is essential.

Peacemaking in the Middle East is the paradigmatic example of an activity that the United States pursues because it is a good in itself, not simply because it will deflate anti-Americanism. As such, it should not be depicted as a bone that is being thrown to anyone or as a defensive measure.

"A measure of success will only be possible if the U.S. and Europe achieve a remarkably higher level of coordination. This must be a genuinely Western project."

REVALIDATE AMERICA'S MORAL CHARACTER

The international community, and Muslims in particular, requires a revalidation of America's moral character and mission.[6] Before any deeper engagement is possible, those who are on the fence about America's global role need to be convinced that the United States has not forsaken the rule of law and, following former Vice President Dick Cheney's famous remark about needing "to work… the dark side," has not made torture and other human rights violations a permanent part of the struggle against terror. At a minimum, this will require affirmative declarations by President Barack Obama that America does not torture, investigations to clarify what was done, the closing of Guantanamo military prison and any remaining "black sites," a clear and sustainable policy on rendition, and compensation to those who have been mistreated. These inquiries must be carried out in a sensitive and depoliticized manner—requirements that suggest that either a 9/11-type commission or a "truth and reconciliation" effort be created. It is essential that such an undertaking not become another incitement to partisanship, but, at the same time, there are doubtless numerous stories such as those of the destroyed interrogation tapes waiting to come to light. A comprehensive effort is required to deal with this chapter in American history, bring other such episodes to light, and help establish the nation's post-Bush ethical standards. It bears emphasizing that whatever benefit this may have for our international standing, it is even more vital that we do it for our own moral wellbeing.

A Positive Agenda

The United States must reestablish global trust in its leadership; clearly, different approaches are required for different regions. Given the U.S. reaction to the September 11th attacks, the need is particularly acute for policies with a special salience for Muslims.

What should be at the core of a new U.S. relationship with the Muslim countries that stretch from the Maghreb to Southeast Asia? The best way to put it is a positive agenda focused on modernization—a term that captures the mixture of economic liberalization, institutional reform, and democratization that would bring the Muslim world closer to the mainstream of the global system. The United States undoubtedly has an interest in stability and security in the region, as well as in bordering areas such as Africa, which are already threatened by the terrorist menace in a variety of ways. To many, those objectives would argue for supporting existing regimes and preserving the autocratic status quo that is in place from Northwest Africa to Pakistan. In light of the powerful demographic pressures in most of this

region, generally stagnant economies, and enduring dissatisfaction with corrupt and inefficient governance, such a conservative approach risks being on the wrong side of history when a transition comes. (Today, these regimes appear resilient, but a number of unknowns, such as the dynamics of transition between rulers, raise the possibility that at some point there will be change and perhaps even a rupture.) The status quo is also inconsistent with American values and long-term interests, which benefit from undermining that element of the jihadist narrative that holds that the autocracies are an instrument of the West for the subjugation of Muslim countries and the repression of the true faith.

Making progress with such an agenda will take many years and cost a great deal of money.[7] It will be difficult to manage; modernization itself is widely viewed in less developed countries with wariness and even antipathy, and it will be rejected if the changes are seen as "Westernization" and a conspiracy against local cultures. But if the West does the necessary groundwork to demonstrate that it genuinely seeks the peaceful and culturally respectful modernization of Muslim countries—and sees such a development as being a global priority—a major symbolic victory will have been achieved. It is worth mentioning a few rules of the road for such a project:

- A measure of success will only be possible if the United States and its allies, especially the wealthy countries of Europe, achieve a remarkably higher level of coordination. U.S. credibility—not to mention its financial resources—is so depleted that it could not hope to push such an effort by itself. This must be a genuinely broad-based project.
- To the extent possible, ownership of reform should be local. Indeed, the paradox here is that successful reform will advance the process through which Muslim nations are declaring their independence of the West. Over the long term, that should also be in the United States' interest.
- There must be an understanding that a reform agenda will not diminish terrorist violence any time soon. If the former is hostage to the latter, it will fail. It is reasonable to ask whether any of this is possible, and it must be conceded that there is not a lot of basis for optimism. As if the obstacles posed by entrenched autocracies were not sufficiently forbidding, the political obstacles that U.S. and European leaders would face in building domestic support for a deeper and costlier engagement in the Muslim world are daunting. One can, however, counter this pessimism by noting the successes of a comparable engagement in the second half of the twentieth century in Asian countries such as South Korea and in postwar Western Europe.

Another argument is also relevant: beyond the issue of efficacy is the matter of symbolism, which is vitally important within the context of a battle of narratives. To be sure, anti-American media can depict our actions so that symbols are not seen as we would like. Foreign governments have considerable ability to frame the engagement in a way that will be inimical to our goals. However it has nonetheless been true in the past that many Muslims placed some of their hopes for improved lives in the United States and the developed countries, and not long ago, the image of the United States was far better than it has become. We will not be able to undercut the jihadist appeal without undertaking this kind of repositioning. We will certainly not be able to achieve that repositioning rhetorically, as we learned during the brief heyday of the Freedom Agenda.

ELEMENTS OF THE AGENDA: ECONOMICS, INSTITUTIONAL REFORM, EDUCATION, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Although there have been signs of hope in the last few years, many developing nations, including most Muslim countries, suffer from sclerotic,

undiversified economies with woefully inadequate job creation. The development of the middle class lags, reducing hope for the emergence of viable democracies. Some countries, of course—such as the oil monarchies—need no financial help. Improving the situation for the rest will require a number of different tools: financial assistance, trade deals, and technical assistance. There is no cookie-cutter approach, but the relative roles of each must be weighed carefully.

Through a mixture of economic and technical assistance, the United States may be able to help influence the development of these economies—and provide actual improvement and demonstrate American concern for the wellbeing of the citizens of these countries. Many other areas of assistance and targeted investments may play a beneficial role: humanitarian relief, as we saw after the Southeast Asian tsunami, can markedly improve the United States' reputation. Assistance for health programs and education could also provide much-needed support. Chronic complaints of citizens in the Maghreb, Middle East, and Muslim South Asia involve widespread corruption and the poor provision of justice. U.S. rule of law initiatives can play a vital role in ameliorating conditions and changing America's image.

Deciding how democratization fits into this scheme will be challenging. In most Muslim countries there is a genuine rage at appalling governance and corruption—a central grievance of jihadists, who speak of the "apostate" rulers, thus translating the anger into a religious context. As mentioned earlier, even if the United States and Europe did not create these autocratic regimes, anger is directed against us because we are seen as the prop that has kept the autocrats in power. Consequently, it is essential that democratization is an element of American policy and that the United States and its allies are seen by Muslim (and especially Arab) populaces as being on the right side of this issue.

At the same time, the United States must proceed with the recognition that our ability to steer events and persuade autocratic regimes to create more space for reformers is seriously limited. Indeed, it cannot be ruled out that one generation of autocrats will eventually be replaced by another. Over promising—as the Bush administration did with the Freedom Agenda—makes things significantly worse. Creating real leverage for change through economic incentives—if at all possible—will cost a great deal more than the United States is currently spending. (The United States gives Egypt $2 billion a year, for which it gets support for the peace process but little else.) Efforts to create political pressure for change through support to civil society have shown themselves to be largely futile, because the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are to be the agents of change in these countries are not truly representative of civil society; they are creatures of the state. To cite one example, virtually all of the approximately 19,000 registered NGOs in Egypt are in some way co-opted by the state. Those that are not—for example, Saad Eddin Ibrahim and his Ibn Khaldun Center—are hounded and marginalized. The autocrats understand the danger posed by a thriving civil society and have moved to preempt it. Indeed, the Egyptian government was so determined to prevent any opening in its society through the development of independent NGOs that it torpedoed the 2005 Manama summit to launch the Forum for the Future over precisely this issue, humiliating Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.[8]

Room for maneuver is limited. U.S. policy will need to combine a steady rhetorical support for democracy and its advocates with an effort to enhance our leverage through increased assistance that is granted with significant conditionality. Where possible, the United States and its allies should work to win the trust of one or more Muslim national leaders and help them open up

their countries' political systems. To build a constituency for change, the United States must do the same with religious leaders and other appropriate prominent members of society.

Two mistakes must not be repeated. First, we should not conflate elections with democracy. There must be emphasis on the fact that democracy is about more than voting, and, in fact, it may not be advisable to push for elections until some measure of institution building has been achieved in sectors such as the judiciary and education. How vocal we should be about calling for elections is another question that will require a deft approach—intervening in another country's domestic affairs, especially after the experience of the last decade—is a perilous matter.

Second, in the event that free elections occur, the United States needs to recognize that it may not like those they bring to power. Still, the United States should be very reluctant to shun them. When change does come, the United States does not want to be on the wrong side of history. It follows, therefore, that the United States should seek to know better those who will vie for power if and when the autocrats depart. Specifically, we need to know the broad range of Islamists, who appear to have the greatest strength among those who form the de facto opposition in these countries, much better than we currently do. We also must have deeper relationships with liberals and others who are part of this opposition. The United States has undermined its interests by being too deferential to host country concerns about such contacts in the past.

A Varied Threat and the Need for Varied Responses

Simply because there is a jihadist narrative that has resonance in many different Muslim populations does not mean that there is a single strategy for the whole "Muslim world." Clearly, there need to be continuities across regions, but there also need to be tailored strategies for different countries and different regions that have specific needs.

Some countries require particular attention. Pakistan, for example, represents the most difficult problem because it has become the host of the global jihadist movement and terrorists can increasingly operate with impunity there because of the weakening of the state. Afghanistan, because of the weakness of the current regime, the dominance of the illicit economy, and its history as a safe haven, has its own set of issues. Other countries that play a pivotal role in the fight against terror include Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The rapidly growing Muslim populations of Africa have been targeted by jihadist groups for recruitment, and parts of the Sahel have become a safe haven for the radicals of the Maghreb. As has been the case in the last five years, Europe, with its large and disaffected Muslim minorities, will continue to be a central theater of jihadist operations. This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather indicative of the variety of challenges that must be addressed with a range of different tools and approaches.

REGIONAL MILITARY POSTURE/USE OF FORCE

A positive agenda, as well as essential steps to reduce—and perhaps eliminate—our presence in Iraq should not be seen as a concomitant to a broader withdrawal from the region. On the contrary, a U.S. presence—principally offshore—will be essential for maintaining global stability at a time of tensions between the Sunni nations and Iran and for preventing radicals from stepping up their aspirations. As noted above, any effort to create a large, land-based presence of U.S. forces in the region will have a harmful effect on our work to resituate ourselves. But our ability to check Iranian ambitions will also be important for reassuring Sunni leaders, preventing them from using sectarian difference as a mobilization tool and giving them the confidence to allow domestic reform to proceed.

While U.S. military engagement in the region remains essential, it is important to recognize the disadvantages of using the military tool in counterterrorism. In this respect, the nation needs to readjust its understanding of what works. Faced with a powerful threat, our instinct is to wheel out our most powerful response: the armed forces. Yet the large majority of counterterrorism work depends on action in the realms of intelligence and law enforcement, in part because most terrorist activity occurs within functioning states. Most of these states are our friends, or, at a minimum, not states we want to attack. It may seem obvious, but we need to use less kinetic means in these cases.

At times, military action will be appropriate, as it was in 2001–2002 in Afghanistan, the world's first terrorist sponsored state. In Afghanistan today, military force remains necessary because of the continued threat from the Taliban and the specter of the country becoming a safe haven for al Qaeda again. Indeed, Afghanistan will remain a must-win for the United States, though many will debate what winning means. There will likely be a call for the use of force in some other areas, including possibly Lebanon, Somalia, Yemen, and Gaza. Ultimately, in Afghanistan and perhaps in areas such as these, a mix of Special Operations Forces and conventional units from some outside power is needed to chip away at these insurgencies. But even when military force is used, the model of warfare will be less the early years of the Iraq occupation and more the classic counterinsurgency campaigns devised by Gallieni in French Indochina or Sir Robert Thompson in British-run Malaya. This kind of warfare is 90 percent civil action and 10 percent "kinetic"—guns and bombs. It can only succeed if it is carried out in the name of a government that is perceived as relatively legitimate and can tap large numbers of civilian experts to win loyalty through the provision of vital services to an immiserated population. Even with the wisest of policies, however, our experience in Iraq has clearly illustrated the problems of fighting terror with military force, especially against an ideologically driven foe like the jihadist movement. The downsides of a military response against jihadists are manifold.

First, as we learned in Vietnam and elsewhere, occupations—or any large-scale presence of foreign troops—arouse resistance. We must avoid spurring recruitment through unwise deployments—and as the influx of foreign fighters in Iraq has shown, the presence of a non-Muslim military on Muslim soil can radicalize young men from neighboring and distant countries.

Second, a policy of relying on ground troops to fight militants plays into the terrorists' game. They are happy to have the targets brought closer to them for easier attack, to allow them to demonstrate their bona fides to their audience by striking at the perceived occupiers; this proximity relieves them of the harder job of mounting long-distance terrorist attacks. Ground troops operating in an alien environment may eventually get the upper hand, especially if they have local proxies to work with, but the terrorists are likely to enjoy significant recruitment gains first.

Third, confronting terrorists with military force has the effect of glamorizing the enemy. That is, the terrorists can then plausibly portray themselves as the true standard bearers of Muslim dignity and the only actors who are prepared to confront a hated occupier. The tableau of these fighters in action, taking up arms against the world's most powerful military force, has had a galvanizing effect on radicals around the world. This has been especially true because of the broad Internet distribution of videos of al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AQIM) and allied groups in action. The insurgents understand the value of these videos. They often deploy two or more camera crews to film the action, recognizing that the presentation of the act is at least as important as the killing itself. Caches of these videos have been found in the possession

of innumerable terrorist cells, including many that have carried out attacks. In addition to denying its opponents the subject matter for such videos, the United States also must study how to turn the Internet and modern communications technologies to its benefit in the struggle against radicalism.

Large-scale military efforts to deal with terrorists typically lead to other benefits for our opponents, as we have seen in Iraq and elsewhere. They gain critical experience in tactics and create the new networks of support and social bonds among disparate groups that will enable future collaboration. U.S. military action also gives terrorists the opportunity to raise more funds and acquire weapons. Finally, the use of military force against terrorists is frequently unwise because it is inevitably indiscriminate and often results in the alienation of exactly those individuals in a given community who we do not want radicalized. Military action against terrorist targets often causes the deaths of innocents, no matter how much care is taken. With scores, and perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Iraqi deaths during the years of the U.S. presence, many Iraqis have come to blame the tragedies that have befallen their families and communities on the United States.

This, quite clearly, has occurred in Iraq; thousands of Iraqis joined a jihadist movement in a country that had little experience of radical Islam. Though news reports herald the possible defeat of AQIM, any fair assessment would conclude that the group achieved a remarkable success in foiling American efforts to occupy the country. Not only did it spark a civil war, AQIM also managed to turn bin Laden's pre-invasion prophesy of a ruinous war of attrition into a reality. The Bush administration appears to have calculated that jihadists would find the experience of American firepower a disincentive to confrontation with the United States. In fact, the jihadists were prescient in their belief that the forces of destruction would serve their goals more than ours.

TACTICAL COUNTERTERRORISM

A key element of an American strategy to contain and defeat the jihadist challenge involves the prevention of terrorist attacks and other actions that the terrorists can use to buttress their case to be the true leaders of the global ummah. It is self-evident that successful tactical counterterrorism must be a major part of any strategy to deal with the radical Islamist movement. That means capturing and killing terrorists, disrupting their operations, and keeping them off balance so they cannot carry out attacks. This is not only a matter of protecting innocent lives — a paramount priority in its own right — but also a necessity for deflating the terrorists' overall effort. Put another way, if our foe practices a strategy of "propaganda of the deed," we must prevent the deed. We will not be able to stop all attacks, but frustrating jihadist efforts undermines the terrorists' claim to being uniquely effective in moving its opponents to change their policies. Although the global level of jihadist violence has been rising, at least in the number of attacks if not fatalities (and the picture is muddled by Iraq), the post-9/11 record is good. Indeed, few counterterrorism practitioners would have predicted that as many conspiracies in Europe, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and elsewhere could be thwarted.

The large majority of tactical counterterrorism work involves intelligence and law enforcement because most terrorist activity occurs within functioning states. Most of these states are our friends, or, at a minimum, not states we wish to attack. For the most part, we have the fundamental tools necessary for the job, though we will continually need to improve our performance if the threat persists and the terrorists gain greater knowledge of our methods. To maintain progress, the United States will need to sustain a high level of investment in technology — especially signals intelligence — and we need to have a less politicized, serious discussion about our surveillance needs abroad and at home. We will also need to

"One of the main reasons for the tactical successes of recent years has been the high degree of international cooperation in the fight against terror…We should not take for granted that this cooperation might decay or that there is not room for improvement."

improve the quality of intelligence analysis, which has been uneven in recent years, and we will need to untangle some of the mess caused by the recent rounds of intelligence reform. Reorganization has created additional layers of bureaucracy and has not, as intended, dramatically reduced turf battles or improved intelligence sharing. Further reorganization, however, would be a mistake, consuming time and resources better devoted elsewhere. It would be more useful to implement small fixes and redirect energies into counterterrorism instead of wire-diagram revisions. To put it another way, the intelligence community cannot afford another round of surgery.

We will also need to continue investing in our clandestine services and liaison partners. The oft-repeated criticism that we rely too much on foreign intelligence services is largely misguided; we cannot hope to replace what our partner services supply, though we should always work to increase our own collection ability, including through unilateral penetrations of terrorist groups.

Cutting the flow of resources to terrorists must remain a high priority. It is not possible to bring terrorist activity to an end through financial interdiction — terrorism is too cheap, and the possibilities for funding too abundant. But it is nonetheless essential to continue taking steps that make it more difficult for terrorists to operate. Thus far, cutting terrorist financing has been one of the more successful areas of counterterrorism activity. Work to stop terrorist financing has a salutary effect in terms of elucidating financial byways and illuminating the origin of some terrorist resources. It has also helped encourage some radical sympathizers to reduce their support of terror for fear of having their assets seized.

One of the fundamental reasons for the tactical successes of recent years has been the high degree of international cooperation in the fight against terror — the unsung success of the post-9/11 period. We should not take this cooperation for granted or assume there is no room for improvement. As the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on "The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland" noted, "We are concerned, however, that this level of international cooperation may wane as 9/11 becomes a more distant memory and perceptions of the threat diverge."[9]

At the level of national leaders and policy makers, there is a fairly acute understanding of the nature of the threat and the desire to maintain close cooperation. To a remarkable extent, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has become a global clearinghouse for terrorism-related intelligence and a coordinating body for counterterrorism efforts. The question is whether popular support for a GWOT (or a more felicitously named successor) can be sustained in Europe and elsewhere. Some measure of support will be forthcoming, if only because several key European countries feel themselves under attack. But maintaining solidarity over the long term will still require work

because of the diminished sense of legitimacy attached to American policy.

However eager national leaders and top civil servants are to maintain their countries' relationships with the U.S. intelligence community, it cannot be ruled out that further revelations of human rights abuses will trigger popular moves to limit cooperation with the United States, especially in Europe. This could have severe consequences for our counterterrorism work. President Barack Obama must affirm that the United States does not engage in or condone torture in any way and that the struggle against terror will be conducted in accordance with traditional respect for the rule of law. The new administration should not shy away from investigations of the misdeeds of the last six years (perhaps using a bipartisan "truth and reconciliation" commission approach), and it should seek a return to the tradition of serious bipartisan oversight of intelligence activities.

We should not be blind to the difficulties such a course may encounter. At least as important as our Western allies' cooperation is that of friendly countries in the Muslim world — regimes that often do not share the West's commitment to upholding human rights. Preserving the cooperation of both will require a deft diplomatic touch and a sure sense of what is both morally acceptable and publicly defensible.

Covert Capabilities

Though force should be used sparingly in American counterterrorism, we will need a reliable covert capability for dealing with the problem of terrorist safe havens in largely ungoverned spaces. This problem already exists in Pakistan, and it may confront us again in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere. Our senior military commanders seem chronically averse to deploying Special Forces on counterterrorism missions, especially light and lethal disruption/snatch-or-kill missions, as the revelation about a scrubbed 2005 plan to target Ayman al-Zawahiri underscores.

These are among the most important kind of counterterrorism missions. Highly mobile, highly lethal counterterrorism operations are clearly possible. Israel scored victories with raids in Entebbe, Uganda; Tunis; and Beirut, Lebanon, in the 1970s and 1980s. The September 2007 operation against a Syrian nuclear target is another such achievement in the realm of counter-proliferation. Other countries have carried out similar operations, like Germany's Mogadishu raid of 1977, which freed passengers on a Lufthansa plane hijacked to Somalia by the Baader-Meinhof gang. Because the Pentagon has shown that it cannot carry them out, it may be time to ask the CIA to perform them. The Agency, to be sure, had its own risk aversion issues before 9/11, but its culture seems considerably more amenable to such undertakings than the military's. This is a capability the United States needs.

Building Capacity, Institutionalizing Cooperation

American policy makers will increasingly face a conundrum in the future: there is likely to be waning global interest in counterterrorism at the same time that the actual threat level rises. Many countries, especially in the developing world, will understandably say that they have higher priorities than helping the West defend its citizens. Yet it is imperative that the United States builds enduring partnerships with countries around the globe — especially weaker ones — to prevent terrorists from taking advantage of their states' insufficiencies.

By doing this, the United States can fulfill the strategic imperative of shaping the battlefield. We already have considerable experience in this area through the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program and other more general law enforcement and intelligence assistance programs administered

by the State Department and other federal agencies. What has been lacking is a comprehensive approach. Taken all together, spending on ATA and related non-military programs has run to less than $1 billion. A program that was significantly enlarged and better coordinated—within the United States and with other donors and in recipient countries—could produce competent intelligence officers, border security authorities, financial investigators, prosecutors, and judges. There will be considerable challenges in dealing with capacity building in the areas of intelligence and law enforcement in countries that have few democratic safeguards—and that will be a limiting condition. Ultimately, though, the United States should be as energetic in this area as possible without compromising our fundamental values. The nation has a strong interest in integrating others into the counterterrorism effort because we cannot defend everywhere all the time by ourselves. We should do so, moreover, with the explicit goal of helping others deal with the terrorist threats that confront them, too. For numerous countries, al Qaeda is but one of many threats, and often not the most pressing one. The United States has squandered much political capital by paying insufficient attention to the threats others face—Turkey's perception that it was not receiving adequate support for its campaign against the PKK, which precipitated a crisis in bilateral relations in late 2007, is an outstanding example. By focusing exclusively on al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Bush administration helped reinforce the impression that the war on terror is solely about safety for Americans and hostility to Muslims.

Helping others with their terrorist challenges and building capacity are areas in which the U.S. military can also play an important role—and it already has an established track record of doing so. Through "mil-mil" relationships, the U.S. Special Forces trainers have strengthened the capabilities of others to fight terrorists, especially in countries in which the central government's writ does not extend to all parts of the national territory. The outstanding case in this regard is the Philippines, where U.S. forces have been helpful in crippling Abu Sayyaf. There are a number of countries in which similar missions are underway and helpful; the Pentagon has become the government's largest dispenser of counterterrorism assistance, in part because of the Bush administration's conception of terrorism as a fundamentally military problem.

The United States can take another important step to shape the environment in which terrorists operate through institution building. If one compares this period with the beginning of the Cold War—when there was another paradigm shift in the security landscape—the difference is striking. Circumstances are not exactly parallel (they never are) but there is undoubtedly room for innovation.

Although numerous international organizations now take counterterrorism issues into consideration in their work, no single institution focuses primarily on the issue. The United States should back the establishment of an international organization to raise global norms of behavior by states to ensure that terrorists find it more difficult to act within any country or region. The creation of such an organization would have the further virtue of removing the perceived "made in America" label from the struggle against terror, which has been a disincentive to cooperation for some states.[10]

MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

One Muslim population deserves special attention: America's. A key reason why the United States has not been struck again is that American Muslims have shown little interest in the global jihad. They are, as a group, highly diverse and well integrated. While generally critical of U.S. foreign policy, most American Muslims are deeply rooted in the United States. Any actions that single out an ethnic or religious community in the United States—even for affirmative treatment—are fraught with peril.

At the same time, America's Muslims must also be the nation's first line of defense, since they are likely to encounter radicals, whether homegrown or imported, before anyone else. Their trust in and cooperation with U.S. law enforcement is critically important.[11]

For all that has been accomplished in terms of integrating Muslims into American society, these communities are now unsettled by aggressive law enforcement action (especially in the post-9/11 period), dubious prosecutions, and abuse of the material witness statute. A further major irritant is the rise of Islamophobia, which is being driven by some from the religious right and talk radio.

We have a compelling interest in reassuring American Muslims. The federal government should adopt policies to ensure that police at all levels recognize the importance of outreach and improving community relations. It would be helpful to continue to increase Muslims' engagement in public life, especially their participation in state, local, and federal politics. Officials should denounce incidents of anti-Muslim sentiment quickly and vigorously.

It is also vitally important that the United States is prepared to respond appropriately to a terrorist attack on American soil. Such an event ought to be viewed as a statistical inevitability—the law of averages will eventually catch up with us. An oft-cited concern from American Muslims is that after the next terrorist attack, they will be deprived of their civil rights. Our long-term ability to deal with the terrorist threat requires that we be prepared to act quickly to prevent discriminatory reactions, law enforcement overreaction, and other events that would destroy Muslims' sense of belonging.

HOMELAND DEFENSE

The desire to acquire WMD is a constitutive element of al Qaeda's identity and has been part of its program since the earliest days. In the very recent past, the jihadists have been known to be pursuing chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons. In Iraq, jihadists have learned how to inflict large casualties by conventional means; some are also learning these skills in Pakistan and bringing them to Europe. If the enemy succeeds in inflicting large casualties, or if it manages to damage our economy significantly, it will be increasingly empowered and therefore a far more formidable foe. A successful attack would also change the way they live their lives.

Hence, it is vital that the U.S. government skillfully manages the consequences of an attack and ensures that, for example, a stricken city is back on its feet as soon as possible. Americans—and the enemy—must see the U.S. government responding swiftly, calmly, and effectively to the crisis. Both prevention and effective consequence management are essential to limiting the terrorists' "profits" from an attack.

We cannot harden every potential target against conventional attack. We need to evaluate what is most critical and how we can ensure that vital services are maintained despite attacks. The belief that fighting "them" in Iraq would mean that we would not have to fight them at home, combined with a negligent attitude toward the hard work of governing, has meant our homeland security programs have suffered drift at a critical time. We have squandered the years since 9/11, again, largely through excessive reorganization and an unwillingness to match resources to needs. One only need look at the devastation and continued mess caused by Hurricane Katrina to recognize how far the United States is from having effective consequence management. No place in the nation has sufficient hospital capacity for the serious burns that a sizable terrorist attack would cause, a disruption at a major point could have a choking effect on the economy, and the threat of shoulder-fired missiles could ground air traffic indefinitely. The technical literature is overflowing with critical

unmet needs in the area of homeland security, and no further recitation is required here. For the most part, the prioritization of requirements is best left to homeland security specialists.[12]

PREVENTING A TERRORIST ATTACK WITH WMD

Two threats, however, have a strategic quality that requires addressing: biological and nuclear terrorism. There may be reason to believe that biological agents are less appealing to jihadists because their use would undermine the terrorists' aspiration to appear as noble warriors — images of masses of sick and dying people would likely be repellent to most people in al Qaeda's Muslim target audience. Nonetheless, there is a record of effort to acquire biological agents, and the threat should be taken seriously. Given the nature of the technology involved in bioterror and the proliferation of the basic skill sets needed to create pathogens, the heavy emphasis in this area must be on consequence management. This involves creating early warning systems, emergency health care delivery systems, and antidotes as well as plans for ensuring appropriate quarantine and care response in the event an attack uses a "reload" approach.

Nuclear weapons are viewed by jihadists as the most desirable, and there is a general consensus that if the terrorists can acquire fissile material, bomb fabrication is or soon will be technically within their reach. There is also considerable, though not unanimous, agreement that al Qaeda would use a nuclear weapon if given the chance. As any number of experts have observed, the nuclear capability is one that can be largely removed from the reach of the jihadists. Consequently, the United States must undertake a broad range of efforts against nuclear terrorism including improving detection systems for nuclear materials and pursuing a vigorous non-proliferation policy.[13]

PUBLIC POSTURE/PUBLIC EDUCATION: DEMOBILIZING THE POPULACE, IMPROVING THE GOVERNMENT'S MOBILIZATION

A final, essential element of dealing with terrorism requires setting a tone for national discussion of the threat and reducing the element of panic that has been manipulated for political purposes since 9/11. The schizophrenic attitudes now prevailing play directly into our foes' hands. Their strategy depends upon our overreaction to attacks — and even their rhetoric — so they can make their case to Muslims around the world. The terrorists achieved their goals in the first round, and we bear the burdens of our involvement Iraq. We may not have learned our lesson: we are now in the perilous position of being primed to commit a major error after the next attack. Imagine, for example, what might happen if a significant, successful terrorist conspiracy was traced back to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan, and a major military strike was ordered. The stability of Pakistan might be severely tested. Yet it is difficult to imagine that we would not retaliate with a massive attack because our credibility would be seen as being at stake and because we as a nation have become hostage to a Manichean mindset that requires maximal actions against the enemy, even when such actions may not be in our interest.

The United States needs to develop a broadly accepted view of how the terrorist phenomenon can be managed and reduced, and it needs to understand — as, for example, some European nations do — that most attacks have limited consequences. Terrorism is going to be a fact of life for the foreseeable future. In the case of jihadist terror, the ideology is durable and has, for some Muslims, a compelling authenticity because of its appropriation of canonic Muslim texts. To a significant extent, the ideology cannot be disproven, though repeated setbacks may convince followers that it is a dead end. The rise of jihadism is part of a deeper set of tectonic changes within Islam associated with a crisis of authority within the religion. How long violence and anti-Western sentiment will be a

central issue in the redefinition of Islam is impossible to predict. Moreover, the fuse that was lit in Iraq with the invasion and resulting insurgency may not burn down for some time. Roughly a decade intervened between the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan and the scattering of the victorious mujahedin and, later, al Qaeda's emergence on the world stage. It is therefore difficult to predict when the consequences of Iraq will be fully felt.

Therefore, it is vital that the nation develop a better understanding of risk and of the real impact of the different types of terrorist acts. A car bombing or even a series of car bombings would be deeply disturbing, but such events represent no significant threat to the nation. Most attacks with crude chemical or biological weapons would also pose little real danger. But the reality of the "high-end" threat involving WMD or a campaign involving major infrastructure targets (such as chemical plants) or a systemic threat to aviation (such as shoulder-fired missiles) needs to be taken seriously. In terms of both public attitudes and government deliberations, a new level of understanding about these distinctions is needed for intelligent and effective action.

The Threats of Tomorrow

Creating a new attitude toward terrorism—along with getting the right mix of law enforcement and intelligence policies—is all the more important because the danger will not cease once jihadism is brought under control. The relentless advance of technology means that the barriers to entry for those wishing to commit violence are falling. There are many different ways the phenomenon could evolve, including the spread of religiously motivated terror to other traditions, anti-globalization violence, and radical environmentalist violence. With the United States' military vastly stronger than all other conventional competitors, military analysts expect asymmetrical warfare to be the norm for a long time to come; that may well involve the rise of terrorist networks that operate semi- or fully independently of countries whose "cause" they share. "The privatization of violence" is a phrase that has been much used to describe the rise of the new terror. The expression needs to be understood as a historic dynamic. Because of the accessibility of dangerous technologies, violence will be privatized into the possession of ever smaller, "more private" units. The power that will soon be at the disposal of very limited groups and even individuals will be considerable—think about how few people it might take to create a biological weapon. Such a development would extend the paradigm shift in warfare that became evident on 9/11 and that could determine the essential nature of security for decades to come.

This is not a reason for despair. The societies of the developed nations, with their enormous research establishments, will devise technological remedies and countermeasures. But it will take great ingenuity, vision, and determination to keep ahead of those drawn to terrorist violence. This will require the continued deployment of government and private sector resources, and it will demand that government is organized and mobilized to meet the danger. For meeting this challenge, the essential element will be leadership that is focused and determined to impart to the nation a sober understanding of the threat.

ENDNOTES

[1] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (8 April 2008), at http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/08/103392.htm.

[2] See, for example, Director of National Intelligence, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland* (July 2007), at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf; and *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate: "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States,"* (April 2006), at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf.

[3] Today, it is painfully clear as well that the opportunity costs of our counterterrorism policies have been enormous. Whether one looks at the state of U.S. policy toward Russia in the aftermath of that country's invasion of Georgia, our position in East Asia or, perhaps most tellingly, the way Iran has profited from the GWOT, it is obvious that an over-emphasis on the GWOT has badly hurt America's global leadership. The full measure of that damage, however, belongs to another work.

[4] For insight into the structure of public opinion in a number of Muslim societies, see John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008) and Shibley Telhami, "2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll: Survey of the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland," at http://www.brookings.edu/topics/~/media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf.

[5] Shibley Telhami, "2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll." See also John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?*

[6] John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?* See also Pew Global Attitudes Project, "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other" (22 June 2006), at http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253.

[7] One potential source of funding to support such a project is the resources amassed by the Gulf oil monarchies during the recent run-up in oil prices. Cf. Ariana Eunjung Cha, "Foreign Wealth Funds Defend U.S. Investments," *The Washington Post* (27 March 2008); Andrew England, "Paulson keen to attract Gulf wealth funds," *Financial Times* (2 June 2008); and Eckart Woertz, "U.S. and Gulf interdependence," *Financial Times* (28 May 2008). Nonetheless, the history of economic support for reform from this quarter has never been very impressive, nor, given the polities in the region, should one have high hopes.

[8] Tamara C. Wittes, *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy* (New York: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); Steven Heydemann, "Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World," (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2007), at http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/10arabworld.aspx.

[9] Director of National Intelligence, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland.*

[10] The agenda of such an organization should include:
- Achieving universal ratification and enforcement of all international counterterrorism conventions.
- Undertaking a systematic effort to upgrade intelligence and law enforcement capabilities in countries in need of greater capacity; such an effort would include matching donor countries with recipients, using a process of peer review like the one of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and "naming and shaming," one of the few mechanisms for driving real change on such a charged issue.
- Working with FATF on multilateral initiatives and training against terrorist financing.
- Preparing the hardest cases of state misbehavior for UN Security Council attention.

[11] Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting It Right* (New York: Times Books, 2005): 115-125. See also Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mainstream" (22 May 2007), at http://www.pewresearch.org/assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf.

[12] Richard A. Clarke, *Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters* (Hopewell: Ecco, 2008); John D. Moteff, Congressional Research Service, "Critical Infrastructures: Background, Policy, and Implementation" (13 March 2007), at http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/RL30153.pdf; Mark Holt and Anthony Andrews, Congressional Research Service, "Nuclear Power Plant Security and Vulnerabilities" (18 January 2008); Paul W. Parfomak and John Frittelli, Congressional Research Service, "Maritime Security: Potential Security Attacks and Protection Priorities" (9 January 2007); and Shawn Reese, Congressional Research Service, "State and Urban Area Homeland Security Plans and Exercises: Issues for the 109th Congress" (3 March 2006).

[13] On the agenda of such a policy, the following steps are essential:
- Accelerate global nuclear security programs designed to secure vulnerable weapons usable fissile materials in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. As part of this effort, the G8 partners must fulfill their Kananaskis commitments and increase funding.
- Improve detection systems to prevent nuclear materials from transiting ports, etc.
- Urge Russia to account for, secure and, where possible, dismantle its tactical nuclear weapons stockpile.
- Explore ways of increasing the scope of comprehensive threat reduction to include other states such as Pakistan.
- Strengthen global cooperation on identifying and intercepting suspected weapons shipments through the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), especially for seagoing vessels and aircraft, by among other things, providing a sound, legitimate framework for PSI.
- Build other countries' customs and border security capacity — an essential requirement.
- Secure research reactors to prevent theft of highly enriched uranium.
- Amend the Non-Proliferation Treaty so that no new enrichment/reprocessing facilities are created in new locations, existing facilities are proliferation proof, and diversion from state stockpiles becomes more difficult.

Appendix

APPENDIX A: SOLARIUM II EXPERTS

The following group of experts on national security and terrorism, retired military personnel, former diplomats and other government officials participated in conferences and panels on combating violent extremism. CNAS thanks them for their insights. Their participation does not indicate their agreement or disagreement with the findings and recommendations in this report.

James Adams
Alexis Albion
Gary Anderson
Zeyno Baran
Michael Beech
Rand Beers
Daniel Benjamin
Steven Biddle
Reuben Brigety
Shawn Brimley
Kurt Campbell
Roger Carstens
Gary Cheek
Derek Chollet
Roger Cressey
Janine Davidson
Zachary Davis
Larry Diamond
David A. Fastabend
Michèle Flournoy
Price Floyd
Nathan Freier
Kathleen Hicks
Alice Hunt
David Kilcullen
Aidan Kirby
Daniel Levy
Anthony Lord
John Metz
James Miller
Mark Newton
David Ochmanek
Shannon O'Reilly
Marc Packler
Christine Parthemore
Nirav Patel
P. Dean Patterson
Camille Pecastaing
Eric Pierce
Neal Pollard
Christopher Preble
Lenny Richoux
Nicolas Roche
Marc Sageman
David Sanger
Harvey Sapolsky
Tammy Schultz
Sarah Sewell
Steve Simon
Vikram Singh
Jim Steinberg
Jim Thomas
Emma Vialpando
Ted Warner
Kenneth Watman
Mark Winn
Mark Wong
Jaron Wharton
Steven Zotti

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Design by CRABTREE + CO

Production Notes

Paper recycling is reprocessing waste paper fibers back into a usable paper product.

Soy ink is a helpful component in paper recycling. It helps in this process because the soy ink can be removed more easily than regular ink and can be taken out of paper during the de-inking process of recycling. This allows the recycled paper to have less damage to its paper fibers and have a brighter appearance. The waste that is left from the soy ink during the de-inking process is not hazardous and it can be treated easily through the development of modern processes.

Center for a
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