



TASK
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COUNTERING AL-QAEDA'S IDEOLOGY:
RE-ASSESSING U.S. POLICY TEN YEARS
AFTER 9/11

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COUNTERING AL-QAEDA'S IDEOLOGY:
RE-ASSESSING U.S. POLICY TEN YEARS AFTER 9/11

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Task Force Report 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The U.S. has made sweeping changes to its national defense strategic goals and objectives since 9/11. In response to the rise in prominence of al-Qaeda and its extremist ideology, the U.S. established the Department of Homeland Security, created the Office of Director of National Intelligence, and adopted new legal definitions for detention and interrogation policy. The U.S. has expanded intelligence-gathering and information-sharing mechanisms and learned to fight an enemy that wears no official uniform, that has no borders, and that represents no sovereign state. During the same period the U.S. government launched military contingency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, deploying hundreds of thousands of troops.

Although the U.S. has prevented attacks at home, it has failed to garner support from the local populations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the rest of the Muslim world. Short-term tactical gains acquired through drone attacks and overt military force has limited the U.S.'s ability to neutralize al-Qaeda's threat and restrain the appeal of its narrative. Going forward, long-term strategy must drive military and intelligence operations in order to effectively remove al-Qaeda combatants from the battlefield and contain their extremist ideology. The U.S. must not let combat operations undermine the ability to coexist and cooperate with the Muslim world or contradict U.S. emphasis on shared human values, promotion of relationships with the constituents of Muslim societies, and commitment to address legitimate grievances of local populations. In doing so, the United States will strengthen its position to stop al-Qaeda and affiliated groups from carrying out attacks against the U.S. and more effectively delegitimize the message al-Qaeda endorses to gain recruits and material support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The last decade has proved there are no quick fixes in the U.S. response to al-Qaeda. The U.S. successfully routed al-Qaeda from its 2001 strongholds, but the organization continues to gain broad-based support and franchise abroad. The U.S. has struggled to disengage from an inconclusive war in Afghanistan, the longest war it has fought. This particular challenge

demonstrates the gradual changes in U.S. interests, resources, and constraints over time. This task force report acknowledges and examines the steadfast efforts of the United States since 9/11, but its primary objective is to build the framework for the future response to al-Qaeda, highlighting the most effective and sustainable means for the road ahead.

This first goal of this task force is to understand al-Qaeda, define its extremist ideology, and identify the threat it poses to U.S. interests. Second, the report recommends the most effective ways to delegitimize al-Qaeda's ideological message through the dissemination of the U.S.'s own message. Third, this report sets the message war as the impetus to the direct fight against al-Qaeda. No longer can the U.S. solely rely on killing and capturing al-Qaeda operatives to prevent future attacks on U.S. interests and contain the appeal of al-Qaeda's narrative. To protect and preserve the security of the United States and its interests throughout the world, the U.S. must consider the following recommendations:

- **Employ an offensive counter message.** The U.S. must utilize negative messaging against al-Qaeda in order to counter their ideology. By highlighting the countless acts of violence al-Qaeda commits against Muslims, and other weaknesses in their theology and ideology of how the world should be governed, we can discredit their ideology in the Muslim world. The U.S. should work with Muslims who are willing to deliver this message due to their enhanced credibility with the target audience.
- **Utilize the Internet to combat al-Qaeda's ideology.** The U.S. should create a lead agency within the State Department, Department of Defense or the intelligence community that coordinates an Internet based campaign against al-Qaeda's message. While al-Qaeda utilizes the Internet as its primary recruitment and propaganda tool, the U.S. response in this medium has been extremely inadequate. Disaffected Muslim youth are the primary targets for al-Qaeda's Internet message and the group most likely to commit violent acts against the U.S.
- **Cooperate with and support international strategic partners.** The U.S. must cooperate with international powers like the EU, Russia, China and India in order to most

effectively and efficiently defeat al-Qaeda. Because these strategic partners maintain significant power in the world, it is critical that U.S. work alongside them in our fight against al-Qaeda.

- **Eliminate financing for al-Qaeda's operations.** The U.S. must eliminate financial support for al-Qaeda by increasing oversight of charitable donations originating in the Gulf States while collecting and exploiting intelligence from al-Qaeda's financial operations to prevent future attacks.
- **Employ effective counterinsurgency.** The U.S. must employ an effective COIN strategy that limits al-Qaeda's ability to build insurgencies in the Muslim world. This should be done with methods that minimize cost to the U.S., allowing our efforts to be driven by local security forces rather than our own. Because utilizing U.S. military force is either unrealistic or unsustainable, it is critical that our COIN strategy emphasize the training and equipping of local security forces by U.S. forces.
- **Reform U.S. development policy.** Establish USAID as a cabinet-level agency, shift resources from the Defense Department to USAID, and encourage bottom-up development projects that consider the needs of local populations. In doing so, the U.S. will empower local governments to provide for their people, eliminating the possibility for the discontent that can lead to insurgencies.

SECTION I

UNDERSTANDING AL-QAEDA AND THE THREAT IT

POSES

AL-QAEDA AND WHAT THEY BELIEVE

Written by: Aria Nazari & Vanja Radunovic

Al-Qaeda is a global, multinational terrorist organization with a specific ideology that it wants to impose on the rest of the world. Its main, short-term approach is to portray itself as the defender of Muslims and Islam against United States and Western aggression. It spreads the message that the west is at war with Islam and it is the duty of all true Muslims to fight back by any means available. However, its long-term goal is much broader than merely fighting off this Western aggression. Starting with Muslim countries and then spreading to the rest of the world, al-Qaeda believes everyone should live by a set of laws and rules based on its narrow fundamentalist vision of Islam. Al-Qaeda denounces man-made laws such as: sovereignty, democracy, human rights and any other laws that don't comply with its strict interpretation of God's law. Al-Qaeda presents a conflict that the West cannot be reconciled with Islam. It believes that the existing order in the world directly opposes its ideology and is therefore illegitimate. Al-Qaeda attacks the existing world order in any way it can, including the use of terrorism in an effort to break it down, believing that in the chaos that follows from these violent acts, its ideology will fill the void.

HISTORY OF AL-QAEDA

The history and rise of Islamic separatists and radicals in the late 20th century resulted from frustration, hopelessness, and powerlessness within the Muslim world as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Western power.¹ Muslims in the Middle East felt dominated and subjugated by the rest of the world after WWI, when European colonial powers divided and occupied the Middle East. Western control and occupation in the Middle East resulted in rethinking desperate measures and solutions expected to bring back some form of order that would restore the dignity and pride of the Islamic world and its people. Various radical Islamic ideologues gained popularity and proposed alternative solutions to help Muslims cope with their grievances. In addition to these grievances, Muslims in the Middle East were frustrated with their

own governments and the way they were functioning. This is one more reason why al-Qaeda felt it needed to intervene and “change the world.”

Sayyid Qutb, believed in the continuous breakdown of the Muslim world based upon Muslims abandoning the Prophet Muhammad and the strict set of fundamental laws outlined in the Quran. In his book, *Milestones*, Qutb's argument is that the world is heretical and that it must be forcibly cleansed by Islam.² Furthermore, he emphasized that the world was not large enough for Islam to co-exist with other competing ideologies, leaving the only solution to be eliminating anyone who disagreed with Islamic hegemony. Failure to take action would then result in further Western subjugation and suppression of Muslims.³ Qutb's fundamentalist ideology inspired and shaped the backbone of al-Qaeda's beliefs and was instrumental in giving birth to its cause.

In response to the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, the world saw the emergence of the Afghan Mujahidin. This group operated as a resistance force against the Soviets, dedicated to what they understood to be jihad. At the conclusion of the Soviet-Afghan war, these mujahidin groups combined, allowing for the continued dedication to an offensive, jihadi ideology. This combination of fundamental Islamic movements dedicated to an offensive jihad played a critical role in the creation and development of al-Qaeda.

With this combination of Afghan Mujahidin, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, as well as many others, united and eventually launched al-Qaeda to carry out their campaign against the West and the rest of the world. If it were not for collaboration and unification of resources in Afghanistan, it would be safe to conclude that each fundamentalist group would be focused on individual goals. However, these fundamentalists groups have come together, forcing their demands on a much larger, global scale with the intent of ending Western government influence and dominance throughout the world. Bin Laden, specifically, succeeded in unifying different radical Islamists by indoctrinating them with Qutbist ideology.

On 23 August 1996, Bin Laden issued al-Qaeda's first declaration of war against the United States, and in August 1998 his group was allegedly responsible for bombing U.S facilities in Nairobi Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In retaliation, the U.S. bombed his camps near the Pakistani border, as well as a pharmaceuticals plant in Sudan, with no effect. Essentially, it was

Bin Laden's return to Afghanistan and his reunion with Zawahiri that gave birth to the unification of Sunni Islamic separatists in 1998 that were perpetrators of these initial attacks.

Since then, al-Qaeda has been influential in recruiting followers, gaining sympathy by addressing and exploiting the local grievances of Muslims throughout the globe. Before 9/11, al-Qaeda was a hierarchical, centralized movement, but after this, their organization became transnational, recruiting and franchising on a broader scale. Recently attempted attacks from Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab and Faisal Shahzad highlight that these new insurgents were not acting on direct orders from Bin Laden, however, because they believed in al-Qaeda's ideology, they were motivated to act independently.⁴ Groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) indicate to the United States that the ideology has not died and that the U.S. should not underestimate al-Qaeda's transnational appeal.

THEOLOGY OF AL-QAEDA

Currently, the United States' biggest challenge in combating a terrorist organization is when the organization depends on religious fundamentalism. Although al-Qaeda argues that they are strictly following the Quran, it must be understood that the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the world do not agree with their narrow, fundamentalist ideology⁵. Most Muslims reject the idea that al-Qaeda's ideology is purely Islamic. This being said, Al-Qaeda's violence is mainly justified through negation, or the process of interpreting religious verses in order to justify a particular ideology or action. In doing so, al-Qaeda is able to utilize the Quran to justify violence and recruit its follower in order to prolong the existence of their extremist ideology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the largest problems in delegitimizing al-Qaeda is the limited understanding of al-Qaeda's core ideology and their use of religion in promoting their message. Today, al-Qaeda benefits from the fact that the West is ignorant of Islam, allowing them to hide behind created, Islamic principles—created by al-Qaeda—that should be easily discredited. In order to delegitimize their ideology, the U.S. must be able to distinguish between the Islam practiced by the majority of Muslims and al-Qaeda's core ideology. Additionally, better education

opportunities in the Muslim world would give Muslim youth the opportunity to interpret the Quran themselves. Therefore, better education would be the first step in greatly diminishing (if not eliminating) al-Qaeda's ability to recruit new followers with their hostile and fundamentalist ideology.

AL-QAEDA'S THREAT TO UNITED STATES' INTERESTS

Written by: Gillian Frackelton & Grasilda Mincin

Given al-Qaeda's violent extremist ideology and their goals, it is clear that the United States and its international interests are currently being challenged and attacked. To properly counter this challenge, we first must understand exactly which U.S. interests are being threatened and then set a clear goal for our policy response. The first and most important interest is the security of the United States, its citizens, and its allies abroad. The second interest is prosperity – the United States must continue to expand and strengthen its economy. Thirdly, American core values must be respected and upheld in all actions and decisions that are made. These values include democracy, justice, freedom of speech and religion, and equality. The final interest is to strengthen cooperation and improve relationships with American allies and other international partners. International support will help to defeat al-Qaeda's global insurgency and to promote peace, security and prosperity⁶. In the conflict with al-Qaeda, some military tactics such as drone strikes produce short-term gains that can ultimately undermine the overall long-term strategy to delegitimize al-Qaeda's ideology. American military tactics have had the unfortunate result of civilian deaths, and these tactics undermine our policy objectives by increasing the power of al-Qaeda's narrative and helping to feed negative perceptions of the United States in the Muslim world.

SECURITY

The number one responsibility of this policy recommendation is the protection of American citizens. Today the United States faces threats that are different than those of the Cold War. Al-Qaeda's global insurgency is an asymmetric, non-state threat that has proven to be highly adaptable and ideologically persuasive. In addition to the protection of Americans within the borders of the United States, it is in the interests of the United States to protect *all* Americans, including those who are abroad: working in one of the 289 American embassies and consulates, working and traveling overseas, and the American troops stationed around the world⁷.

Recent attacks in the U.S. include the Fort Hood shooting in November 2009, where 13 people died at the hands of Major Nidal Hasan, an Army psychiatrist. The failed Christmas Day bombing attack in 2009 was set to detonate on Northwest Airline Flight 253 originating from Amsterdam to Detroit carrying 290 passengers. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Yemen-based Nigerian man was charged with the attempted attack and, three days later, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the airline-attempted bombing. On 1 May 2010, Times Square was targeted with a car bomb attempt, which ignited but was disarmed before it could cause a massive number of casualties. Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistan-born U.S. citizen was charged with the attack, trained in the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban) that has close links to AQAP.⁸ These attempted attacks all display al-Qaeda's reach and ability to execute their strategy against the United States from abroad.

A key shift in the threat to American security is the increasing number of Americans attaching themselves to al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups.⁹ More disturbing is that U.S. citizens have been inspired by al-Qaeda's violent ideology on the internet, where al-Qaeda has been masterful in propagating its narrative. This has caused U.S. citizens to plan and execute attacks even if they did not receive direct orders from al-Qaeda. According to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs Hearing of "Nine Years After 9/11: Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland," since 2009, at least 63 American citizens have been charged or convicted for terrorism or related crimes.¹⁰ This shows an enormous increase of American citizens' alignment with al-Qaeda's narrative, which makes it more difficult for law enforcement to predict and prevent attacks because these individuals often do not fit the profile of potential terrorists.

A major threat is the possibility of al-Qaeda acquiring the means to make weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria and North Korea have been known to provide material support to terrorist organizations, and all are suspected to have WMD-related programs¹¹. Osama bin Laden has consistently showed interest and pursued nuclear capability with Pakistani, Russian, and Sudanese affiliates¹². The United States is "pursuing a comprehensive nonproliferation and nuclear security agenda" by drawing down our own nuclear arsenal and working to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty¹³. It is vital to American

security that the United States coordinates with the international community and the International Energy Agency to safeguard nuclear facilities in all countries and to tightly regulate the movement of nuclear-related materials.

Al-Qaeda is ambitious, persistent and has an extensive reach – its repeated attempts to acquire nuclear materials and its potential to improve its strategy to attack the United States and American allies requires an adaptive and internationally cooperative defense mechanism. On 30 October 2010, ink cartridge bombs were discovered in cargo planes in Britain and Dubai – “If this attack is by AQAP, it demonstrates an accelerated ability to design new and innovative ways of conducting IED attacks and a focused effort to execute those attacks on U.S. soil.”¹⁴ These bombs were intended to detonate on U.S. soil, yet were discovered in Europe, so this specific attack outlines the importance of the maintenance of an internationally focused security strategy. It is the responsibility of the United States to protect against and prepare for attacks by al-Qaeda at home and abroad – preparation cannot provide absolute safety but it can make targets much more difficult to successfully attack and can allow the opportunity for capture of terrorists. This focus on the American interest of security is vital to the protection of Americans and our allies.

PROSPERITY

The strength of the United States economy is essential to American power and leadership. In this time of recovery after the economic crisis of 2008, the struggle with al-Qaeda has been expensive for the United States – in FY 2010-2011, the specific allocation for overseas contingency operations from the budget of the Department of Defense is \$130 billion¹⁵. The money for military operations is provided by American taxpayers, and has been growing every year since the beginning of the ‘Global War on Terror’ campaign in 2001. It will be difficult to support this growth in military spending in the fight against al-Qaeda considering the increasing American federal debt of \$1.4057 trillion¹⁶.

In 2002, al-Qaeda claimed that its strategy was to reduce America to economic ruin.¹⁷ The Federal Bureau of Investigation has concluded that al-Qaeda’s choice of targets and attack methods will continue to focus on economic targets, such as aviation, the energy sector, and mass transit; soft targets such as large public gatherings; and symbolic targets, such as

monuments and government buildings. In Osama bin Laden's videotape before the 2004 presidential election, he boasted that the 9/11 attacks had cost al-Qaeda only \$500,000 while inflicting roughly \$500 billion of economic losses on the United States. In February 2009, on the *al-Fallujah jihadi forum*, an open debate concluded that continuous blows to the U.S. economy would ultimately result in its disintegration, subsequently expanding to include Europe as well. In sum, repeated *jihadi* website postings now reveal growing interest in the health of both the American and global economies. The struggle with al-Qaeda is increasingly seen as an economic war. Terrorists' choices of targets have begun to change: including attacks on oil facilities, civilian infrastructure, transportation, tourism and financial institutions. Future attacks will presumably continue to target the American economy and financial infrastructure.¹⁸

The United States economy is built on the availability of inexpensive energy. Petroleum is central to America's transportation of people and materials, and it is vital to the functionality of the U.S. military. The United States' role as a superpower and the stability of all NATO allies relies on petroleum. The United States consumed over 20 million barrels per day in 2007, and a fifth of U.S. petroleum imports are provided by five Muslim countries - all five in the top fifteen petroleum suppliers in the world. The Muslim majority states that provide the U.S. with oil have fifty percent of the world's proven petroleum reserves. The United States also has to contend with the growing competition in demand for oil from blossoming economies such as India and China. Unless the United States is able to develop alternative energy sources, we need to accept the reality of dependence on oil from Muslim countries.¹⁹

In March of 2006, the Associated Press reported that an al-Qaeda document posted to an Islamic militant web forum reiterated Osama bin Laden's earlier call for armed attacks on petroleum-related interests.²⁰ "The targeting of oil facilities is a legitimate means of economic jihad," one of al-Qaeda's key religious voices, Abdelaziz bin Rashid al-Anzi, wrote. "Pipelines may be the front line in a long-term war of attrition on oil and its interests."²¹ The steep number of attacks in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and elsewhere suggest that these calls have not been ignored. In February 2006, al-Qaeda launched an abortive attack on the Saudi petroleum complex of Abqaiq,²² the largest oil terminal in the world. The attack caused a slight rise in global oil prices, but the effect would have been much worse if the attack had succeeded in disrupting the flow of oil and the

halting of exports. There are almost daily altercations between security personnel and armed militants that intentionally focusing their attacks on oil production facilities in the Gulf. Between 2003 and 2007, the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for the Analysis of Global Security documented 461 cases of terrorist attacks on energy infrastructures in Iraq alone, with other attacks stretching from the African continent to the Arabian peninsula, and as far as Pakistan, India, and Indonesia²³.

Total U.S. economic aid has increased from \$12 billion to \$29 billion during 1997 to 2007, and Afghanistan and Iraq received approximately one quarter of the total aid in 2007 (this is not including the aid that they both receive through supplementary budgets). Countries that are breeding grounds for insurgencies, or are prone to attack from insurgent groups such as al-Qaeda, saw an increase in aid during that time from 28 percent to 42 percent. In the beginning of 2009, the Obama administration pledged to double U.S. international aid payments. The United States has made a considerable effort to spend money on Muslim countries that are involved with or attacked by al-Qaeda's global insurgency, which means that there is a diplomatic economic aspect to this struggle.²⁴

Considering the amount of economic aid that is allocated to the Muslim majority world, it would be devastating to the American goal of international stability and a waste of American resources if al-Qaeda is successful in destabilizing countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen, and Iraq.

VALUES

In policy decisions regarding al-Qaeda's global insurgency, America strives to represent and promote values that are the foundation of the American government and way of life. Internationally, countries that adhere to similar values are more supportive of the United States. These values include, but are not limited to, an individual's freedom of speech, assembly, religion, as well as basic human rights of equality and tolerance.²⁵

Al-Qaeda's strength as an ideological force in the Muslim world is derived from its ability to disseminate this message: America is trying to destroy Islam, and is hypocritical, pledging to stand for 'freedom' and 'democracy', yet routinely denying these same rights to the Muslim

world. The United States has made mistakes in the past that have contributed to the success and strength of al-Qaeda's message – such as Abu Ghraib and the “Ground Zero Mosque.”²⁶

The United States must counteract the portrait that al-Qaeda tries to paint to the Muslim world. One of America's greatest strength is the potential to change and learn from mistakes. In every policy decision that is made, representing American values are often secondary to security and economic interests, but considering the fight against al-Qaeda is ideologically based, it is vital that the U.S. makes every effort to respect and uphold these important principles. Furthermore, it is essential that there is a conscious effort to understand and respect the values of peoples, religions, and nations that may be different. Our strength as a country, and within the international community, is dependent on our accountability to American values within the policies that are implemented.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Al-Qaeda is not a localized organization – its narrative and terrorist network is transnational, and al-Qaeda has franchised and mutated to incorporate struggles all over the world. A crucial American interest is the strength of the existing international community and world order, thus the United States must combat the threat of al-Qaeda with the help of its allies, partners and countries in the Muslim world. When faced with transnational terrorist organizations that work outside the conventional state system, global security is dependent on a strong international order, backed by legitimate international institutions such as NATO and the United Nations. The United States and its allies have a mutual interest to defeat this threat, because al-Qaeda has declared war against the United States but have also targeted other parts of the world, such as the terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, and Bali. These common objectives provide a platform in which the United States and its allies can mutually benefit from collective security, for “the sum of our actions is always greater than if we act alone.”²⁷

Muslim political and economic refugee numbers have increased in Europe in the past few decades. These immigrant families have been forced to leave their homes and native countries, and already have a sense of hopelessness and anger. Many do not fully assimilate into European societies and often experience identity crises that in turn create resentment toward their new

countries. Hence, al-Qaeda and extremist groups are able to exploit this resentment and pose a serious threat to the international order that the United States is seeking to protect. Extremism has become a problem in a number of America's European allies, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium.²⁸

American cooperation with Muslim majority countries is especially important, for al-Qaeda's global insurgency has attempted to overthrow secular and Western-allied regimes in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, and Jordan²⁹. Poll numbers around the Muslim world show sharp drops in support for Osama bin Laden personally, and for suicide bombings in general. Support for suicide bombings has dropped in Indonesia from 26 percent to 15 percent in the past eight years and in Jordan from 43 percent to 20 percent.³⁰ These countries have substantial Muslim populations, and are threatened by the same terrorist networks that threaten America, therefore increased cooperation would be mutually beneficial.

Al-Qaeda continues to have influence and pose a threat in Muslim majority countries. They have succeeded in radicalizing a segment of Muslim youth that finds appeal in al-Qaeda's global narrative that the West is at war with Islam. Other groups, such as Hezbollah and Hamas, do not subscribe to al-Qaeda's global insurgency vision, but have nonetheless increased extremism among the populations in Palestine and Lebanon – often building support through their broad and extensive social service networks.³¹ Failed states, like Yemen, with poor unstable governance also pose a threat to U.S. interests. It is in these areas that al-Qaeda affiliates, such as AQAP, work within the cracks of a country's vulnerability to establish radical extremist bases in various regions and promote the global insurgency against the West. East Africa remains a key locale for al-Qaeda associates and Somali-based terrorists associated with the insurgent group al-Shabaab. Some al-Shabaab leaders share al-Qaeda's ideology and have publicly praised Osama bin Laden and asked for further guidance from the AQSL to carry out attacks against U.S. interests.³²

In October of 2001, the United States launched its military operation against al-Qaeda strongholds in Afghanistan and the Taliban regime, which had been a safe haven for al-Qaeda since 1996. Forty-eight nations contributed troops to this coalition, including all 28 NATO members.³³ The United States needs the continued cooperation of the international community, and especially its allies in NATO, in order to be successful in the fight against al-Qaeda in

Afghanistan. American security relies on global stability, and the United States must work multilaterally with these nations to combat the threat from al-Qaeda.

CONTAINMENT STRATEGY

The United States is trying to defeat al-Qaeda, but it is important to recognize that it is nearly impossible to completely eliminate al-Qaeda's ideology. Instead, the ultimate goal is to *contain* al-Qaeda's global insurgency and reduce the influence of its ideology to the point where it no longer threatens core American interests. Containment of al-Qaeda's ideology is necessary so that the United States can protect its citizens and interests while allowing the opportunity to discredit al-Qaeda's ideology in the Muslim world. This containment strategy must be founded on a policy of sustained engagement that emphasizes cooperative coexistence, and would establish a relationship with Muslims and Muslim majority nations. American policy must promote a positive agenda, in contrast with al-Qaeda's promotion of violent extremism. This message-driven policy would ultimately advance and protect our international interests of security, prosperity, values and international order.

“The ultimate goal is to contain al-Qaeda’s global insurgency and reduce the influence of its ideology to the point where it no longer threatens core American interests.”

THE ROLE OF U.S. POLICIES IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF AL-QAEDA'S IDEOLOGY

Written by: Jonathan Humphrey

In order to eliminate the threat posed by al-Qaeda's ideology, the United States must engage in a message war communicated not only through traditional media, but through all of U.S. policies. Successful implementation will require the U.S. to reassess its message, its target audience, and how to convey that message. The primary threat facing the U.S. is the outsourcing of al-Qaeda's ideology to an array of local organizations.³⁴ Al-Qaeda increasingly takes the role of a propagandist,³⁵ brandishing its message that the U.S. is at war with Islam and declaring it the duty of all true Muslims to engage in a global insurgency.³⁶ While al-Qaeda's message is clear, the lack of a coherent U.S. counter-message restricts its ability to combat the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology. The result is continued support for al-Qaeda in active theaters of operation and successful radicalization by al-Qaeda of groups located throughout the Middle East, Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Given the effects of the invasion of Iraq, the Abu Ghraib scandal, recent anti-Muslim demonstrations in the U.S., and continuing presence in Afghanistan, the U.S. should pursue a message of cooperative coexistence in order to prevent further radicalization. Furthermore, as the success of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Sons of Iraq in combating al-Qaeda demonstrate, the U.S. should pursue continued partnership with regional governments who can most effectively communicate both the benefits of U.S. involvement and the violence al-Qaeda brings.

LOSING THE MESSAGE WAR

The US is losing the message war in three ways. First, too many of its policies have not, and do not align with the message of cooperative coexistence, and al-Qaeda uses these discontinuities as fodder for propaganda. The term cooperative coexistence embodies the values outlined in the May 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) and provides a concise term to evaluate U.S. policies. Second, the message of coexistence has not been effectively articulated to the Muslim

world. Third, the U.S. has not adequately conveyed the violence al-Qaeda has perpetrated against Muslims. The U.S. needs to better show this destruction and violence in order to discredit al-Qaeda in the Muslim world.

After September 11th, the Bush administration pursued a message framed along ideological lines, wrapped within the term “Global War on Terror.”³⁷ America’s message was that al-Qaeda presents an existential threat to the world system and America’s moral foundation.³⁸ However, the ideological rhetoric, the emphasis on preemptive strike, and associations made between Islam and terrorism alienated the greater Muslim population and fed into al-Qaeda’s message. Furthermore, the broad policy decisions—unbalanced support for Israel and the inability to peacefully resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Iraq invasion, and continued presence in Afghanistan—substantiated al-Qaeda’s message and further discredited the U.S.

The Iraq Invasion’s Impact on Muslim Perceptions

The decision to invade Iraq corroded Muslim perception of the U.S. and fostered radicalization. The image of a Western power invading and occupying an Islamic nation substantiates the message that the U.S. is at war with Islam. As early as 2004, a Pew Global Attitudes Project survey found that a majority of Muslim nations, and a number of Western allies, believed the Iraq invasion undermined US efforts to combat al-Qaeda and fomented radicalization.³⁹ Prior to the troop surge in 2007, only twenty-nine percent of the global population felt that the U.S. was having a positive impact in the Muslim world despite a marked increase in US media saturation in the Middle East.^{40,41} Furthermore, there was support among Muslim nations for attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf.⁴² The reasons for invasion—securing potential weapons of mass destruction and liberating an oppressed people—were not communicated properly and were not believed by the Muslim audience. Future policy decisions must weigh the immediate tactical importance of invasion with both the sharp reduction in positive attitude towards the U.S. and the use of military intervention as propaganda. Additionally, any military action must coincide with explanations of the reasons for intervention and be expressed through channels that will engage the target audience.

Abu Ghraib and Mounting anti-American Propaganda

The Abu Ghraib scandal fed into fears that the U.S. disregards Islamic culture, fueling anti-U.S. propaganda. A Senate Armed Services Committee Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in U.S. Custody found that “treating detainees harshly only reinforces [the view that the U.S. is at war with Islam], increases resistance to cooperation, and creates new enemies.”⁴³ Further, the April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate cited pervasive anti-American sentiment as an “underlying factor fueling the spread of the global jihadist movement.”⁴⁴ General Petraeus has called the incident a “non-biodegradable” event, stating that “the human terrain is the decisive terrain.”⁴⁵ While the incident is an aberration in the processing of detainees, and anything but official U.S. policy, oversight should be extended throughout the Department of Defense to ensure that U.S. values are consistently upheld. While a strategic communications plan which attempts to explain U.S. detainee policies may alleviate discord caused by such incidents, the result of this event cannot be rectified through U.S. messaging alone. The trust gap between U.S. messages and Muslim populations is too great. Regional allies must make it clear that an important aspect of the fight against the spread of al-Qaeda’s ideology is incarceration/interrogation, and that Abu Ghraib is not representative of U.S. policies towards Muslims.

The Ground Zero Mosque and Quran Burning: Muslim perception of American Attitudes

Recently, two events have further strained Muslim perception of the U.S.—the debate over building a Muslim community center and mosque near Ground Zero, and the planned burning of Qurans on 11 September 2010, the 9th anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks. Opponents of the mosque claim the center will be used as a source for domestic radicalization.⁴⁶ Such an argument sends the message that the U.S. is at odds with Islam, not al-Qaeda and its violent ideology. The opposing argument is weakened by the fact that Imam Rauf, the project’s coordinator, has been sent on diplomatic missions by both Presidents Bush and Obama to spread pro-American sentiment.⁴⁷ The State Department distributes his book, *What's Right with Islam: a New Vision for Muslims and the West*, to promote American values abroad.⁴⁸ He is a vocal proponent of the U.S. to Muslim audiences. While President Obama initially provided tentative

support, stating that all citizens have “the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan,”⁴⁹ the following day he retracted, stating, “I was not commenting, and I will not comment, on the wisdom of making a decision to put a mosque there.”⁵⁰ This debate alienates a successful, pro-American, moderate Muslim voice—one which has championed American tolerance. Again, while not official U.S. policy, such events are a significant liability to U.S. image, and the commitment to U.S. values must be articulated in the official response.

In remembrance of 9/11, Pastor Terry Jones, who preaches at the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville, Florida, decided to burn Qurans, a grievous offense to Muslims sure to incite anti-American violence. Muslim intellectual and fellow at the Brookings Institute M. A. Muqtedar Khan states “*Quran desecration represents the spiritual, emotional and psychological torture of all Muslims*”.⁵¹ The official American response, in contrast to the debate over the Ground Zero Mosque, was quick to admonish Jones. General Petraeus warned that video of the incident would be used much the same way as Abu Ghraib, “to incite violence and to enflame public opinion against [the US] and against [the] mission here in Afghanistan”,⁵² the Presidents of Pakistan and Indonesia also warned such an event would incite violence.⁵³ The Obama administration, fearing increased recruitment, provided a strong rebuttal of Jones.⁵⁴ The official response successfully discredited him, and the event was cancelled. In contrast to the mosque debate, the U.S. successfully conveyed coexistence.

The confluence of official policy and the actions of a minority radical wing in the U.S. mirrors the position of al-Qaeda in the Middle East. Al-Qaeda is a minority presence and promotes a minority ideology. The message the U.S. sends must not only emphasize the distance between mainstream American perceptions of Islam and Reverend Jones, but emphasize, in similar terms, that the U.S. understands al-Qaeda to be a fringe element in the Islamic World. Additionally, U.S. media highlighting respect for Islam and the fringe-nature of al-Qaeda would provide a succinct counter-narrative to propaganda, which uses both the debate of building the mosque and the planned Quran burning to fuel anti-American sentiment.

Improving Policies in Afghanistan

U.S. presence in Afghanistan provides similar material for al-Qaeda's propaganda, as did the invasion in Iraq. However, of greater concern is the disconnect between the U.S.'s rhetorical message and the policies it pursues. The Department of State's January 2010 Afghanistan and Pakistan Stabilization Strategy "cites reconstruction and development as key elements of the overall effort to stabilize Afghanistan and reduce the strength of the insurgency,"⁵⁵ essentially cooperative coexistence. This strategy also aligns with the interests outlined in the NSS. The Obama administration is conveying the correct rhetorical message. Cooperative coexistence already exists as a consideration for policy decisions, but fails to be implemented in a comprehensive manner.

The introduction of 30,000 additional troops and the escalation of covert unmanned drone strikes without a strict commitment to increasing civilian experts to aid reconstruction introduce a credibility gap—one that the Muslim population recognizes. Support for President Obama in the Muslim world dropped between 2009 and 2010, with only a third of the population (excluding Nigeria and Indonesia which maintain substantial support) remaining confident in his policies.⁵⁶ According to George Washington University professor Marc Lynch, this is largely because "they don't see [Obama's] actions matching his words, and until they do then it isn't likely that there will be a sustained recovery in America's image."⁵⁷ Support for U.S. counterterrorism policies and troop levels in Afghanistan are below 20% in Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan, with Pakistan support for troops in Afghanistan at 7%.⁵⁸ While arguing for the increase in troop levels, JCS Chairman Admiral Michael G. Mullen acknowledges that "We are not winning, which means we are losing and as we are losing, the message traffic out there to (insurgency) recruits keeps getting better and better and more keep coming."⁵⁹ The Obama administration understands that U.S. military presence directly feeds insurgency unless victory can be assured. As in Iraq, the tactical benefits of continued presence must be weighed against increased anti-American propaganda and radicalization. Additionally, the widening credibility gap between the U.S.'s message and the policies it pursues must be contained or the U.S. will face continued spread of al-Qaeda's contagion.

Implementing Cooperative Coexistence

These incidents demonstrate the need for adoption of a powerful counter-narrative to al-Qaeda's message. This message must be apparent throughout the policies the U.S. pursues, as well as in communications with the Muslim world. The values outlined in the NSS provide a strong rhetorical foundation, but adoption of the term cooperative coexistence provides a succinct and evocative manner to convey the positive role the U.S. plays in the world system.

However, there are difficulties in ensuring that policies prescribe to coexistence. The Obama administration should seek to institutionalize cooperative coexistence through the creation of an organization with the authority to audit existing policies and craft better ones. As in Afghanistan, there is an understanding that such action should be taken. Pursuant to section 1055 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2009, the Obama administration conducted a comprehensive study of the strategic communications operations. It outlines three broad goals: "aligning [US] actions with [its] goals...throughout the government," becoming "more effective in our deliberate communication and engagement," and to "do a better job understanding the attitudes, opinions, grievances, and concerns of peoples."⁶⁰ However, it ultimately concludes that an overarching institution is unnecessary to coordinate strategic communications.⁶¹ The vast number of agencies involved and the multitude of programs being pursued makes such an assessment dubious. To effectively convey the message of cooperative coexistence, there must be institutional safeguards to ensure strategic communications prescribe to cooperative coexistence.

COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE THROUGH REGIONAL PARTNERS

Strategic communications have limited reach and depend on comprehensive and cohesive implementation. The successes of three regional partners—Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Sunni tribesmen in Iraq—demonstrate the possibility for cooperative coexistence, the effectiveness of a negative message, and the need to further engage regional powers.

Violence in Saudi Arabia

In 2003, al-Qaeda attempted a prolonged campaign against the Saudi government. In response, the government pursued a multi-pronged approach, combining strategic counterterrorist policies with merciful treatment of detainees, sustained anti-radicalization programs in prisons, and most importantly, a comprehensive media blitz to “highlight and magnify the effect of the violence on Muslim life and property, thereby undermining the militants' message that their jihad focused on Westerners.”⁶² The treatment of prisoners prevented further radicalization and the media campaign starved insurgents of popular support.⁶³ Other than a few cases of individuals returning to insurgent activities, Saudi Arabia has not devolved into a hot-bed of insurgent activity. Two important conclusions: 1) programs to rehabilitate prisoners address grievances that are a factor for radicalization, and 2) the negative message is most forcefully conveyed through regional powers.

Partnering with Jordan's General Intelligence Department

In 2005, Jordan faced a similar assault. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, coordinated the bombing of three hotels on 9 November 2005, killing fifty-seven people and wounding 100, many of whom were participating in a wedding ceremony.⁶⁴ One year prior, King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein issued the Amman Message, which incorporated *fatwas* from twenty-four of the most senior religious scholars that declared anyone a Muslim who prescribed to the eight schools of Sunni Islam or the two schools of Shi'a Islam, forbidding *takfir*, and delegitimizing any edicts issued by a person not adhering to the methods of Islamic jurisprudence.⁶⁵ This is undoubtedly the strongest refutation of al-Qaeda's ideology, and as it emanated from an Islamic government, casts al-Qaeda as a fringe element and presents the U.S. message in terms widely acceptable to Muslims.

Jordan's General Intelligence Department (GID) has implemented similar strategies to those adopted by the Saudi government. Detention centers are routinely inspected by Red Cross representatives to ensure humane conditions for prisoners, and actively teach moderate Islam to inmates in an attempt to de-radicalize. The Jordanian media routinely endorses the Amman Message, which has contributed to a country-wide culture opposed to al-Qaeda's ideology; it is

accepted to be a national duty to prevent the spread of insurgency. Counterterrorist actions are pursued discreetly and they depend on a broad network of informants. The success in countering the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology has largely cleared Jordan of any influence by al-Qaeda, and has cemented a cooperative relationship with the U.S.

One troubling issue is the reluctance of the GID, the Jordanian government, and media institutions to acknowledge both U.S. support for counterinsurgency operations in Jordan and the positive policies the U.S. pursues in the region. After the tragic attack on Forward Operating Base Chapman killed not only seven CIA operatives, but also exposed, through the death of a Jordanian operative, GID involvement in the war in Afghanistan, there was widespread surprise in the Jordanian media that the government was directly involved.⁶⁶ While the rationale is that exposure risks the legitimacy of Jordanian operations among the Arab world, the increasingly close relationship provides a profound opportunity to increase the legitimacy of the U.S. message. Further partnering with Jordanians, given their expertise, would be beneficial to U.S. strategic communications in the region, and alliances with other regional governments must be pursued as further legitimizing the U.S. message of cooperative coexistence.

Awakening to al-Qaeda's Violence

The Anbar Awakening, also dubbed the Sunni Awakening or Sons of Iraq, demonstrates the acute awareness of Muslim communities to the brutality inflicted by al-Qaeda. In 2006, Sheikh Abdul-Sattar Abu Risha approached Col. Sean MacFarland to unite his Sunni forces in opposition to Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁶⁷ David Kilcullen traces the emergence of these movements in the Anbar province to violence perpetrated against women and families in order to establish marriages and ensure tribal support for al-Qaeda.⁶⁸ In response, the U.S. began intensive funding for such alliances and by 2008 the system of allying with local militias to oust al-Qaeda in Iraq successfully diminished al-Qaeda influence to nearly non-existent levels. Rather than approach the tactical and strategic merits of such alliances, the importance lies in Risha's admonishing of the negative impact al-Qaeda's operations had on the Iraqi people. In allying with Sunni tribal organizations, the U.S.

"The U.S. needs to partner with tribal groups, demonstrate the violence al-Qaeda affiliated groups bring, and provide the necessary support to dissolve them."

pursued its own message—al-Qaeda as fundamentally harmful to the proper functioning of the Muslim world—but communicated it through Muslim voices with vastly more local legitimacy than the U.S. Additionally, al-Qaeda's use of marriage as a means to spread its ideology is not unique to Iraq. While tribal alliances through marriage are well established in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is attempting to marry into the Yemeni tribal structure.⁶⁹ This presents the U.S. with an opportunity to apply the lessons of the Anbar Awakening. To combat the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology, the U.S. needs to partner with tribal groups, demonstrate the violence al-Qaeda affiliated groups bring, and provide the necessary support to dissolve them.

EMPLOYING THE NEGATIVE MESSAGE

As the policies pursued by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Sunni tribesmen demonstrate, the most effective counterinsurgency techniques combine strategically planned kinetic operations with succinct counter-radicalization messages. These messages amplify the beneficial aspects of state policies while denigrating al-Qaeda as socially destructive. To successfully combat the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology, the U.S. should propagate the negative message in its strategic communications, emphasizing that most violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda targets Muslims, which has resulted in low sympathy for al-Qaeda in Muslim populations.

Diminishing tolerance for violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda against Muslims presents an important avenue to counter the spread of its ideology. Searching the National Counterterrorism Center's Worldwide Incident Tracking System for insurgent attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, of the 40,049 attacks reported in 2010, 85 percent, of the victims were citizens of those three nations.⁷⁰ A report by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, which indexed solely Arabic primary sources, also found "15 [percent] of fatalities resulting from al-Qaeda's attacks between 2004 and 2008 were Westerners."⁷¹ These findings are mirrored by popular opinion polls. In eight Middle Eastern countries, support for Osama bin Laden declined by double digits, with support under 30 percent in each country except the Palestinian territories.⁷² Additionally, less than 20 percent in each country, excluding Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, feel suicide attacks are justified.⁷³ Importantly, 86 percent of Pakistanis agree that the

Taliban or al-Qaeda operating in Pakistan is a serious problem.⁷⁴ Al-Qaeda cannot be seen as the vanguard of Islam when its ideology incites the murder of Muslims. Popular support is integral for continued insurgency, and al-Qaeda no longer has it. Looking at the success of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraqi tribesmen in curbing radicalization by emphasizing the violence al-Qaeda's ideology engenders, the U.S. should mimic that message and pursue it throughout its strategic communications strategy.

Taliban rule in Afghanistan serves as a prime example of the harmful application of al-Qaeda's ideology and would serve as a strong rebuttal to those vulnerable to al-Qaeda's message. The Taliban began its assault on the Afghan people with the hanging of an accused rapist from the barrel of a tank.⁷⁵ In 1999, a Human Rights Watch Report notes the Taliban enforced its interpretation of Shari'a "with weekly public executions, floggings, and amputations in Kabul stadium."⁷⁶ A report by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs cited the case of several men charged with sodomy being buried under a wall toppled by a tank.⁷⁷ Kite flying, music, long hair, immodest dress, and several other traditional activities were all banned based of an ideology which mirrors al-Qaeda's message.⁷⁸ These events are not unique to Afghanistan. The Tehrik-i-Taliban in Pakistan, a distinct organization from the Afghani Taliban, began its war against the government with the publication of a video showing the hanging of three men from a telephone pole and the fourth slumped on the ground with wads of money in his pockets and a bottle of whiskey in his lap.⁷⁹ The TTP proceeded to impose similar restrictions on social activities as the Afghani Taliban.⁸⁰ Communicating the transgressions to the Afghani and Pakistani population would severely decrease any remaining support for al-Qaeda's ideology. Nevertheless, the U.S. should also communicate these events to regional governments. Al-Qaeda's ideology threatens the established order and seeks to impose an arbitrarily violent social system, and the examples of Taliban rule serve as a powerful tool for gaining greater cooperation with regional governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The single greatest threat al-Qaeda poses to the U.S. is the spread of its ideology. However, the U.S. has not adequately ensured that the policies it pursues align with the values it hopes to

embody. Furthermore, emphasis on the positive, while necessary as a consideration for which policies to pursue, is insufficient to completely prevent al-Qaeda's spread, and explanations of al-Qaeda's failings must be simultaneously promulgated, preferably through regional allies.

- **Create an organization to ensure U.S. policies prescribe to cooperative coexistence.** It is necessary for the U.S. to pursue policies which exhibit the values outlined in the May 2010 National Security Strategy. The vast number of policies and institutions combating al-Qaeda makes this challenging without oversight. The creation of such an institution would help to ensure incidents like Abu Ghraib do not reoccur.
- **Continue to pursue harmonious partnerships with regional governments and organizations.** The successes of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Sons of Iraq provide a way forward for the U.S. The U.S. should actively pursue such alliances and make continued cooperation with regional allies dependent on their continued messaging campaigns.
- **Use the examples of violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda and the Taliban in messaging to Muslim populations.** The failures and atrocities perpetrated by al-Qaeda against Muslim populations needs to be conveyed simultaneously with the message of cooperative coexistence. These examples are most effectively communicated through regional partners.

SECTION II

FIGHTING THE MESSAGE WAR:

DELEGITIMIZATION OF AL-QAEDA'S IDEOLOGY

THE MESSAGE WAR

Written by: Linn Gracey

Creating an appropriate counter-message is necessary but not sufficient to counter the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology. The United States must also address the audience al-Qaeda targets and how that message is spread. Al-Qaeda not only has a simple and effective message, they have become masters at delivering that message to their target audience—the Muslim world in general and young, disaffected Muslim men in particular. Al-Qaeda relies heavily on the internet to deliver their message to this audience. Meanwhile, the U.S. has been slow to respond to al-Qaeda's ever growing internet propaganda campaign. Al-Qaeda is an entity with a certain legitimacy, size and strength, largely because of its media strategy utilizing propaganda,⁸¹ and the United States has no hope in combatting this organization if its message is not countered effectively. To do so, the United States must address the emergence of the internet as the central propaganda tool of al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda has exploited the internet for the purposes of recruitment, radicalization, training, coordination, financial support as well as media and propaganda to effectively transform the organization into a self-sustaining entity.⁸² The dangers this trend poses to the containment of al-Qaeda are diverse and must be properly addressed in order to inhibit the group's durability.

AL-QAEDA AS A PROPAGANDA MACHINE

As witnessed by the rise of Nazi Germany and the defeat of communism, effective propaganda is essential to a successful political movement. Interestingly, in recent years, al-Qaeda's leadership has shifted its priorities from expensive military operations and large-scale terrorism to smaller, less frequent attacks and more virulent propaganda. This shift has been transformational, as al-Qaeda has invested considerable resources into its media wing, As-Sahab, and focused its efforts on propaganda creation and dissemination on a global scale through the uses of modern technology. Al-Qaeda's media outlets, As-Sahab and the Global Islamic Media Front, are responsible for the recording, editing, and production of videos and audio that are uploaded onto

internet sites, and then reproduced on internet forums.⁸³ Al-Fajr Media Center is al-Qaeda's "official online logistical network,"⁸⁴ through which the terrorist organization is able to disseminate its propaganda in English, Arabic, German, French, and a host of other languages to sympathizers across the globe.⁸⁵ The large increase in media content produced by these media arms is truly astonishing. As-Sahab alone has increased its annual video releases online from 6 in 2002 to 97 in 2007.⁸⁶ In addition to these official al-Qaeda media networks are the thousands of internet web forums run by sympathizers of the global insurgency, where al-Qaeda propaganda and ideology are shared. The grassroots nature of these forums has contributed to an online culture aiding and abetting the ideology of violent extremism and support for terrorism. The online propaganda campaign originating from al-Qaeda has created an online society dedicated to furthering the group's murderous and hateful ideology without the constraints or risks involved with becoming an official member. The online platform al-Qaeda has adopted represents an extremely challenging innovation in regards to international terrorism.

AL-QAEDA ONLINE

Al-Qaeda has cleverly and strategically chosen to adopt the internet as its chosen form of propaganda distribution. The structure of the group as a decentralized organization is similar to the structure of the internet. Its strength lies in its nature of being "both a vertically and horizontally dispersed network without being constrained by either...It is an innovative, open-source, interactive, participatory operation" therein, offering power, control, and agency to those involved.⁸⁷ Similarly, the near immediacy of access, the potential for uninterrupted replication and the vastness, scope and opaqueness of the internet has made it the ideal method of dispersion. Tellingly, the internet is now al-Qaeda's primary method of "communications, propaganda, recruitment and networking" and is operating around 5,600 websites with 900 more emerging every year.⁸⁸ The formats these websites follow are various, and include "jihadist websites, forums, chat rooms, electronic boards and blogs."⁸⁹ The internet is one of the primary fronts the group uses "to win supporters to its cause, preserve its decentralized structure, galvanize its members to action and raise funds."⁹⁰ Al-Qaeda uses the internet primarily for publicity and propaganda, but also increasingly for operational purposes after its base in Afghanistan and Pakistan was deserted due to American military action.⁹¹ More important is the

ability for disinformation to be spread, throwing off intelligence as well as creating the fiction of planned attacks, increasing perception of its importance and “threat potential.”⁹² The internet allows for al-Qaeda to reproduce the effects of real terrorism online and mimic “psychological warfare” freely and globally through their propaganda.⁹³ The internet is a blessing to al-Qaeda, as the organization no longer has to rely on mainstream media outlets for its messages to be dispersed. It does so on its own accord and now has more control over its image. Al-Qaeda’s internet activities are self-regulatory and shape-shifting, a transformation that is a nuisance and menace to national governments and international intelligence.

AL-QAEDA’S AUDIENCES

Al-Qaeda not only understands the basic tenets of successful propaganda, but is also aware of who is most susceptible to its messages. In the area of recruitment, al-Qaeda targets young Muslim men for its membership. U.S. Army Colonel John M. Venhaus states “Al-Qaeda’s ubiquitous message of anti-Muslim oppression and global jihad appeals to the developmental needs of adolescents” and therefore specifically targets Muslim youth in Muslim-majority nations as well as in the diaspora.⁹⁴ The Middle East, in particular, has an extremely youthful population, as 60% of the population is 25 years old or younger.⁹⁵ The Quilliam Foundation produced its report on internet radicalization, “Cheering for Osama,” through the lens of what it considers the three most significant trends in the Arab world: rapidly rising Internet usage, high numbers of unemployed youth, and an undemocratic political environment out of tune with the needs of young people.⁹⁶ This scenario is ripe for exploitation by “Jihadist websites which offer radical, utopian solutions to complex socio-economic and political challenges” and “can easily appeal to young people who are bored, frustrated and lack basic opportunities to live full and productive lives.”⁹⁷ Middle Eastern youth are the highest-risk group for radicalization by extremist groups such as al-Qaeda. The youthful population presents challenges to the region in terms of economic growth and job creation and, relatedly, to the challenges of extremism.

Al-Qaeda’s narrative is appealing to Muslim youth in the Middle East due to political and socio-economic factors, but it is also highly appealing to Muslim youth internationally as it offers a coherent ideology suitable to the needs of adolescents. Through interviews and personal histories

of 2,032 “foreign fighters”—individuals who cross international borders to join al-Qaeda—a common cause of membership is that “potential recruits have an unfulfilled need to define themselves” and “Al-Qaeda’s ability to turn them to violence is rooted in what each seeks: Revenge seekers need an outlet for their frustration, status seekers need recognition, identity seekers need a group to join, and thrill seekers need adventure.”⁹⁸ The need to belong is a strong desire for all youths, across ages and cultures, and the identity seeker (the most significant group of recruits) “needs the structure, rules, and perspective that come from belonging to a group, because belonging defines him, his role, his friends, and his interaction with society.”⁹⁹ For these young men, “al-Qaeda is more than just a legend—it is the best possible club to join,” for its “ideology demands strict obedience to a state of mind and prescribes how members should think, feel, and behave. These clear rules and coherent vision of the world appeals to identity seekers because they neatly package an identity into the ideology.”¹⁰⁰ For the millions of youth with few prospects for upward social mobility and employment opportunities, al-Qaeda can seem appealing. Al-Qaeda, in the cases surveyed, did not actively recruit these young men, but instead, these individuals sought out the group on their own. These young men were likely exposed to al-Qaeda’s ideology online, and became so entrenched they were willing to cross international borders to die for their cause.

Muslim youth are drawn to extremist websites for many reasons. Jarret Brachman, an internationally recognized terrorism expert, argues that online extremism is widely appealing to a broad audience, but especially youth, as a process of identity formation, the creation of a satisfying “virtual life,” and the potential of celebrity.¹⁰¹ The pulls of social media sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, and online extremist forums serve the same purpose: creating an ideal self on the internet when real life fails to offer the same opportunities or satisfactions.¹⁰² Online activity, be it gaming or social networking, offers the individual an opportunity to create a self unconstrained by the realities of everyday life, such as law, family, friends, school, and work, and instead, create a controlled image of an ideal self based on how one would like to be perceived.¹⁰³ Brachman uses American Idol as an analogy, stating, “thanks to the Internet, there is no shortage of individuals who want to be the next ‘al-Qaeda Idol.’ Instead of singing into their bedroom mirrors, these contestants perform each day on their computers by posting news, information, and other content to extremist websites.”¹⁰⁴ Others, he claims, “go as far as to

record their own videos, stylized with the same kinds of logos and soundtracks that have become associated with official al-Qaeda productions.”¹⁰⁵ Brachman argues that “both of these lives are ‘real’ to the individual in that they consist of meaningful friendships and the production of intellectual content, which can be read and disseminated and can even have an impact.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, becoming a “practicing extremist” online has a “lower barrier for entry” making the online version of extremism less intimidating and more easily accessible.¹⁰⁷ The instant gratification offered by internet communication, relationships, and self-replication, combined with the potential for celebrity status, such as that achieved by Anwar al-Awlaki, are all factors for why youth seek out al-Qaeda’s ideology online. The internet is a safe haven for an individual seeking an outlet for frustration, a forum for social relations, answers to religious and political questions, and a desire to be recognized. The danger in this seemingly harmless online activity of video-sharing, online forums and personalized extremist websites is in the potential of these online activities to be extended to real life.

THE INTERNET AS A TERRORISM FACTORY

Though youth seek out al-Qaeda and related websites online for reasons as innocent as curiosity, loneliness, and as an outlet to vent frustrations, the repetition and exposure to extremist ideology can ultimately take hold in a transformational way. Not only do recruiters log in to chat rooms and visit internet cafes to enlist susceptible youth, but “electronic bulletin boards and user nets can also act as vehicles for reaching out to potential recruits.”¹⁰⁸ Online support forums are regularly tracked by active recruiters in order to convince sympathizers to take their words and put them into action. Online support forums are similar to traditional terrorist training camps as they successfully seduce and indoctrinate sympathetic recruits, who are taught military skills and offered a social network connected to leaders of terrorist organizations.¹⁰⁹ This process is, according to Evan Kohlmann of the Combatting Terrorism Center, “the hidden dark side of online social-networking—as a virtual factory for the production of terrorists.”¹¹⁰ Online propaganda is utilized by al-Qaeda as a central element to the organization, but they do not control the content from a top-down perspective, as information is regularly uploaded and shared as to create a virtually autonomous, self-sustaining organism. Rather than this being a problem, the copy-cat nature of the internet works in their favor, garnering support on a massive scale,

giving agency to any individual with a computer and internet access to take on the call to fight in the global insurgency. Brachman states that through the clever use of the internet “al-Qaeda has transformed itself into an organic social movement, making its virulent ideology accessible to anyone with a computer.”¹¹¹ Its use of the internet has allowed for al-Qaeda to achieve a certain global character, as has been its goal, and its rapid adaptation to this new medium is a cause for serious concern and increased attention.

SELF-REPLICATION TO SELF-DETONATION

The radicalization occurring on the internet is the most significant transformation in the recruitment of terrorists to al-Qaeda and similar organizations, as well as an increase in lone-wolf terrorist attacks. Lone-wolves are individuals without formal training or ties to terrorist groups, but are inspired to participate in extremist ideology and/or violence on an individual level.¹¹² For these individuals, the processes of “alienation” and “replication,” are easily experienced online, and radicalization can occur rapidly.¹¹³ The last step, “performativity,” is when the online extremist goes operational.¹¹⁴ The step between words and actions is one that is taken by a handful of individuals, with notable cases such as Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood shooter, Mohamed Osman Mohamud, the failed Portland bomber, and Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, the CIA suicide bomber. Jarret Brachman explains the transition from self-replication to performativity as, “The dissonance that one feels between the physical self and the idealized, stylized, online archetype of the self” which “often leads to the individual trying to reproduce his or her avatar in the physical world.”¹¹⁵ There are increasingly numerous cases of individuals being radicalized online and are inspired to act alone in order to promote and perform the violent extremist ideology al-Qaeda espouses.

The process of online activity going operational has been mirrored by all three of the aforementioned ‘terrorists.’ Nidal Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, had been exchanging numerous e-mails with radical Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Alwaki before the shooting, asking for religious guidance.¹¹⁶ Evidence of regular and increased visitation to extremist websites was found on Hasan’s laptop during a post-shooting investigation, though there was no evidence of any official membership with terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda.¹¹⁷ Hasan acted alone,

solely with the guidance of al-Alwaki and online material promoting extremist propaganda.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Mohamed Osman Mohamud, a self-proclaimed “expert on jihad online,” wrote three online articles for *Jihad Recollections*, an online monthly magazine similar to *Inspire* magazine before the decision to plot an attack on Portland during a Christmas tree lighting ceremony on 26 November 2010.¹¹⁹ Mohamud notably wrote an article titled “Assessing the Role and Influence of As-Sahab Media,” praising al-Qaeda’s media and propaganda wing, and offered his own opinion on the most inspirational propaganda for potential terrorists.¹²⁰ In an interview, Brachman remarked “‘I’m not at all surprised that he was publishing articles in cyberspace as he was trying to find a way to get connected to actual terrorists in the physical world. He was looking for avenues to self-actualize as a jihadi.’”¹²¹ Lastly, the Jordanian doctor Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi used the pseudonym “Abu Dujanah al-Khorasani” in order to rise to “the highest levels of online Jihadi importance” due to his eloquent and persuasive messages urging Muslims to join the global insurgency.¹²² He was approached by the Jordanian government who recruited him to infiltrate al-Qaeda, and later was asked to inform the CIA regarding information on top al-Qaeda leaders.¹²³ Instead, on 30 December 2009, upon entering the CIA facility near Khost, Afghanistan, al-Balawi detonated a bomb, killing 7 CIA operatives as well as a Jordanian intelligence officer.¹²⁴ Eleven days after the attacks, al-Balawi’s propaganda partner Abu Kandahar warned his readers “Beware, beware that you are satisfied with writing on the forums without going to the battlefield in the cause of Allah” and urged for writers to “die so that their thoughts can live.”¹²⁵ Al-Balawi made the jump from self-replication to self-detonation, and in doing so, has become a symbol of adoration and emulation by many online extremists.

Al-Balawi is a textbook case for the online extremist going operational. According to Brachman, this occurs when, “after enough online labor, one begins to see the difference between the *mujahid* that one could be (the avatar) and the disappointment of one’s real-life self”¹²⁶ and the jump is made from “keyboard to Kalashnikov.”¹²⁷ Brachman argues that the online extremist movement has created an expectation that online sympathizers will “try to live up to their virtual selves in the real world.”¹²⁸ The creation of the online space for radicalization is the precursor for many operational terrorists. The virtual world offers the lowest-common denominator

“The virtual world offers the lowest-common denominator for entry, and represents an egalitarian and participatory forum for the aspiring terrorist.”

for entry, and represents an egalitarian and participatory forum for the aspiring terrorist. With enough hours logged in under a pseudonym dedicated to violent extremism and support for terrorism, online participants eventually come to a crossroads where they must decide whether to “reconcile the gap” between their online activities and their real life actions or to leave their calls to violence in cyberspace.¹²⁹ The dangers for the United States lay both in the frequency of violent, hyperbolic dialogue online and in the carrying out of the violent action. The internet is the most prominent method of radicalization in the current era of al-Qaeda, and in order to contain the threat of further contagion, the United States must focus on an effective strategy to counter this growing wave of online extremists.

ONLINE EXTREMISM: CHALLENGES TO THE UNITED STATES

Al-Qaeda's adoption of the internet as their main distribution method for its propaganda and ideology has presented an extraordinarily difficult task in preventing the spread of its extremist ideology. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates lamented that, “It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the Internet than America.”¹³⁰ Al-Qaeda has managed to out-strategize the United States through password-protected sites, anonymous online identities, and the utilization of webmasters “devoted to hacking, multimedia, cybersecurity and distribution.”¹³¹ The official web forums where propaganda is distributed are also highly regulated and moderated by high-ranking members who have the authority to post material. In this way, the propaganda remains reliable, consistent and authentic.¹³² The most popular and trusted online web forums, Al-Falluja (with 17,858 registered members,) Shumukh al-Islam, and al-Tahaadi, are al-Qaeda affiliated, and are constantly being shut down by intelligence agencies, only to re-emerge under a new web address.¹³³ Using ‘mirror’ sites, forums are redirected to an alternative web address, in order to preserve content.¹³⁴ The attempts by national authorities and international intelligence agencies to track and shut down extremist websites are akin to a dog chasing its own tail.

The secretive nature of such online web forums is only made more challenging by the sheer number of these sites. There are thousands of forums used by sympathizers of the global insurgency that are unaffiliated with any specific terrorist organization, in addition to the official

forums, who average 10,000 members.¹³⁵ The number of experts who read and write Arabic fluently are in no way able to track all extremist activity on the Arabic-language blogosphere. Tracking, infiltrating, and responding to terrorist threats on Arabic-language websites is a nearly impossible task due to the nature of the vast opaqueness of the Internet. In the case that an individual is found guilty of involvement with online extremism, there is currently no international law for the prosecution of such hate speech, and national laws regarding these activities vary, with coordination rare and highly ineffective.¹³⁶ The ability to control internet content is a daunting task which demands creative and innovative approaches to tackling the challenges of online extremism.

Due to the difficulty of internet regulation, online extremism cannot simply be challenged through tighter restrictions of online content. Christopher Wolf, Chair of the Anti-Defamation League Internet Task Force considers legal solutions for regulating online extremism to be but a tool for the end of internet hate speech. All forms of extremism and hate are best defeated through “counter-speech—exposing hate speech for its deceitful and false content, setting the record straight, and promoting the values of tolerance and diversity.”¹³⁷ The challenge for the United States in the creation of a counter message to al-Qaeda’s ideology is in the exclusivist nature of online extremist websites, and more importantly, the U.S. lacks the legitimacy to do so. Josh Decon, senior analyst at SITE Intelligence Group remarked, “It’d be extremely difficult for the CIA or another intelligence agency to introduce credible and effective counterpropaganda.”¹³⁸ Any counter-speech emanating from the United States alone is counter-productive in the current state of affairs, and other actors must be included in the process.

In order to tackle the spread of online extremism, the root of the problem must be addressed, and more young people must be deterred from seeking out extremist material online in the first place. The largest problem for the United States being a leader for a global counter-message against extremist ideology is the extreme distrust and antipathy many Muslims have for U.S. policies and Americans in general. It is well-documented that the majority of Muslims have an extremely negative view of the United States.¹³⁹ Generally, “Messages appearing to emanate from the U.S. government to Muslim populations struggle for credibility in the minds of a skeptical public. This leads to mistrust of any message coming directly from the United States.”¹⁴⁰ The failure of

the United States to communicate effectively to the Muslim world can be seen in numerous examples, most recently by the US-government run, pan-Arab satellite TV station al-Hurra, (the “free one”) which has struggled to gain the viewership of the Arab-speaking world. Statistics show “less than one percent of people in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates watch al-Hurra as their first choice of television—compared to the 45 percent who pick Al Jazeera.”¹⁴¹ Radio Sawa, the American run radio station playing pop music with occasional news bytes has gained somewhat of a larger audience, yet its music-oriented platform is unlikely to change any minds.¹⁴² The largest issue facing U.S.-led efforts at opinion formation in the Middle East is the deeply ingrained skepticism of the public, who see these programs as blatant propaganda and a further example of U.S. imperialism.¹⁴³ Likewise, attempts at counter-messaging on websites dedicated to the global insurgency have virtually no chance at being disseminated, and will not change the minds of the hard-liners. Therefore, the challenge remains how to reach the Muslim mainstream in an environment of hostility, mistrust and suspicion to prevent further interest in online extremism by susceptible audiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States must re-think its communications strategies in order to curtail the rapid spread of extremist ideology. The rise of online extremism is the newest and most vital area of concern in the war against al-Qaeda. A multi-faceted approach involving national governments, the computer industry, and Muslim leaders would be the most effective strategy for an online and offline offensive against al-Qaeda. Through continued regulation of online activity, increased coordination between governments, and heightened efforts at creating a global counter-message, the United States can make steps towards containing the spread of online extremist activity and thereby better control al-Qaeda’s propaganda, recruitment, training, and communication capacity. Specifically, the United States should pursue the following recommendations:

- **Increase the focus on online extremism and the prosecution of perpetrators of terrorism-related material.** The Quilliam Foundation, in its report “Cheering For Osama: How Jihadists Use Internet Discussion Forums,” recommends that policy-makers begin to focus more on the content of online extremism, rather than the various mediums.¹⁴⁴ In order

to better understand what is driving individuals to extremist websites, it is imperative that the content be dissected, in order for an effective counter-narrative to be developed. Quilliam recommends dissecting the themes apparent on extremist forums, in order to identify patterns, thought-processes, and the ideological leanings of users.¹⁴⁵ Due to the vast number of extremist websites run from the United Kingdom, the Quilliam Foundation also recommends including online perpetrators of violent ideology to be persecuted under the 2006 Terrorism Act, and to limit the internet accessibility of well-known online extremists.¹⁴⁶ The U.S. should pursue a similar approach for online extremists based in the U.S., which requires legislation allowing for such exceptions to the First Amendment right to free speech.¹⁴⁷ Ultimately, the prosecution of online extremists at the international level is the desired goal. Lastly, cooperation with privately owned Internet Service Providers (ISPs) is essential to the tracking and shutting down of known extremist websites. ISPs should be required by law to shut down or make access more difficult to known websites that incite violence and hatred, and report terrorism-related sites to intelligence bureaus. Continued resources and actions to curtail online extremism is necessary to prevent the further spread of al-Qaeda-inspired ideology.

- **Increase the spotlight on Muslims against violent extremism.** Organizations similar to the Quilliam Foundation, which engages in research, training seminars, media campaigns, and public events dedicated to counter extremism, should be given special notice and fully supported by national governments.¹⁴⁸ The founders of the Quilliam Foundation, Maajid Nawad and Ed Husain, are both former members of UK-based Islamist organizations who have renounced extremism and now dedicate their lives to countering their previously held views.¹⁴⁹ Muslim messengers, such as those at Quilliam, are sorely needed in order to preserve legitimacy for the counter-extremism message, and should be used as resources, as well offered financial support and media coverage for their activities. Similarly, Muslim Imams in the West who discourage extremism must be encouraged to take on leadership roles in their communities, and encouraged to utilize social networking tools and the internet as a platform for their message. Former extremists who have renounced al-Qaeda and violent extremism, such as Dr. Fadl, should also be recognized by Western governments as valuable resources as legitimate Muslim messengers. The deep skepticism of the Western narrative by

Muslims is a challenge, therefore, encouraging Muslim representatives against extremism to more publicly and vigorously speak out against al-Qaeda, especially through the internet and social networking sites, is essential to the legitimacy of any counter-message.

- **Coordinate with Allies.** The global nature of the internet is a serious setback to the regulatory power of the United States to track online extremism. Therefore, it is necessary that the United States effectively communicate the threat the internet represents to global security, and encourage its allies to better coordinate between intelligence agencies and national governments regarding suspect online activity. Certain European nations have legislation in place used to prosecute online hate speech,¹⁵⁰ and are keenly aware of the dangers of rising extremism within their borders. The shared concerns regarding violent extremism between the United States and Europe are evidenced by David Cameron's speech on radicalization and Islamist extremism 5 February 2011 at the Munich Security Conference. Cameron even warned about the influence of the internet on radicalization, mentioning, "Internet chat rooms are virtual meeting places where attitudes are shared, strengthened and validated."¹⁵¹ Rather than tackling extremism nation by nation, a more concerted, coordinated effort must take place internationally to regulate suspicious internet activity, and produce legislation, enforceable by international law, to prosecute online extremists. The Quilliam Foundation also recommends better utilization of mainstream media outlets, such as the BBC's Arabic Service, by creating an online offshoot, a website that discusses topics such as radicalization and violence, and regularly features scholars and individuals who refute extremism.¹⁵² Mainstream media based in Western nations should be encouraged to expand online in Arabic and to address content related to counter-extremism in order to address young people more effectively. Lastly, an effective global counter-message and movement condemning al-Qaeda's tactics and ideology must replace the unilateral efforts by the United States and various other national programs. A global counter-message will only be considered legitimate if more actors are involved in the process. In order to create a powerful stigma against violent extremism in Muslim communities worldwide, an international approach to the issue is obligatory. Terrorism is a global security issue, affecting the lives of millions of people directly and indirectly, Muslims and non-

Muslims alike, and this shared fate must be better communicated on the international stage in order to derail al-Qaeda.

ENGAGING THE MUSLIM WORLD

Written by: Peter Muller & Allison Stone

“If we are to have partners for peace, then we must first be partners in sympathetic recognition that all mankind possesses in common like aspirations and hungers, like ideals and appetites, like purposes and frailties, a like demand for economic advancement. The divisions between us are artificial and transient. Our common humanity is God-made and enduring.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Address at the Centennial Commencement of Pennsylvania State University

11 June 1955¹⁵³

In order to reach a sustainable level of cooperative coexistence with the Muslim World, the United States must continue to increase engagement on all levels of human interaction: diplomatic, military, and social engagement. This is the most effective long-term strategy in the ongoing war against al-Qaeda's global insurgency, and its violent ideology. President Obama's May 2010 National Security Strategy explicitly declares, “successful engagement will depend on the effective use and integration of different elements of American power.”¹⁵⁴

ENGAGEMENT: POLITICAL, MILITARY AND SOCIAL

Political Engagement

Political engagement consists of sub-official meetings between policymakers both in and out of office. It can take the form of global diplomacy policies that directly influence the American government's intentions and objectives when negotiating with foreign heads of state. Political engagement also includes international political cooperation within institutions such as the United Nations.

While the support of Muslim leaders in the fight against al-Qaeda and other Muslim extremists is essential, the West cannot simply depend on cooperation from only the highest level of government authorities. National governments that are Muslim-majority may be political allies of the United States, however this does not mean that the majority of their people hold the same sentiments. Diplomatic relations with the governments of countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia have not only failed to prevent the spread of anti-Western sentiments among the people, but have often, paradoxically, contributed to the spread of anti-Western sentiment. In addition to reaching out to government leaders of the Muslim world, the U.S. must also reach out to citizens who reside within their borders.

Another area of political engagement is American immigration policy. Antiterrorism has dominated American immigration policy since 9/11. In an article in the *California Law Review*, Karen C. Tumlin highlights how security has overtaken immigration functions of the U.S. government: "Following 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has assumed responsibly for immigration and immigrant policy and has subordinated these concerns to separate and larger terrorism policy goals".¹⁵⁵ This is a clear area where the rhetoric of cooperative coexistence is challenged by security concerns.

Military Engagement

Military engagement is dependent on the strong relationships that America has built with foreign militaries. This cooperation is derived from military-to-military exchanges and foreign officer study at American military institutions. Historically, this cooperation has fostered cooperative relationships between the U.S. military and key allies in the Middle East, including Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, and Pakistan.

Social Engagement

Social engagement is the most extensive and basic form of interaction between the citizens of the United States and the citizens of the Muslim world. Social engagement projects can be divided into two categories: 1) those focusing on the economic benefit of both the Muslim world and the

United States 2) those that extend beyond economic development, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural communication and understanding.

The American message needs to be one of cooperative coexistence with world citizens who are dedicated to freedom. As al-Qaeda has shifted from a central bureaucracy to franchising their violent ideology, the power of cross-cultural exposure and exchange between Americans and Muslims worldwide has become increasingly important to spread the American message of coexistence. Social engagement is not an unknown concept to the current administration, and The National Security Strategy highlights the need for comprehensive engagement, with an emphasis on “the engagement among the people-not just governments-around the world.”¹⁵⁶

FOCUSED ENGAGEMENT

The Muslim world, for the purpose of this policy paper, will be categorized into two main subgroups, “American Muslims” and “International Muslims”. American-Muslims are citizens, or permanent residents, of the United States that identify with the Muslim faith. International Muslims are those that reside outside the borders of the United States, and often live in countries in which the majority of the population also identifies with the Muslim faith. This group is as diverse and varied as it is large, encompassing a vast range of people that span across Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

“The power of cross-cultural exposure and exchange between Americans and Muslims worldwide has become increasingly important”

Specific Military Engagement

The power of military engagement with the Muslim world can be seen in the case study of Pakistan. The decades of military exchanges and various classes of Pakistani officers training at American military institutions was interrupted by the Pressler Amendment, which imposed sanctions on that country from 1990 to 2001. Originally passed to help pressure Pakistan to stop nuclear arms activity, the unintended consequence decreased cooperation and communication between both American and Pakistani officers, and has harmed the ability of both militaries to work together, even after cooperation restarted shortly after 9/11.¹⁵⁷ The lack of connection

between American and Pakistani officers has not only denied Pakistani officers the benefit of training at advanced American military institutions but also has created a disconnect between the American and Pakistani military.

Social Engagement: Financial Engagement

Social engagement with a financial focus best describes policies and projects aimed to bring America and the Muslim world together through prioritization of shared economic issues. Acknowledging this type of economic engagement as integral to our holistic fight against al-Qaeda, President Obama hosted an entrepreneurial summit meeting at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington D.C. The summit was focused on fostering economic ties with the Muslim world and included 250 entrepreneurs from 60 countries spread throughout Africa, Central Asia, Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. In his opening remarks, President Obama highlights the role of the summit to increase entrepreneurship opportunities between America and the Muslim world:

“Trade between the United States and Muslim-majority countries has grown. But all this trade, combined, is still only about the same as our trade with...Mexico. So there’s so much more we can do together, in partnership, to foster opportunity and prosperity in all our countries.”¹⁵⁸

This summit fosters an attitude of inclusion, and President Obama has highlighted the need for increasing partnerships—precisely the kind of inviting communication with Muslims that debunks al-Qaeda’s idea that the U.S. is at war with Islam.

Trade policy is another area of financial engagement that has important implications for the U.S. fight against al-Qaeda. For example, US tariffs on Pakistani cotton are, on average, four times higher than those on other nations.¹⁵⁹ Even in this limited market, a fourth of Pakistani exports are sent to the United States, and a third of foreign investment in Pakistan comes from the United States. Coupling this lack of economic cooperation with the Pressler Amendment, it becomes clear that the environment for cooperation between America and Pakistan is difficult. Increasing various Pakistani imports provides an important bridge to bring America and this key ally closer together. Knowing that textile exports represent such a large part of Pakistani production

demonstrates a good area to start increasing imports.

Social Engagement: Cross-Cultural Engagement

Social engagement is also an effort to increase “cross-cultural” interactions that will allow the Muslim world and the United States to exchange cultural traditions. Diplomatic interaction and relations among the leaders of prominent Muslim nations and the United States does not necessarily result in positive relations among the two countries’ citizens. Currently, the relationship between the people of the West and those of the Muslim world is one that has been described in terms of the differences in cultures, religions, and values. Cross-cultural engagement projects aim to bridge this gap in understanding and work to battle these mutual misconceptions.

These projects may take the form of increased funding to support educational exchanges between Muslim students and American students, both on American soil and abroad. University level debate is an important place for engagement and the university setting provides an effective setting for social engagement. On-campus cultural and ethnic groups provide visible reminders of the diversity of the American populace and student exchanges between international Muslims, American Muslims, and non-Muslim Americans provide room for healthy debate. This knowledge will then be passed to the participant’s family, friends and community.

One such exchange, *The Olive Tree Initiative*, set up by multi-faith students at the University of California-Irvine, created a forum in which the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is discussed from a variety of views. Important for true cross-cultural engagement, the group has sent its student body to Israel for the past three years to develop personal relationships with those involved in the region. The importance of this social interaction is summed up on *The Olive Tree Initiative* web site: “The mission of the journey was to gain knowledge beyond what is received through second hand information and mainstream media, to hear directly from Israelis and Palestinians, and to share this learning with the community.”¹⁶⁰ Exchanges such as these provide a forum where various perspectives on the conflict in that region can be addressed from both sides. This example demonstrates important implications for instilling within American universities an environment of cooperative coexistence.

These types of exchanges may also be facilitated between business leaders, religious leaders, artists, and athletes. By opening channels of communication in all of these areas and encouraging honest dialogue about the stereotypes that permeate both groups, it will be easier to disprove misconceptions and highlight shared values and beliefs.

One World 2011 is an example of such an organization. It works to promote engagement in various areas including, but not limited, to international sporting events, youth leadership programs, business, and arts and culture.¹⁶¹ The organization's CEO, Bob Walsh, organized the 1990 Goodwill Games between the Soviet Union and the United States. According to its' mission statement, "One World 2011 creates positive relationships between people of the Muslim world and people of the United States by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, culture and ideas."¹⁶² Based in Seattle, the organization aims to establish successful relationships between Muslims and Americans by using common interests to provide space for dialogue. Unique among the organizations listed above is the International Sports Program, whose games will run from 8 July 2011 to 22 July 2011 in Seattle, and feature youth athletes from the U.S., Canada, and the Muslim world.¹⁶³ The curriculum uses sports as a common ground to promote conflict resolution and teamwork among Americans and those from the Muslim world.

Political Engagement: Immigration and Policy Dialogue

The Department of Homeland Security has dominated American immigration policy for the last 10 years. In the years after 9/11, Muslim immigrants have encountered a particularly hostile environment from the security-focused U.S. immigration process. As part of a profiling technique established in 2004, "Immigration—plus profiling—conflates nationality with religion and targets immigrants from nations with sizable Muslim populations for selective enforcement of immigration laws."¹⁶⁴ Karen Tumlin, an attorney on the legal staff of the National Immigration Law Center, highlights the effect of predatory immigration policy on American immigrant Muslim communities: "Intense targeting of those of Arab or South Asian ancestry has created widespread fear in those communities. Many report being afraid to attend their usual place of worship or to take any action critical of the government, including engaging in constitutionally protected speech."¹⁶⁵ This fear works against the desire of American Muslims to provide the very important intermediary work that is so needed between the United States and

the Muslim world. Opening up access to America for international Muslims, and treating American Muslims better, is fundamental to establishing cooperative coexistence and fostering relationships based on understanding and mutual respect.

Another example of political engagement is the *US-Muslim Engagement Initiative*. This think tank “promotes action oriented, cross-societal dialogue among thought leaders, opinion leaders and decision-makers from the U.S. and Muslim societies.”¹⁶⁶ One of the group’s positive projects consists of a two-year discussion program between Muslim and American leaders, started in 2010, which includes multiple discussions a year by 20 to 40 panelists “including current and former government officials, religious leaders, journalists, business people, academics, educators, philanthropists, and others as appropriate to the focus of a particular dialogue.”¹⁶⁷ One of these discussions launched “The United States and Pakistan: Through Each Others Eyes,” another indication of the need to engage Pakistan on a more productive level. The project to bring Pakistani and American leaders together, run by the U.S.-Muslim Engagement Initiative, can provide an important channel that will outline common interests in security issues.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

It is important to note that these Social engagement projects occur both on Western soil and in the Muslim world. This is especially true in the case of cross-cultural exchange programs and projects. Because there is less of a direct economic gain to be had from inter-faith and multicultural events and discussion forums, both the West and the Muslim world must be willing to participate on the grounds of mutual interest and respect. Both parties must send and receive students for academic study exchanges, have the chance to host inter-faith events and dialogues, and showcase their country’s achievements as well as allow the visiting representative a true first-hand look challenges faced by the receiving country. The Olive Tree Initiative is an example of a successful student exchange program that developed links between California and Israel. If there is equal participation, it will allow for cross-cultural engagement to truly be an act of mutual participation and interest.

Mutual respect and effort on the part of both societies will only successfully be achieved if it is sought on a mutual quest for common ground. As stated by President Obama in his 2009 speech at Cairo University,

“But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground.”¹⁶⁸

This speech was a critical and well-publicized move of diplomatic political engagement with the Muslim world, where President Obama was attempting to renew and strengthen relations. Throughout the speech, he urged his audience to end “the cycle of suspicion and discord” and not to fear that “because of modernity we lose control over our economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities.”¹⁶⁹ He also acknowledged that some of America’s decisions in the past have been impulsively influenced by fear and anger provoked by 9/11 that were “contrary to our traditions and our ideals”—such as Guantanamo Bay and the use of questionable interrogation tactics. This type of diplomatic honesty, and the ability and willingness to address past decisions, is one that the Obama Administration has made a concerted effort to pursue while in office.

This same manner of political engagement that was demonstrated by President Obama will only be possible in the realm of social engagement if the citizens of a country, not *only* their leaders, are willing to engage in respectful and contemplative dialogue. Just as it is unlikely that extremists in the Muslim world will be willing to lay down their arms and arrive unbiased for exchange or discussion, many American citizens are just as set in their views of the Muslim world. This can be presented both in the form of blaring racism towards Muslims, as well the existence of deep-seeded, and difficult to detect, biased opinions held of the Muslim world. Unfortunately, the latter form of prejudice is one that could hinder the potentially successful attempts at social engagement projects the most.

On occasion, the United States and its citizens seem to propagate the belief that they always act diplomatically, militarily and economically in the best interest of the entire world. This is usually done without actually listening to the rest of the world’s opinions and preferences, and

most importantly, reactions to these unilateral actions. The U.S. government and its citizens must create dialogue and exchange with the understanding that anyone can be influenced by a variety of biased propaganda, and their initial opinions may be incorrect. Americans are often quick to assume that their way of life, religion and cultural values are the best way to conduct life, regulate a community or run a government. The United States must recognize that our values and traditions are not the *only* values and traditions, and that each nation, culture and community is unique in the way they live and the way they define success and happiness. An assumption that “the West knows best” will only discourage their Muslim counterparts from engaging in cross-cultural exchanges and dialogues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase Trade with Middle Eastern Countries.** Regarding import quotas of cotton, the U.S. government should consider more open trade with Pakistan’s cotton sector. Increased economic engagement invariably would bring these two states closer together and would foster an environment of cooperation that is becoming ever more important in the war against violent insurgency.
- **Reinstitute military engagement with key Middle Eastern governments.** Different levels of engagement with foreign militaries have led to a discrepancy in effective cooperation between American and foreign militaries. The U.S. government should reinstate engagement with Pakistani armed forces in order to foster a more cooperative environment in that country which has been a central front in the fight against al-Qaeda’s global insurgency.
- **Eliminate “Immigrant-Plus” profiling.** Similar to trade policy, immigration policy should be evaluated through the perspective of the current war against al-Qaeda. Contemporary immigration policies should be analyzed in their effectiveness in detaining terror suspects in addition to the damage done to the relationship between American Muslim communities and the U.S. government.
- **Continue to focus on Middle Eastern Economic Cooperation.** Institutionalize the April 2009 Entrepreneurial Summit. Long-term financial engagement will facilitate cooperation between the American and Muslim business worlds. Business cooperation will help create

relations between the West and the Muslim world outside the lens of anti-insurgency, inspiring a more comprehensive cooperation between these two areas.

THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT AID

Written by: Juliana Mendel

The United States must reposition itself as a committed partner to economic and social development both in Muslim nations and the larger developing world if it is to wage a comprehensive fight against al-Qaeda and its extremist ideology. Development, as the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) affirms, “is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative,” and by cultivating programs that champion human dignity, the United States can directly challenge al-Qaeda’s message with an alternative that emphasizes individual freedom and opportunity.¹⁷⁰ Enhanced development efforts in the region, as well as around the world, would demonstrate the United States’ dedication to supporting “the aspirations of all people for security and opportunity,” and present a benevolent image of the U.S. that is crucial to countering al-Qaeda’s negative propaganda.¹⁷¹ Policies that engage with local partners to improve economic opportunities, political openness, and the satisfaction of basic human needs will be key as the United States begins to build a more inclusive relationship with the Muslim world. To ensure the success of these policies, the United States must reform the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to emphasize bottom-up solutions and take the lead in programs currently implemented by the Department of Defense (DOD). The United States must also establish USAID as an independent, cabinet-level agency in order to further secure the sustainability and political influence of a strengthened development agenda.

Development must be at the forefront of the fight against violent extremism for three reasons. First, programs that aim to increase economic and political opportunities offer a direct answer to the thousands of frustrated young Muslims who constitute prime targets for radicalization. Addressing the “underlying political and economic deficits that foster instability” will, in the words of the NSS, advance U.S. security by targeting the discontent and alienation that are the root causes of violent extremism.¹⁷² While many al-Qaeda members come from educated, middle-class or even upper-class backgrounds, their motivations stem in large part from the economic and political climates of their home countries, which suffer from widespread

unemployment and political repressiveness.¹⁷³ Sweeping unrest in Egypt, Tunisia, and other Muslim nations in the early months of 2011 illustrates the potency of these frustrations, which render societies unstable and leave them vulnerable to al-Qaeda's ideology. Echoing sentiments felt throughout the region, one Egyptian protester remarked that he was fighting for "bread, social justice, and freedom," demonstrating a powerful dissatisfaction with unresponsive governments that the United States must help to address if it is to successfully challenge al-Qaeda's extremist message.¹⁷⁴ Context-specific development programs, appropriately planned and executed, can create more job opportunities and alternative means for political redress, and thus ensure that al-Qaeda's message of violent extremism is no longer seen as a viable option.

Second, intensifying development campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan serves counterinsurgency efforts by denying al-Qaeda safe haven and supporting transitions from conflict to sustainable peace. The basic human needs of food security, health and education are a prerequisite for the development of functioning peacetime societies¹⁷⁵, and the United States must focus on helping local governments meet those needs if it is to fully eradicate the allure of al-Qaeda's ideology. Building the capacity of host nations and local communities is key to a successful counterinsurgency, for it is only when local governments can effectively deliver services to their own citizens that violent extremism loses its appeal.¹⁷⁶ With this in mind, reconstruction challenges present an opportunity to enable the growth of stable, responsive states and thus ensure that the United States can responsibly withdraw its military presence in those countries and use military resources more directly in the fight against al-Qaeda.

Finally, a more public and active development agenda in the Muslim world delegitimizes al-Qaeda's portrayal of the United States' intent on destroying Islam. Development policies that secure post-conflict zones, spur economic growth, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance will project a positive vision of American-Muslim partnerships. Creating such cooperative relationships between civilian development agencies and Muslim communities in the region—as well as with other developing areas around the world—is crucial to invalidating the view that the United States is an aggressive enemy. Enhanced development efforts would replace this message with an affirmation of the United States' commitment to promote "peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges."¹⁷⁷ A renewed

development effort would thus ensure that the enduring American values of individual freedom and opportunity, and not al-Qaeda's ideology of extremism and murder, define the United States in the region and around the world.

The United States must reform its approach to development and address serious deficiencies in the current deployment of aid if it is to ensure the success of renewed development efforts in the fight against al-Qaeda. While the recognition that development efforts are paramount in delegitimizing al-Qaeda's ideology is not new, criticisms of the current approach remain. Projects implemented through military structures are faulted for being "poorly executed, inappropriate, and [lacking] sufficient community involvement to make them sustainable."¹⁷⁸ Due to the appropriation of funding and resources, DOD personnel perform an increasing majority of civilian development functions, undertaking operations better suited to the approaches and expertise of USAID staff.¹⁷⁹ USAID's role in formulating a cohesive development strategy has been overshadowed by an inefficient division of labor between USAID, DOD and the State Department, indicating a need to elevate USAID's voice in the policy-making process to that of a cabinet-level agency. While the George W. Bush administration raised the profile of development by ranking it alongside defense and diplomacy as one of the "the three Ds," equality in practice among the three has not been achieved.¹⁸⁰ USAID's position as a lead agency with a high caliber of expertise and central coordination in the field must be bolstered if the United States is to effectively combat al-Qaeda's ideology.

A FOCUS ON BOTTOM-UP SOLUTIONS

As David Kilcullen notes in *Counterinsurgency*, "current experience actually suggests that bottom-up, civil-society based programs may have a greater chance of success... than traditional, top-down programs that focus on building the national-level institutions of the state."¹⁸¹ While enhanced national-level capabilities play an important role in deterring al-Qaeda's ability to function within a state, small-scale community development projects receive more local support and can thus more effectively counter al-Qaeda's ideology. Top-down projects like Afghanistan's National Development Strategy, though key in encouraging the growth of a stable

Afghan state, endorse macro-level solutions such as civil service training and government reform that would rarely be felt by individual communities. An emphasis on building a strong central state ignores that, particularly in Afghanistan “with its rugged terrain, strong tribal affinities, and extreme poverty... it is localism that will defeat poverty and corruption.”¹⁸² Reframing development projects to focus on micro-level solutions that speak to the concerns of local people would “demonstrate [to threatened populations] that their best interests are served by cooperating with us,” enabling a successful counterinsurgency and building partnerships with Muslim communities that would displace the potency of al-Qaeda’s message.¹⁸³

The problems faced by the DOD’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) in Afghanistan illustrate the need to make these local partnerships the foundation of U.S. development efforts. Since 2004, the DOD has funded CERP with over \$2.64 billion intended to fund small-scale projects that respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction needs.¹⁸⁴ A January 2011 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found, however, that an increasing number of CERP investments are used for large-scale, “multimillion dollar asphalt road projects” determined at a company or battalion level, “without adequate assurance that the Afghan government had the resources to maintain the roads after completion.”¹⁸⁵ Externally defining and imposing the solution of large-scale roads onto communities unable to independently maintain them, CERP managers failed to account for the specific needs and capabilities of the people they intended to help. Such a disconnect contributes to the perception that U.S. development projects are of poor quality and represent false promises. To combat these perceptions and ensure development funds are used effectively, projects must be measured by their impact on the local community, not on how many roads or schools are built or how much money is spent.¹⁸⁶

Driven by this indicator of success, Afghanistan’s National Solidarity Program (NSP) presents an example of bottom-up development worth emulating. Founded in 2003, the NSP allocates block grants of up to \$30,000 to communities in Afghanistan for rural infrastructure projects, requiring that each community elect a community development council and propose their own project in order to receive funding.¹⁸⁷ Over 15.4 million Afghans have participated in the project, and community development councils have been democratically elected in 352 of Afghanistan’s

364 districts.¹⁸⁸ The direct election of development councils “teaches rudiments of democratic decision-making [that] help to promote reconciliation within communities,” and the small size of most grants ensures that corrupt officials are unable to dip into funds unnoticed.¹⁸⁹ Most importantly, communities themselves dictate the direction of development projects, establishing the local ownership necessary for project sustainability well after the United States departs. In order to use development efforts successfully to counter al-Qaeda’s appeal, the United States must adopt a similar strategy, and ensure that projects encourage individual communities to take the lead in formulating and acting upon their own visions of progress.

SHIFT RESOURCES FROM DOD TO USAID

As a result of the decades-long neglect of USAID, the imbalanced division of development responsibilities between DOD and USAID must be significantly shifted towards USAID if the United States is to successfully reform its development agenda. The disparity between DOD and USAID reconstruction capabilities developed in the wake of the Vietnam War, as “a culture developed within the military that deferred post-conflict operations to civilian partners” at the same time those civilian departments “saw their skills and resources decline in the face of a cost-cutting Congress.”¹⁹⁰ Such downsizing reduced the number of USAID personnel from over 12,000 during the Vietnam War to about 2,000 today, resulting in a short supply of the civilian skills necessary to manage post-invasion operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁹¹ This deficiency forced DOD to develop the necessary post-invasion skills to bridge the gap, adding to a soldier’s responsibilities many tasks beyond “purely military functions... [He] must be prepared to become a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse.”¹⁹² In comparison to the State Department’s Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization office’s staff of “fewer than 100,” DOD now dedicates “tens of thousands of military personnel” to development operations, and funds programs like CERP and Provincial Reconstruction and Human Terrain Teams that do the work traditionally done by USAID experts.¹⁹³ To the detriment of USAID’s role in reconstruction, the bulk of foreign assistance is now performed by DOD in response to the ongoing ground struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the department’s emphasis on purely offensive capabilities has shifted to “a more balanced approach that incorporates prevention and humanitarian assistance.”¹⁹⁴

Though this shift was necessary given the post-invasion conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the imbalance between DOD and USAID responsibilities has created the impression that American foreign policy has been “militarized,” damaging civilian voices in the policy-making process, adequate DOD attention to regular combat operations, and the United States’ image in the Middle East and around the world.¹⁹⁵ Crucially, DOD personnel have taken on functions that their USAID counterparts, equipped with “greater training and connections to other civilian agencies,” can perform much more effectively.¹⁹⁶ The *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* even recognizes this shortcoming, following its exhortation that a soldier must be prepared for all kinds of tasks with the insistence that it should be “only for as long as he cannot be replaced, for it is better to entrust civilian tasks to civilians.”¹⁹⁷ Development is neither sustainable nor effective in the ideological struggle against al-Qaeda when done entirely at gunpoint, and the United States must ensure that the majority of stability operation tasks “are performed by civilian professionals... equipped with the appropriate training.”¹⁹⁸

A renewed focus on USAID’s role, however, faces opposition from some DOD policymakers, who have written that “realistically, counterinsurgents will have to perform a particular task when and where it is needed... rather than standing on formality about who should perform it.”¹⁹⁹ While this attention to on-the-ground realities is important, the “who” of U.S. development assistance does matter, for civilian aid delivery ensures that the United States is no longer defined narrowly by its military power and is thus seen as sincerely committed to helping communities in the region. Although DOD has the security capabilities, on-the-ground contacts, and experience necessary to jumpstart development projects, once basic security is achieved, USAID must be given the lead role in funding and programming processes to direct and implement development programs. Shifting development functions to USAID will also relieve a military force already burdened by operational tasks in two theaters, and ensure that the U.S. can begin a responsible withdrawal.

“USAID must be given the lead role in funding and programming processes to direct and implement development programs.”

ESTABLISH USAID AS A CABINET-LEVEL AGENCY

If the United States is to transform development assistance into a major instrument of national security policy, it will have to address the question of who exactly is in charge of foreign assistance. There are presently three major programs—USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—that carry out the United States' development agenda, with many less publicized programs found in other departments like DOD, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Agriculture, and the Trade and Development Authority. Not surprisingly, the multitude of independently functioning programs has led to “policy incoherence, a lack of integration across issue areas, overlapping bureaucracies, and endless conflict over roles and responsibilities,” increasing the cost of aid implementation and creating confusion among recipients and other donors.²⁰⁰ The United States must bring these fragmented programs under the single command of USAID if it is to effectively use foreign assistance to fulfill the NSS goal of “strengthening the security and capacity of our partners,” both in the Middle East and around the world.²⁰¹

In order to endow USAID with the power equal to its importance in the ideological struggle against al-Qaeda, the United States must make the organization a cabinet-level agency capable of formulating a cohesive development strategy. As Secretary Gates has said, “having robust civilian capabilities available could make it less likely that military forces will have to be used in the first place,” and giving USAID cabinet-level powers would supply it with the political influence necessary to build those capabilities.²⁰² Given equal footing with the State Department and DOD, USAID would be empowered to bring the unity of command and budget necessary for effective aid operations, and truly raise the profile of development as the third “D” of the NSS's defense, diplomacy, and development powers. Removing USAID from the auspices of the State Department would also eliminate the “bureaucratic dysfunction, disinclination to plan, and passive-aggressive culture” that have stymied development projects in the past, allowing USAID to create a new organizational culture with an independent management system.²⁰³

Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) provides a model for the kind of empowered, independent development agency the United States should seek to build. Separated

from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the State Department's British counterpart, in 1997, DFID has used its position to achieve greater influence on development matters throughout the British government by "holding authority over all development activities... [and] helping shape trade, finance, and environmental policy at the cabinet level."²⁰⁴ By virtue of its position in the policymaking process, DFID has become "the most prominent government aid agency in the world," even though the United States spends more on foreign assistance.²⁰⁵ Its independence has enabled the agency to assess its aid projects, particularly in Afghanistan, without first needing to overcome bureaucratic hurdles, and control its own budget in response to those assessments. Unlike USAID, whose stated mission is to "further America's foreign policy interests *while* improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world," DFID's purpose is first and foremost to fight world poverty, an approach that prioritizes effective foreign assistance over competing interest. To successfully implement a cohesive development strategy capable of delegitimizing al-Qaeda's ideology, the United States must eliminate "the stove piping of American [aid] programs" and follow Britain's lead in creating a cabinet-level development agency that pursues effective aid deployment over other concerns.²⁰⁶

As described in a 2007 Center for Strategic and International Studies report, the central question in the ideological struggle against al-Qaeda is "not simply whether we are capturing or killing more terrorists than are being recruited and trained, but whether we are providing more opportunities than our enemies can destroy and addressing more grievances than they can record."²⁰⁷ Development assistance that prioritizes job creation, political openness and basic human needs in health, hunger and education will play a critical role in providing these opportunities and thus delegitimizing al-Qaeda's ideology. To achieve success in these efforts, the United States must restructure U.S. foreign assistance to establish USAID as a leading voice in the policy-making process and shift resources from DOD to this newly empowered agency. In pursuing an agenda of hope and opportunity over al-Qaeda's agenda of extremism and murder, and ensuring that the appropriate implementation of aid supports this positive agenda, the United States can emphasize once more the values that have made it unique and help shape a world in which individuals and nations "can build their own destiny, and leave with the peace and dignity they deserve."²⁰⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Focus on bottom-up, small-scale solutions.** Determine assistance priorities and goals through dialogue between local communities and foreign experts. Evaluate programs in light of local knowledge, traditions and capacity, and make the needs of local people, not overall military strategy, the driving force behind development projects. Implement programs that build the capacity of local partners and host nations to deliver services themselves, instead of supplying an unsustainable fund of resources.
- **Shift development resources from DOD to USAID.** Transfer DOD reconstruction funding and responsibilities to USAID. Restructure the relationship between the two agencies to give USAID a wider role in setting policy and coordinating overseas implementation.
- **Establish USAID as a cabinet-level agency.** Bring all U.S. assistance programs together under this new agency, and enable the new USAID to create a comprehensive national development strategy that prioritizes effective foreign assistance and coordinates all projects. Optimize all aspects of USAID program management – personnel, contracting, operational doctrines, and organizational culture – for the demands of stabilization support.

COOPERATING WITH GLOBAL POWERS

Written by: Alexander Jeffers

The threat posed by al-Qaeda's extremist rhetoric is an international one. Confronting this threat is a responsibility not just for the United States, but also for the world's major powers, as they too have a stake in reducing international terrorism. U.S. foreign policy must shift away from the brash unilateralism that characterized the immediate response to 9/11 and the early stages of the Iraq War and move towards a framework within which world powers work together for mutual benefit. The United States can no longer afford to advance its interests alone in the fight against al-Qaeda's ideology. Part of the U.S. message must be that it is willing to work with other members of the international community, especially the global powers, to combat the threat posed by al-Qaeda in a multilateral fashion.

Of the world powers, the four most important for the U.S. to enlist in the effort to defeat al-Qaeda are the European Union, Russia, India, and China. All four of these powers face specific threats from al-Qaeda, or groups ideologically associated with them, and all four are threatened by the worldwide caliphate that al-Qaeda envisions. These powers can help the U.S. achieve its four objectives as outlined in the 2010 National Security Strategy—international security, economic prosperity, values of democracy and human rights, and cooperation within the international order. The E.U. and India will more naturally align themselves with the U.S., while cooperation with Russia and China may prove more difficult.

The United States, with the world's largest economy and its most powerful military, is the most obvious manifestation of Western dominance in world affairs. Because al-Qaeda views the West as both incompatible with and an existential threat to Muslim societies, U.S. interests in particular are a perennial target for violent extremists under the influence of al-Qaeda's ideology.

But this is not to say that the threats posed by al-Qaeda and its affiliates are borne by the U.S.—or even by western countries—alone. Violent extremists associated with al-Qaeda or other

strains of radical Islam have struck in places as far spread as Mumbai and Chechnya, in addition to London, Madrid and many others. Within China's far west live 30 million Muslims, some of whom are susceptible to al-Qaeda's radical fringe movement. The threat of al-Qaeda's ideology, insofar as it leads to the training and proliferation of violent extremists and their acts of terror, is worldwide.

In the case of the European Union, Russia, India, and China, U.S. policymakers must consider: 1) the context for strategic cooperation with the U.S.; 2) threats from Islamic fundamentalism faced by that power; and 3) recommendations for policy coordination with the U.S. in defeating al-Qaeda's ideology.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

Context for Strategic Cooperation

The U.S. and the European Union have a shared cultural heritage and a long history of cooperation in matters of foreign policy. Since, at least, the implementation of the Marshall Plan and the creation of NATO, the nations of Europe, especially Western Europe, have proven most helpful in achieving US foreign policy goals. This bodes well for trans-Atlantic cooperation in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda's ideology.

European countries understand very well the consequences of violent extremism. Al-Qaeda's rise notwithstanding, terrorism has long been a security threat in European countries. Serbian terrorists sparked World War I. Leftist groups carried out violent attacks in Italy, France, and Germany during the 1970s, just to "shake up the established order."²⁰⁹ Both the United Kingdom and Spain have had to deal with separatist groups.

Following the 9/11 attacks, European countries were deeply sympathetic of the U.S. Large marches took place in Paris and London in a strong show of solidarity, and many European governments committed to help the U.S. defeat al-Qaeda, promising to aid the FBI and CIA. Many European countries tightened their borders, established fingerprint databases for asylum seekers, and froze millions of dollars in assets believed to belong to al-Qaeda. Additionally,

E.U. member states collectively established an arrest warrant that facilitated the deportation of suspected terrorists.²¹⁰

Though U.S.-E.U. relations immediately following the 9/11 attacks were characterized by cooperation, the Bush administration's subsequent decision to invade Iraq was extremely divisive in the European community. While the British and Spanish governments supported the U.S. decision to confront Iraq militarily, the governments of Germany and France were strongly opposed. Much of Europe favored increased sanctions and diplomatic approaches to resolve the issue.²¹¹

The steps the U.S. has taken to extricate its military forces from Iraq will help the U.S. move forward in its efforts to cooperate with the E.U. in the struggle against al-Qaeda. On 31 August 2010, President Obama announced "the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the completion of the withdrawal of all U.S. combat brigades, and the transition of the role of the remaining U.S. military force of 50,000 troops to advising and assisting Iraqi security forces."²¹² By the end of 2011, all U.S. military forces are scheduled to be withdrawn from the country.

Threats from Islamic Fundamentalism faced by the European Union

The threat faced by the European Union of violent extremism influenced by al-Qaeda's ideology is real. This threat was most evident in the aftermath of recent attacks in Madrid and London.

On 11 March 2004, in an attack subsequently described as "the worst Islamist terrorist attack in European history," a series of coordinated bombings took place on the commuter train system in Madrid.²¹³ More than 190 were killed and approximately 1,800 were wounded.²¹⁴ Although there was no direct link made between al-Qaeda and the attackers, it is believed that the North African men who carried out the bombings were "inspired by a tract on an al-Qaida-affiliated website that called for attacks on Spain."²¹⁵ It is likely that al-Qaeda's ideology played a role in motivating the bombings.

On 7 July 2005, three bombs were detonated on the London Underground within 50 seconds of each other during the morning commute. A fourth bomb was detonated on a double-decker bus

nearby an hour later.²¹⁶ In total, 56 were killed and 700 were injured.²¹⁷ The suicide bombers were later identified as Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, and Jermaine Lindsay.²¹⁸ All were British citizens and all had come under the influence of radical Islam similar to that espoused by al-Qaeda.^{219 220} In a video made before the bombings, Mohammad Sidique Khan referred to al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri as beloved heroes.²²¹ The events are collectively referred to as 7/7, and are among the most poignant memories in British memory of domestic attacks influenced by al-Qaeda's ideology.

These are but two of the most recent and devastating examples of the influence of al-Qaeda's extremist ideology in the European Union. The E.U. and the U.S. have both felt the tragic effects of violent extremism directly, and both have every interest in countering the threat posed by the spread of al-Qaeda's message.

RUSSIA

Context for Strategic Cooperation

In January of 2001, a bipartisan commission chaired by high-ranking U.S. Senators, including senior counsel to President Reagan during the Strategic Arms Limitations II (SALT II) talks, concluded that:

“[t]he most urgent unmet national security threat to the United States today is the danger that weapons of mass destruction or weapons-usable material in Russia could be stolen and sold to terrorists or hostile nation states and used against American troops abroad and citizens at home.”²²²

In confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda's ideology, U.S. cooperation with Russia will be essential. Russia remains host to many of the world's nuclear weapons, the proliferation of which must be prevented at all cost.

Many western analysts are skeptical of U.S.-Russia cooperation. Russia specialists Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman recently argued in *Foreign Affairs* that “[t]oday, Russia and the

United States share few interests and even fewer priorities.”²²³ Russia, they say, “needs the United States for relatively little.”²²⁴ The U.S., however, needs Russian cooperation as a result of Russia’s “geographic location, nuclear status, historical relationships with key countries, UN Security Council veto, and role as a major energy exporter.”²²⁵ Thus, while Russia matters very much to the U.S., Russia can pursue many of its foreign policy objectives—notably increasing fuel exports and maintaining friendly relations with former Soviet satellites—without American help.

But there is one crucial area where U.S. and Russian interests overlap: preventing terrorism at home. The threat of Islamic fundamentalism is not new to Russia. Especially in the North Caucasus region, where Islamic fundamentalists are based, the Russian government is “determined to limit external support for these groups, a concern that influences [Russian] policies in Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia.”²²⁶ Washington must make clear to Moscow that a domestic political atmosphere of increased tolerance and coexistence is crucial to confronting al-Qaeda’s ideology, especially its central claim that Islam and the West are fundamentally incompatible.

“There is one crucial area where U.S. and Russian interests overlap: preventing terrorism at home.”

With the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals, Russia and the U.S. have a strong common interest in preventing the proliferation of such weapons. Despite the pessimistic outlook of some regarding U.S.-Russia cooperation, the governments of both countries have made significant gains in changing the tone of their relationship since a low point at the end of 2008, following the Russia-Georgia war of that summer²²⁷. The start of the Obama administration in January 2009 gave both sides of the U.S.-Russia relationship an opportunity to improve bilateral relations, which has since produced results, most notably with the negotiation and ratification of the new START treaty, one that requires “[e]ach Party [to] reduce and limit its strategic offensive arms.”²²⁸

Militarily, Moscow has already cooperated with US and coalition forces in the war effort in Afghanistan. For several years, NATO forces had to ship supplies into Afghanistan from Pakistan in the north, via the Khyber Pass. This route proved to be difficult, both in terms of “handling the volume of material,” as well as frequent ambushes to convoys²²⁹. Eventually, in

2008, the Kremlin agreed to “allow NATO to transport material south on its railway or through its airspace, [providing] a much-needed alternative.”²³⁰

There is thus precedent for enlisting Russia in the fight against violent extremism. Recent ratification of the New START treaty has created a political atmosphere that is amenable to further cooperation between the U.S. and Russia. While the Russian government has been relatively slow to progress on human rights issues, it is important and possible that the U.S. identifies areas of mutual concern with the Russian government.

Threats from Islamic Fundamentalism Faced by Russia

The region in Russia most vulnerable to Islamic fundamentalism is the North Caucasus, particularly Chechnya. Russia is, by the reckoning of certain experts, “experiencing the beginning of an Islamist jihad.”²³¹ Loose networks of Islamic extremists in this region are vulnerable to and influenced by the rhetoric of al-Qaeda. Chechen defiance has become increasingly a part of the global insurgency movement related to Islamic fundamentalism, and may become worse if the Russian government does not make serious efforts in Chechnya to spur economic development and political inclusion.

Russian Muslims “have been subjected to often brutal Russian/Soviet imperial habits over the centuries,” and “[p]ropensities to violence are prevalent in both the Russian and North Caucasian cultures.”^{232, 233} Furthermore, it is clear that “there is an overall degradation in the [terrorist] network’s capacity as one moves away from its ethnic and geographic core in Chechnya.”²³⁴ Chechnya is Russia’s epicenter of violent extremism inspired by radical Islam. The struggle in Chechnya for national liberation, initially one of a “secularized Muslim population,” has been “taken over from within by the Islamist-Jihadists—transforming the liberation struggle into a regional anti-Russian terrorist jihad, at the expense of the Chechens’ own self-interest.”²³⁵ This process of “Chechenization,” as it is called, “involves mobilizing a country, or a region, against the West,” which often means resorting to the type of violent extremism espoused by al-Qaeda. It is critical that Moscow and Washington work to counter the influence of al-Qaeda’s ideology on Chechen militants.

Chechen rebels have claimed credit for terrorist attacks in Russia as recently as February of 2011. Doku Umarov, a Chechen rebel leader, claimed that he had ordered a January 2011 suicide bombing at a Moscow airport that killed 36.²³⁶ Umarov claims that the attacks are retaliation for the “repressions against Chechens ordered by Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin,” and that it is a part of a “broader Islamic insurgency.”²³⁷ He has also taken credit for March 2010 bombings of a Moscow subway that killed 40, as well as the bombing of a train that killed 28 in November 2009.²³⁸

INDIA

Context for Strategic Cooperation

India is eager to cooperate with the United States, and will be a crucial partner in promoting values of tolerance and facilitating cooperation within the international order. India and the U.S. share “a common language, a familiar worldview, and a growing fascination with each other [that] is bringing together businessmen, nongovernmental activists, and writers” from both countries.²³⁹ India is one of the most pro-American countries in the world, with 71 percent of Indians saying they have a favorable view of the U.S. in a June 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey.²⁴⁰ As the world’s most populous democracy and a model of vibrant pluralism, India will be important in demonstrating the virtues of religious and cultural coexistence to parts of the Islamic world where al-Qaeda’s ideology has taken hold.

There is a strong precedent for U.S.-India cooperation in many areas, and the U.S. must extend this cooperation into matters of security and counterinsurgency. The U.S.-India relationship has produced, in recent years, agreements on nuclear energy, collaboration on technological innovation, increasing economic ties, and a “growing...campaign to promote stable, well-governed democracies around the world.”²⁴¹ Especially since 9/11, India has become an important partner in stabilizing South Asia. The U.S. and Indian governments are both interested in a functioning government in Afghanistan, and have already come together to settle other regional issues, achieving a political settlement with the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka “through a power-sharing agreement so as to end the island’s bloody conflict.”²⁴²

India was not a high foreign policy priority for the U.S. during the Cold War, but Washington has found in New Delhi a like-minded ally over the last two decades. The Clinton administration began to engage India more aggressively in the 1990s following India's economic liberalization and May 1998 nuclear tests. The Bush administration continued this trend, and announced the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative in March 2006.²⁴³ President Obama traveled to India in November 2010 to meet with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and the two leaders are reported to have a strong friendship. Prime Minister Singh said President Obama is "a personal friend and a charismatic leader who has made a deep imprint on world affairs," while President Obama characterized the U.S.-India relationship as "the defining partnership of the 21st century."²⁴⁴ The governments of the U.S. and India, the world's largest and oldest democracies, should build upon this reservoir of goodwill in confronting al-Qaeda's extremist rhetoric together.

Threats from Islamic Fundamentalism faced by India

India has dealt with the domestic threat of violent extremism for several decades. By the late 1990s, "India had faced violence linked to ethnic, ideological, and religious insurgencies in its northeast and to Sikh separatism in Punjab state," as well as "the 16-year-old Kashmir autonomy movement, and Naxalite rebellions in the south and east."²⁴⁵ The country has been identified by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri as "a part of the 'Crusader-Zionist-Hindu' conspiracy against the Islamic world," and thus fits nicely into al-Qaeda's fantastic narrative of Islam as threatened by the West and Western-friendly governments.²⁴⁶

The realities of violent extremism came to the fore all too abruptly for India in the Mumbai attacks of 26 November 2008, the targets of which included two hotels, a restaurant, a railway station and at least one hospital.²⁴⁷ Well over a hundred people were killed, with many more injured.²⁴⁸ The attacks were committed by 10 members of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), a terrorist organization with Pakistani roots, and an ally of al-Qaeda.²⁴⁹

The two most stubborn obstacles to confronting violent extremism in India are the ongoing Kashmir dispute and the unstable India-Pakistan relationship. While these two issues are not one-in-the-same, they are very closely related. Anti-India sentiment has been prevalent in Kashmir

since India's independence, and the region has seen the rise of both Islamic fundamentalism and separatist movements.²⁵⁰ Pakistan has served as a base of operations and training for violent extremists wishing to carry out attacks within India.

Kashmir "symbolizes the clash between...rival concepts of national identity" of Indians, who see Kashmir's Muslim majority as "a symbol of the country's secular identity," and Pakistanis, who see Kashmir as "the one Muslim-majority area of Britain's empire that did not become part of Pakistan."²⁵¹ Arguably the largest terrorist threat India faces is that of "Kashmiri groups based in Pakistan with long and intimate connections to al-Qaeda and bin Laden."²⁵² LeT was founded in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and has received support from the Pakistani intelligence service, known as the ISI. LeT's "self-professed goal is to create an Islamic state in all of south and central Asia," which is incompatible with present-day India.²⁵³ "Several al-Qaeda operatives [have been] arrested in Pakistan...[and] found in safe houses run by LeT," whose recruits have "been linked to numerous terrorist attacks in India, including the massacre of dozens of Sikhs in Kashmir in March 2000 during President Clinton's visit to India, bombings in New Delhi in 2005, and bombings in Varanasi and Mumbai in 2006."²⁵⁴

The India-Pakistan relationship has been characterized by hostility and mistrust since both countries gained independence from Britain in 1947. Immediately after independence, the two countries went to war over Kashmir until 1949, and then again in 1965.²⁵⁵ Military buildup by both India and Pakistan has resulted in both countries possessing a large army and arsenals of nuclear weapons.²⁵⁶ To coordinate counterinsurgency in South Asia and to counter the influence of al-Qaeda's ideology, especially through resolution of the Kashmir issue, the U.S. must work with India to improve the India- Pakistan relationship.

CHINA

Context for Strategic Cooperation

The U.S. and China, as the world's largest and second largest economies, are highly vulnerable to the types of attacks favored by al-Qaeda and their followers. For this reason it is important that U.S. policy for confronting al-Qaeda's ideology emphasize cooperation with the Chinese

government. China and the United States have little experience in coordinating foreign policy with one another. While the United States and China often disagree on important issues—from human rights, to economic policy, to regional geopolitical security—both countries are home to significant Muslim populations, and both governments share an interest in defeating the threat posed by al-Qaeda.^{257 258} Soon after the 9/11 attacks, Chinese leaders “offered support and condolences to the United States and expressed a willingness to cooperate against international terrorism.”²⁵⁹

The most persistent stumbling block in U.S.-China relations is the ambiguous political status of Taiwan, an island off of China’s southeast coast. To China, the Taiwan issue is one of “territorial integrity and national unity and hence bears a symbolic value to Chinese nationalism.”²⁶⁰ The Chinese government sees Taiwan’s people as it sees those of Hong Kong and Macau—that is, as “ethnically and historically Chinese.”²⁶¹ Hong Kong and Macau were returned to China from European countries in 1997 and 1999, prompting Beijing to view Taiwan as the last of its “outstanding claims.”²⁶² The U.S. has been selling arms to Taiwan and protecting it since the 1950s, after the Nationalists fled to the island following the Chinese Civil War. If the U.S. is to enlist the Chinese government in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda’s ideology, it should avoid disagreements over Taiwan, and work to maintain the status quo of strategic ambiguity.

It is fortunate that U.S.-China relations are in the midst of a thaw following Chinese President Hu Jintao’s state visit to Washington in January 2011. After a year of public disagreements over several issues, including U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and Chinese currency manipulation, the U.S. and Chinese political leadership now seem to be engaging each other in a dialogue that is more cooperative than confrontational. President Hu conceded while in Washington that “a lot still needs to be done in China in terms of human rights,” signaling a welcome rhetorical shift.²⁶³

In terms of security, President Hu joined President Obama in issuing a joint declaration expressing concern over North Korea’s disclosure of a uranium-enrichment plant, marking the first time the Chinese leadership had publicly discussed that issue in a negative light.²⁶⁴ These instances of US-China cooperation in matters of human rights and security can and should be expanded upon to enlist China in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda’s extremist ideology.

Threats from Islamic Fundamentalism faced by China

As China becomes a more assertive power with global aspirations, it is becoming more vulnerable to violent extremism. As far as the spread of al-Qaeda's ideology is concerned, the most problematic area within China regarding violent extremism is the northwestern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, home to 30 million Muslims. It is in this region that Beijing claims "to have its own homegrown extremist threat."²⁶⁵ The Chinese government associates the Xinjiang area with its campaign against the "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.²⁶⁶ Terrorist organizations such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and the World Uighur Youth Congress have organized violent attacks inside Xinjiang, and in September 2002 the U.S. government labeled the former group a terrorist organization.²⁶⁷

The Uighur population has a tense relationship with the Chinese central government. A Turkic-speaking Muslim people, many of them resent being ruled by a Han Chinese government, which values the oil-rich Xinjiang region. Attacks on security forces in Xinjiang broke out in the summer of 2008—which the Chinese government blamed on separatist groups—and massive riots took place in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in summer of 2009.²⁶⁸

Uighurs complain of social and economic marginalization by the Chinese government. The majority of Uighurs are Sunni Muslim, and many of them feel that "the practice of Islam is tightly circumscribed."²⁶⁹ Imams cannot teach the Koran in private, and fasting during Ramadan as well as pilgrimages to Mecca are closely managed by the Chinese government.²⁷⁰ Much of the industry in Xinjiang is controlled by Han Chinese businesses, and the central government has encouraged Han Chinese workers to live and work there, so as to dilute the political power of Uighurs. All of this has increased Uighurs' resentment of Beijing's rule.

Aside from domestic terrorist threats, China is beginning to find that its economic interests in the Muslim world are also threatened by terrorism and the global insurgency influenced by al-Qaeda's ideology. Despite China's benign rhetoric of a 'peaceful rise' within the global order, China is a ubiquitous and undeniable force in the process of globalization, especially economically; this in and of itself creates resentment among al-Qaeda followers and motivates violence against Chinese interests. China's increased energy dependence has significantly

increased its commercial presence in parts of Africa, the Middle East and other Islamic areas of the world, and this too has serious implications for terrorist threats. In July 2007, a bus full of Chinese engineers was bombed in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan.²⁷¹ In October 2008, nine Chinese oil workers were kidnapped in Sudan, five of whom were later killed while in captivity.²⁷² Chinese workers have also been attacked, often fatally, in Afghanistan, Zambia, Kyrgyzstan, and Niger.²⁷³ China, like the U.S., has an interest in weakening the influence of al-Qaeda's ideology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. message to confront the threat posed by al-Qaeda's extremist ideology must stress international cooperation within a multilateral framework. While this message should be a guiding theme of U.S. foreign policy, its application should be contextual and specific to the U.S. relationship with each of the main world powers.

European Union

U.S. cooperation with the E.U. is natural in matters of foreign policy. Within the National Security Strategy framework, the European Union will be a key partner in ensuring cooperation within the international order and protecting democratic values. The United States and the European Union should take the following steps to confront the threat posed by al-Qaeda's ideology:

- **Improve relations with domestic Muslim populations.** This will counter radicalization among populations that are at risk of finding appeal in al-Qaeda's extremist ideology. Efforts should be made to include Muslims and Islamic culture into European society. At the very least, European Muslims should feel that they are able to practice their religion freely and without prejudice. Any actions taken by European governments that could alienate Muslim populations should be denounced as counterproductive. Examples include: the French senate's September 2010 approval of a law to ban any veils that cover the face; and the November 2009 referendum that passed in Switzerland to ban the building of minarets.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁵

- **Coordinate counterterrorism strategy through NATO.** Al-Qaeda-inspired attacks in both the U.S. and in European countries necessitate the coordination of counterterrorism strategy through NATO. It is important that NATO members continue to maintain “military relationships, interoperability of equipment and doctrines, a strategic system of enroute air bases, pre-positioning programs, and U.S. forces assigned to Europe.”²⁷⁶ NATO members are also encouraged “to join the United States in out-of-area activities from humanitarian missions to armed conflict,” and this will facilitate cooperation in confronting threats posed by al-Qaeda’s ideology.²⁷⁷

Russia

Although the U.S.-Russia relationship has been characterized by mistrust, these two powers should work together on matters of mutual interest and concern regarding the threat posed by international terrorism. Within the National Security Strategy framework, Russia will be helpful in maintaining international security. U.S. cooperation with Russia in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda’s ideology will depend on whether or not those two powers can:

- **Prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.** Russia’s largest area of shared interest with the United States is security. Primarily, this means preventing domestic terrorist attacks and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The U.S. needs to make sure that Russia is included in all international nonproliferation efforts. This can be achieved through bilateral dialogue and through international organizations such as NATO. Most important will be “confidence-building measures and data exchanges” between Russia and the United States and powerful European countries. Persistent and continued dialogue will help to increase transparency, build trust, and improve security measures.²⁷⁸
- **Work towards a solution to the ongoing separatist conflict in Chechnya.** Washington must press Moscow to provide political outlets for Muslims in Chechnya to express legitimate grievances, as well as to protect “Muslims’ political, civil, and human rights.”²⁷⁹ The Russian government must reduce “the cultural divide between a largely secular post-Soviet Russian state and society and Russia’s re-Islamizing Muslims by

increasing the influence of ...moderate forms of Islam and Islamic teaching.”²⁸⁰ Fostering the influence of moderate Islam in Chechnya will help to alienate more extremist views and quell al-Qaeda’s influence there. Ultimately, Moscow needs to “[w]ork toward the creation of a multilateral coalition to induce the Russians and the Chechens to declare a ceasefire.”²⁸¹ Once the Chechens begin to see that it is in their best interest to enter into constructive dialogue with the Russian government, the allure of extremist ideology, such as that espoused by al-Qaeda, will wane.

India

India is an eager and increasingly important partner for the United States in Asia, and its domestic politics serve as a model of pluralism and tolerance for countries in the Muslim world. Within the National Security Strategy framework, India’s goals are largely in line with those of the U.S., especially regarding the protection of democratic values and cooperation within the international order. The two most important things the U.S. and India can do in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda’s ideology are to:

- **Work towards a resolution of the Kashmir issue.** Insofar as it may serve as a base for terrorists inspired by al-Qaeda’s extremist ideology, Kashmir’s contested political status is a threat to international security. Although the U.S. is not a direct stakeholder in this disagreement, the U.S. should press India into more serious dialogue with Pakistan and China to directly address how the issue may be resolved.
- **Encourage increased dialogue between Pakistan and India.** India, like the U.S., is vulnerable to the threat posed by al-Qaeda’s ideology. Pakistan has served as a base for terrorist groups inspired by al-Qaeda’s ideology, and the mistrust between the Indian and Pakistani governments—which are both nuclear-armed—is a threat to international security and an obstacle to countering al-Qaeda’s message. Increased dialogue between Pakistan and India would facilitate a thaw in relations and help both countries identify shared interests and mutual concerns in countering violent extremism.

China

While the size of the Chinese economy guarantees that China will be a crucial partner in ensuring international economic prosperity, U.S. policymakers cannot ignore China in coordinating counterterrorism strategy. The goals of Sino-U.S. cooperation in confronting the threat posed by al-Qaeda's ideology should be to:

- **Increase military ties and intelligence sharing between China and the United States.** China is modernizing its military, one that has become more confident. Defense Secretary Robert Gates expressed his concern in January 2011 of a “disconnect” between China's civilian and military leadership, especially considering that President Hu seemed to be unaware of a January 2011 test of a new Chinese stealth fighter.²⁸² The U.S. must build trust with the Chinese government and facilitate military cooperation between the two countries in coordinating, or at least discussing, each other's counterinsurgency policy.
- **Improve relations between the Uighur population and the Chinese government.** For China, economic prosperity and domestic stability are closely related, and can be effectively pursued by improving relations between the Chinese central government and the Uighurs. The Uighur population is China's most vulnerable demographic to al-Qaeda's ideology, and their grievances need to be addressed by the Chinese government. If Uighurs feel that they can solve their social, political, and economic problems within existing power structures, the appeal of al-Qaeda's ideology will be greatly diminished.

SECTION III

THE DIRECT FIGHT AGAINST AL-QAEDA

TAKING DOWN AL-QAEDA'S NETWORK POST 9/11

Written by: Matthew Wright

Since 9/11, the U.S. has successfully killed or captured top-level al-Qaeda operatives, cut off their support, and reduced their ability to plan and execute attacks on the homeland. This success can be attributed to military operations that have enervated al-Qaeda support and put pressure on their sanctuaries, first in Afghanistan and then in Pakistan. Prior to 9/11, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation took the primary and secondary roles in confronting al-Qaeda while the Defense Department's role was tertiary and, indeed, episodic. However, on 13 September 2001, CIA Director George Tenet told President Bush that he was ready to deploy paramilitary teams that would prepare the battlefield for U.S. Special Forces. By the end of November, 110 CIA officers, 316 Special Forces personnel, and scores of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) personnel had initial success compiling a list of high-value al-Qaeda targets and routing them from Afghanistan.²⁸³ Al-Qaeda insiders admit that eighty percent of their members were captured or killed shortly after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and *The 9/11 Commission Report*, citing these successes, recommended shifting the responsibility of planning and executing counterterrorism operations from the CIA to the Department of Defense.²⁸⁴ The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) had already begun developing such operations, but it would have to rely on an information-sharing overhaul that was initiated by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) were established to oversee and increase cooperation among the nation's sixteen intelligence agencies. With these changes, USSOCOM units would be able to fuse operations and intelligence to perfect what military strategists call "find, fix, finish, exploit and assess" (F3EA). F3EA is a offensive model for capturing or killing mid- and senior-level terrorists that synchronizes and decentralizes intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance collection to find and fix the exact location of terrorists, and then exploit the sites of capture to find new starting points.²⁸⁵ The success of Special Operations Forces (SOF) operating in the F3EA model spurred SOF's rapid and unfettered expansion in size, budget, and mission. In 2004, President Bush

tasked USSOCOM to take the lead in coordinating U.S. efforts to build a network of assets that could take down al-Qaeda's network.

Going forward, the U.S. should continue to engage SOF in the fight against al-Qaeda but improve its ability to balance the short-term gains of removing combatants from the battlefield against the long-term damage such military action can have on the larger strategic effort to delegitimize al-Qaeda's core ideological message. The killing of Muslims, both active members of al-Qaeda and, with some frequency, innocent noncombatants, has fueled al-Qaeda's core message that the West is at war with Islam. The U.S. must counter that message in order to advance its four enduring national interests: the security of the U.S., its citizens, allies, and partners; a growing U.S. economy that promotes opportunity and prosperity; respect for universal values; and an international order that is capable of meeting global challenges.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST AL-QAEDA

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has approximately 57,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and civilians assigned to its headquarters unit, its four components, and the sub-unified Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).²⁸⁶ USSOCOM units receive special training and equipment which enables them to conduct a variety of direct missions, including short duration strikes, offensive measures to prevent terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, special reconnaissance, and information operations. SOF are also capable of executing indirect missions that include long-duration unconventional warfare, psychological operations, foreign internal defense, and civil affairs.²⁸⁷

In September 2002, *The Washington Post* reported that General Tommy Franks, Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), would no longer control operations in Yemen and Pakistan; they would be handed over to USSOCOM.²⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which traditionally managed the domain of covert and high-profile clandestine operations, would continue its traditional role by deploying paramilitary units that are expected to work with the Special Operations Command.²⁸⁹ USSOCOM was given the authority to plan and execute its own operations in 2003, rather than functioning solely as support for the DOD's regional commands.²⁹⁰ In 2004, President Bush issued a Unified Command Plan, which

officially expanded USSOCOM's mission beyond its traditional Title 10 authorities and responsibilities.

The most contentious change in the use of SOF came in 2004 when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld gave a broad mandate to conduct intelligence gathering, and operational planning in countries not at war with the United States, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, and other Persian Gulf States. SOF personnel were dispatched to U.S. embassies in approximately 20 countries throughout the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.²⁹¹ Two years later, the National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism mandated that the DOD would “undertake a broad campaign to find and attack or neutralize terrorist leaders, their havens, financial networks, methods of communication and ability to move around the globe.”²⁹² A *New York Times* article in 2006 reported that several senior-ranking CIA officers found the new SOF mandate to be overreaching. The article quoted John O. Brennan, who headed the NCTC until his retirement in 2005: “The C.I.A.'s important lead role in many of these areas is being steadily eroded, and the current militarization of many of the nation's intelligence functions and responsibilities will be viewed as a major mistake in the very near future.” However, USSOCOM elements have operated within their new scope with precision and continue to welcome widespread praise.

By fusing operations and intelligence, SOF enemy-centric, direct-action missions have been successful at collapsing terrorist and insurgent networks by killing terrorists, insurgents, and their supporters.²⁹³ The policy in Afghanistan, which President Obama vowed to make the central front in the fight against al-Qaeda, however, shifted when General Stanley McChrystal, Commander of JSOC from 2003 to 2008, took command. Andrew Exum, an advisor to General McChrystal during his initial assessment of Afghanistan, said that General McChrystal did not think he could kill his way out of the war in Afghanistan, “largely because he had already tried.”²⁹⁴

THE CHALLENGES OF RAPID EXPANSION

Despite all the triumphs and bipartisan infatuation with SOF, several challenges have coincided with USSOCOM's ability to operate under its own authority. Its expansion in personnel, material resources, and geographic scope has threatened to undermine U.S. long-term strategy of advancing its national interests. The U.S. government is facing a budget deficit of \$1.267 trillion, representing 8.3 percent of the gross domestic product, and President Obama requested an increase of 2.2 percent in total defense spending for FY 2011, 6.1 percent higher than the peak under the Bush administration.²⁹⁵ The USSOCOM annual budget has increased six-fold in one decade, from \$1.3 billion in 2000 to \$6.3 billion in 2011, while the entire defense budget has doubled. The 2006 Defense Quadrennial Review called for a fifteen percent increase in SOF personnel from 2006 through 2011.²⁹⁶ Consequently, the FY2011 Defense Budget Request Overview calls for "SOF funds to increase sharply over the next several years."²⁹⁷

The expansion of SOF is challenging the credibility of the U.S. self-proclaimed commitment to international law and its ability to engage and modernize international institutions and frameworks.²⁹⁸ Jennifer Kibbe in *The Oxford Handbook of National Defense Intelligence* paraphrases Colonel K. Stone from the U.S. Army War College: "Under international law, using formal military personnel to conduct a covert military operation (in a country with which the United States is not at war) constitutes an act of war."²⁹⁹ Stone writes, "most of the world has come to look at CIA *de facto* wars as a way of life because most powers benefit from their own CIA-equivalents operating in foreign countries."³⁰⁰ The same cannot be said for uniformed military personnel operating in the same capacity. Military personnel who are captured while conducting covert operations risk being classified as unlawful combatants and losing the immunity provided to them by the international law.³⁰¹

"The expansion of SOF is challenging the credibility of the U.S. self-proclaimed commitment to international law and its ability to engage and modernize international institutions and frameworks."

Nonetheless, the DOD and USSOCOM have continued to press for continued direct-action engagement, "including short duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage

designated targets.”³⁰² Since the beginning of the fight in 2001, the U.S. has emphasized missile strikes carried out by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) against al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen. President Bush issued a Memorandum of Notification that authorized the CIA to kill members of al-Qaeda, including American citizens, that appear on a high-value target list.³⁰³ The MQ-1 Predator was first used in offensive operations in Afghanistan and, according to the DOD, hit nearly 100 percent of its targets.³⁰⁴ Predator strikes were credited with killing dozens of al-Qaeda high-value targets, including Mohammed Atef.³⁰⁵ On November 3, 2002, 100 miles east of Yemen’s capital Sana’a, a predator drone strike killed Abu Ali al-Harithi, a loyal al-Qaeda member suspected of planning the attack on the U.S.S. Cole on 12 October 2000, and five other suspected al-Qaeda terrorists.³⁰⁶

Two distinct ramifications of direct-action engagement executed by SOF and the CIA, which aim to kill high-value targets, threaten U.S. long-term strategy. First, UAV strikes and direct-action engagement on the ground, known colloquially as door-kicking, risks killing civilian noncombatants.³⁰⁷ A noncombatant civilian’s death or even the death of a reconcilable terrorist can strengthen an insurgency and bolster the support for terrorist networks. When foreign security forces use violence against noncombatants—intentionally or accidentally—the result is counterproductive to long-term strategy for security.³⁰⁸

Second, the targeted killing of irreconcilable combatants within the boundaries of a sovereign state can weaken U.S. partnerships with allies and foreign leaders in countries like Pakistan and Yemen with whom the U.S. have cultivated strategic partnerships in the direct fight against al-Qaeda. These leaders risk losing their credibility among constituents who perceive them to be little more than U.S. minions. With their credibility at risk, they can become reluctant to cooperate with the U.S. on future operations. In the months leading to the Predator strike that killed al-Harithi in Yemen in 2003, Ambassador Richard Armitage said, “The deniability was an important component of the mission.”³⁰⁹

The political imperative of deniability, however, was either misunderstood or completely ignored. The CIA’s Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh had agreed upon preserving the deniability of U.S. involvement in the operation, but on 4 November 2002, the Associated Press reported, “U.S. Kills Senior Al-Qaeda Operative

in Yemen with Missile Strike.”³¹⁰ The very next day, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz confirmed U.S. involvement in the strike on CNN. Kibbe highlights the best and worst case scenarios in acknowledging U.S. complicity in aerial strikes executed within sovereign states: in a best-case scenario, U.S. partners will be less willing to cooperate and, at worst, it might incite reprisal.³¹¹ In either case, Kibbe fails to consider even the short-term tactical consequence: the leak infuriated President Saleh because his own assets were still tracking down other insurgents affiliated with al-Harithi.³¹²

Finally, despite its affinity for SOF direct-action engagement, the Defense Department has deployed hundreds of thousands of conventional force troops to augment USSOCOM's fight against al-Qaeda and they have been intermittently successful at removing al-Qaeda fighters from the battlefield. However, the use of conventional forces in Afghanistan has unintentionally resulted in the death of innocent noncombatants and the support of an insurgency that is susceptible to al-Qaeda's ideological message. David Kilcullen has acknowledged U.S. unintentional support for the Afghan insurgency in his book *Accidental Guerrilla*:

“They're fighting us primarily because we're in their face. We turned up in their valley. We turned up in their village, we went in there chasing al-Qaeda or one of the other terrorist groups and they've been manipulated by these local groups of extreme radicals, and they are fighting us because their cousin was killed or we destroyed one of their villages . . .”³¹³

War inherently involves death. Nevertheless, when the U.S. kills Muslims, it reinforces al-Qaeda's message that the U.S. is at war with Islam. Immobilizing and removing terrorists from the fight should always be praised; however, local security forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan—with the support of their populations and U.S. SOF assistance—should lead the fight against al-Qaeda while the U.S. reduces the presence of its conventional forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S.'s strategic advantage lies in its ability to employ several options capable of adapting to new threats, and ultimately, the U.S. is fit to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its violent extremist affiliates. However, the U.S. should deploy SOF assets capable of defeating al-

Qaeda and its extremist ideology without dissipating U.S. efforts to counter al-Qaeda's core ideological message. Specifically, the U.S. should adopt the following recommendations:

- **Decrease emphasis on killing and capturing high-value targets.** Whenever possible, the U.S. should engage its SOF assets to assist local security forces in the capture of al-Qaeda operators, planners, and leaders, rather than pursuing their targeted-killing through UAV missile attacks. Most U.S. senior officials opposed targeted killings before 9/11 because failed attempts would create diplomatic problems that outweighed the potential benefits of successful attempts. Even successful targeted killings can have unintended diplomatic and political consequences, as the 2002 strike in Yemen has demonstrated. Targeted killings that result in the death of innocent noncombatants, whether hitting their target or not, can exacerbate conflict and strengthen an insurgency. Furthermore, targeted killings have been “considered antithetical to the moral and ethical precepts of the United States.”³¹⁴ With these considerations in mind, the U.S. should not completely walk away from the F3EA model because capturing and detaining high-value targets can provide actionable intelligence to prevent future attacks on U.S. interests. However, F3EA should be executed by local security forces whenever possible and should weigh the short-term gains against the abundance of resources that are required to hunt down one man.
- **Develop and employ local security forces.** First, the U.S. should reduce its own conventional military forces deployed abroad. Second, the U.S. should exhaust every effort to develop local security forces in states with al-Qaeda sanctuaries before backing or encouraging the presence of foreign security forces. This recommendation is applicable in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and even Somalia, where the U.S. has trained, aided, and encouraged the presence of security forces from neighboring East African states within Somalia to support the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). AFRICOM's 2010 posture statement calls the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) a reliable partner in combating terrorism and acknowledges its presence in Somalia as a “critical role in providing the TFG an opportunity to establish itself.”³¹⁵ However, the presence of foreign militaries and security forces in Somalia has been effective only in strengthening support for violent extremist groups while the TFG remains politically inept and unable to resolve its own internal

divisions. The number of African Union (AU) troops in Somalia reached approximately 7,200 in November 2011, yet the opposition to their presence has only grown stronger.³¹⁶ So far, AU troops have been unable to deliver a decisive blow to al-Shabab militants. Meanwhile, al-Shabab has begun a campaign of retaliation for the presence of foreign troops, including claiming responsibility for the bombing in Kampala, Uganda in July 2010 that killed nearly eighty people including one American.

- **Strengthen and expand the diplomatic reach of the U.S.** The U.S. should expend all necessary efforts to create and sustain incentive-based relationships of trust and cooperation with the governments and regimes of underdeveloped states. This process is critical in regions where U.S. aims to aid, assist, and train local security forces or conduct operations through surrogate militias. Twenty years passed between U.S. Secretary of State visits to Yemen, a critical partner in the fight against al-Qaeda.³¹⁷ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton acknowledged that her visit was long overdue during her seven-hour stay in January 2011. She assured the population of Yemen—perhaps a decade too late—that the U.S. is “committed to a broad and comprehensive partnership not only with the Government of Yemen, but with the people of Yemen.”³¹⁸ Over the last decade, the Yemeni government has lost the support of its population, especially among Yemeni youth who are critical to the partnership. Less than two weeks after Secretary Clinton’s visit in January 2011, *Al Jazeera* and the Associated Press in *The Washington Post* reported that thousands of Yemeni civilians are participating in demonstrations and encouraging civil unrest in Yemen’s capital city and in southern Aden, calling for President Saleh’s removal in both locations.³¹⁹

UNITED STATES MILITARY IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Written by: Kristen Zipperer

The Bush Administration's goals in Afghanistan were to find and kill Osama bin Laden and other high-ranking al-Qaeda members, to remove the Taliban regime which supported and gave harbor to them, and to eliminate al-Qaeda and its threat to the well-being and safety of U.S. citizens.³²⁰ The extent to which the U.S. has succeeded in achieving these goals in the past ten years is debatable: al-Qaeda's presence has nearly disappeared in Afghanistan—the CIA estimates there are only 50 to 100 fighters left in the country today³²¹—but, as a result, the group has relocated to neighboring Pakistan and has become increasingly nimble and decentralized. Whether Osama bin Laden is dead or alive is unclear and whether the current Afghan government has enough power to self-sufficiently keep al-Qaeda at bay is also uncertain.

Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to be critical to U.S. foreign policy. The Obama Administration's National Security Strategy is to disrupt, dismantle, defeat, and delegitimize al-Qaeda and its ideology in order to ensure the protection of American citizens, allies, and interests overseas.³²² Despite the low number of al-Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan, the country commands U.S. attention due to the persistent presence of a Taliban insurgency.³²³ The group's past history of allowing al-Qaeda safe haven in Afghanistan before 2001 leads to fears this would happen again in a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. In addition, a weak central government, even if not Taliban-controlled, means that the state would not have the power to control al-Qaeda and other potentially harmful groups within its borders. As al-Qaeda and Taliban members fled Afghanistan, they settled in Pakistan and made the country a thriving militant hotbed. The unstable and unreliable central government in Pakistan invites powerful groups to operate without restraint and complicates endeavors to defeat extremist groups in the country. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's national intelligence agency, has historically supported militant groups in an effort to advance its interests in Kashmir and exacerbate this trend of powerful non-state actors.³²⁴ Especially unsettling is that Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons. If

the Pakistani state were to collapse, it is possible that groups, such as al-Qaeda, would have access to these weapons and use them against the United States and other powers.

To most effectively defeat al-Qaeda and protect its interests in the region, the U.S. must first and foremost focus on encouraging healthy governments in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2010, Transparency International ranked Afghanistan 176 out of 178 in an index detailing the world's most corrupt countries.³²⁵ Corruption is fueling instability in Afghanistan. Tensions between a Pashtun south and Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara north is leading to fears of state collapse and the possibility of civil war.³²⁶ A return to civil war in Afghanistan could embolden Pakistan's internal insurgency, in turn threatening Pakistan's stability. The collapse of a functioning government in either country could allow al-Qaeda and its affiliates to once again find sanctuary within their territories and launch new damaging attacks on the U.S. In addition, U.S. policy should reduce its troop presence in the country in order to stop feeding al-Qaeda's narrative that the U.S. is at war with Islam, and instead focus its efforts on building a strong counterinsurgency using local Afghan forces. In Pakistan, the U.S. should follow a broad policy of supporting a strong state capable of maintaining control of both its nuclear arsenal and its territory and advance the growth of civilian institutions.

A STABLE GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN: HOW TO GET THERE

The U.S. military, local Afghan forces, and the central government will all play unique and specific roles in the effort to promote a stable and legitimate government in Afghanistan. The U.S. military should use its remaining time in Afghanistan effectively but realize that it must withdraw from the country in order to most successfully combat al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Until then, working with and supporting the Afghan National Army will be key. While the U.S. military and Afghan forces are foundational in providing the country with adequate security to stop the threat of al-Qaeda, most U.S. effort should be focused on the Afghan government. A state that is able to maintain legitimacy and security will be most important in fighting al-Qaeda in the years to come.

SHIFTING POWER TO AFGHAN CONTROL

Until 2014, U.S. ground forces should utilize counterinsurgency techniques of engaging the local population in order to gather intelligence and minimize security threats. Since the initial invasion in 2001, there has been a general shift in military strategies from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency³²⁷ and this trend should be maintained. A counterterrorism approach focuses on operations that target the enemy, commonly through standoff weapons and remote engagement, while counterinsurgency focuses on people who can provide intelligence about the enemy. Counterinsurgency techniques emphasize providing basic services in an attempt to win local trust and cut off support for al-Qaeda on a foundational level. Due to the remote nature of counterterrorism, this approach can be problematic because it provokes the enemy into fighting and does little to stop new recruits from taking the place of neutralized threats.³²⁸ As a result of counterterrorism efforts, many extremists fight not because they seek U.S. destruction but because they believe the U.S. seeks theirs.³²⁹ This produces large numbers of “accidental guerrillas,” those not originally intending to be Taliban or al-Qaeda insurgents, but who become so due to counterterrorist strategies, which serve to push the population and the enemy together. A more productive method to security is counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen argues that through the process of counterinsurgency efforts such as road building and fostering reliable alliances with key leaders, U.S. forces can begin to separate the insurgents from the people and connect the people to the government.³³⁰ Recently in Afghanistan, there has been an increasing trend toward this approach as new methods such as human terrain mapping—research of local culture—have risen in popularity. Officers see concrete results in improved understanding of the social structures in the tribal cultures that are encountered. Kilcullen argues that concentrated counterinsurgency efforts have the potential to bring governance, rule of law, political communication, economic development, health, and education to volatile regions in Afghanistan. The southeastern village of Kunar, where counterinsurgency efforts have been closely applied, has experienced positive effects and stability, whereas the security situation in the rest of the country has deteriorated.³³¹

Over the next three years, the U.S. military should shift the majority of its counterinsurgency efforts to Afghan control. Some security analysts argue that in order to effectively promote a

counterinsurgency, large amounts of time, money, and manpower are needed. Costs and manpower can be greatly reduced if counterinsurgency efforts are not solely executed by the U.S. Continued occupation by the U.S. will leave it prone to resentment and fuel extremist ideology domestically and abroad. Some experts estimate that complete defeat of insurgent forces within Afghanistan will take fifty years.³³² As such, it is necessary that Afghans run their own counterinsurgency operations. U.S. troop reductions in July 2011 should occur and U.S. troops should work over the next three years to develop the Afghan National Army and train them in the techniques of successful counterinsurgency. Some in Afghanistan have expressed fear of abandonment on the part of the U.S., worrying that the U.S. military is attempting to leave prematurely before the situation is truly fixed.³³³ The U.S. should dispel this fear and make clear that its policy is to continue to support local forces and intermediaries after 2014. Greater integration of Afghans into U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns will allow for more experienced Afghan troops and a smoother transition come 2014. Local forces are expected to grow to 400,000 by the end of 2012³³⁴ and proper training will be vital for a productive counterinsurgency. A buildup of local Afghan forces allows for the military to cut costs while encouraging a more sustainable fight in the long term.

PURSuing NEGOTIATIONS AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

A stable government is essential in Afghanistan, and the most reasonable option is to encourage the Karzai government to hold reconciliatory talks with the Taliban. Sufficient power of the state is important for a handful of reasons. First, the power of the Afghan army is tied to the strength of the Afghan state. If the Afghan state cannot produce funds to pay its soldiers, individuals will not continue to participate in the army and security around the country will decrease. Second, if the government does not have legitimacy beyond the borders of Kabul, maintaining control in the hinterlands will be too expensive and impractical.

The 2010 troop surge allowed for modest security improvements in the country, but these gains are fragile. Wider problems and pressures could lead to a quick reversal and decline in these improvements. General rejection of Karzai rule in the Pashtun south by the Taliban has created an uneven emphasis on certain groups. Current Afghan forces and officers are primarily Uzbeks,

Tajiks, and Hazaras from the north, while only 3 percent of recruits are from the Pashtun south, creating resentment among Pashtuns.³³⁵ Meanwhile, in an attempt to entice populations in the south away from the Taliban, Karzai and his U.S.-backed government have concentrated an estimated 70 percent of all development funds into two southern provinces,³³⁶ creating tensions among the non-Pashtun population. Even more disconcerting is that some Tajik and Uzbek warlords have started to create profitable trade networks with neighboring countries and have become so rich and powerful that they have created their own fiefdoms that rarely listen to the Karzai government. Heightened tensions have created fear of civil war and have put strain on an already weak and corrupt government. The U.S. should seek to prevent state collapse at all costs, as such an event would invite al-Qaeda and its affiliates to re-establish bases within the country.

The Taliban have retained a persistent presence within the country even with the troop surge in 2010, and many have begun to see negotiation with the group as the best possible option for the country's stability. In October 2008, Defense Secretary Gates asserted that a political settlement with the Taliban was the endgame for the Afghan conflict, stating, "There has to be ultimately—and I'll underscore ultimately—reconciliation as part of a political outcome to this."³³⁷ Both the Karzai government and some current supporters of the Taliban seem interested in such talks. In early January 2010, Taliban commanders held secret exploratory talks with a U.N. special envoy to discuss peace terms.³³⁸ Later that same month, at a conference in London, Karzai told world leaders that he intended to reach out to Taliban leaders with a peace initiative,³³⁹ yet, in March, the Taliban declined to participate, stating that there would be no negotiations as long as there were U.S. troops on Afghan soil.³⁴⁰ Despite this, consideration for negotiations still remains a viable policy option. A report produced by NYU argued that the bond between the Taliban and al-Qaeda is often misperceived. After the 9/11 attacks, Taliban leadership was outraged at bin Laden's abuse of their hospitality and blatant disregard for their government. Post-9/11 circumstances forced the Taliban into a de facto defense of bin Laden, but underlying tensions still exist between the two groups.³⁴¹ In September 2010, General David Petraeus addressed the idea of peace talks, stating, "The prospect for reconciliation with senior Taliban leaders certainly looms out there...and there have been approaches at [a] very senior level that hold some promise."³⁴² It is important to note, however, that the Taliban is not a monolithic group but rather one composed of various entities with similar agendas. As such, not all Taliban members will be

reconcilable. The younger Taliban fighters, those with little to no memory of Afghan society before the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, are more ideologically motivated, less pragmatic, and therefore less open to reconciliation.³⁴³ Despite this, a sizable number of Taliban members are interested in talks, and the U.S. should focus its efforts with these individuals. Negotiations should advocate for a coalition government. This would incorporate the Taliban into the government while impeding its ability to regain absolute control. A series of confidence-building measures, such as the Taliban ending suicide bombings and targeted killings, the U.S. pledging to drastically reduce its presence in the country, and the Afghan government promising to free most Afghan Taliban prisoners, would need to be put in place if the talks were expected to be sustainable.

Last, the U.S. should also promote broader governmental reforms, most importantly, the devolution of power to a local level. Over most of its history, when Afghanistan has been governed effectively, it has been governed in a decentralized manner.³⁴⁴ Local governance—a blend of tribal, family, and state structures—has long been the most important influence to individuals, especially those outside urban centers. Devolution of power need not be zero-sum. If the central government were to ally with select local leaders who held regional power but who recognized the ultimate power of the state, the central government would be able to preserve credibility. U.S. counterinsurgency efforts have already established a base for these reforms as a result of establishing connections and allying with local leaders in order to gather intelligence. As part of broader governmental reforms, the Afghan government should also back initiatives that allow for more equal representation of ethnicities in the government, especially Pashtuns in the Afghan military.

“When Afghanistan has been governed effectively, it has been governed in a decentralized manner.”

MOVING FORWARD IN PAKISTAN

U.S. policy and strategy in Pakistan should be based on the understanding that the U.S. will not be able to solve Pakistan's problems.³⁴⁵ The difficulties that Pakistan faces are deep, historical, and complex, and, ultimately, the various solutions need to come from within Pakistan. The U.S. should approach the situation without high expectations, and given the volatility of the country, it

would be a reasonable aspiration to avoid making matters worse. Acknowledging this, the U.S. should pursue a broad policy of engagement and government stabilization without being subject to short-term political expediencies or personalities, recognizing that a stable Pakistan is paramount to its interests and its fight against al-Qaeda.³⁴⁶

The most important policy change the U.S. should make regarding Pakistan is to greatly reduce its covert operations and drone strikes in the country's northwest region. In an effort to apply pressure to terrorist groups operating within the country throughout 2010, the Obama Administration reportedly permitted 117 strikes in the area.³⁴⁷ These strikes have put an additional strain on an already tenuous relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, with the Pakistanis viewing these attacks as a clear violation of their sovereignty. This anti-U.S. sentiment could ultimately prove to be most harmful to U.S. interests. A poll by Gallup Pakistan in the summer of 2008 found only 9 percent of Pakistanis to be in favor of the U.S. drone attacks and 67 percent against them, with a majority ranking the United States as a greater threat to Pakistan than its archrival India, or the Pakistani Taliban.³⁴⁸ Many Pakistanis view the U.S. as a particularly fickle ally who only takes interest in Pakistan when it is of direct advantage to the U.S. To better this image, the U.S. must begin drastically decreasing its drone strikes.

Second, the U.S. should engage seriously and consistently with Pakistan to analyze the internal threats to Pakistan's security and how they can best be contained. Despite its support for the war against al-Qaeda, Pakistan continues to support the Taliban and other extremist groups, and this has been a considerable source of tension between the U.S. and Pakistan.³⁴⁹ This threat analysis should include an assessment of what Pakistan can do with the resources it has and what greater levels of U.S. assistance and support can achieve.³⁵⁰ Part of this understanding involves the U.S. recognizing that while al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban are of particular concern to the U.S., many Pakistani citizens, including those in the Tribal Belt, consider the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban) to be the greater and more immediate threat to Pakistan's interests and stability.³⁵¹

Third, once a mutual understanding has been reached, the U.S. should work with the government to enhance its army and paramilitary forces and combat the threats that directly threaten the continued existence of a Pakistani state. This includes providing basic equipping, such as

personnel gear, recruiting and training more police and military forces, greater information sharing between U.S. and Pakistani intelligence agencies, while stressing the strategies of counterinsurgency and the goal of preventing the killing of noncombatants over killing the enemy.

Additionally, the U.S. should balance strengthening the Pakistani Army with advocating for a healthy civilian government, and encourage Pakistan's efforts to strengthen democracy, engage with political parties across the political spectrum, and support programs that encourage political participation and civil society. Pakistan's political history is one prone to capriciousness, swaying between periods of democracy and dictatorial military rule, and still today the military and the ISI continues to hold a disproportionate amount of power within the country. There is little popular support backing the government as less than 1% of the country's 165 million people pay income taxes, the lowest tax-to-GDP ratio in the region.³⁵² In order to promote a sound government that retains legitimacy in the eyes of its people, Pakistan needs to pursue policies that widen its tax base. To start, Pakistan should update its census and re-demarcate electoral constituencies to better reflect the growth and redistribution of population. This will not only affect the balance of urban and rural seats in parliament, but also provide the basis of a more equitable distribution of federal resources among the provinces. Pakistan is an increasingly urbanized country, yet the electoral seats do not reflect this. The U.S. and others can provide technical assistance to expedite this, allowing for a first step towards a stronger and more cohesive civilian government.

Finally, the U.S. should work with and encourage the government of Pakistan to begin stabilizing relations with India. The U.S. should approach this endeavor with low expectations as history's scars are still readily present in both countries and will take years of negotiations and resolutions to substantively heal. Yet, the politics between Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan are deeply connected and easing tensions between Pakistan and India will be fundamental in setting the stage for the future of the region and the future of U.S. actions in the region. Pressure has increased between the two countries, as Pakistan has become less able or less willing to control the militants within its borders. One prominent militant group in Pakistan, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, has been a particular source of animosity. The group has carried out direct attacks against India,

most notably in 2008 with the bombing of the Taj Hotel in Mumbai. The collapse of the state in Pakistan would mean these terrorist groups would have more freedom to carry out attacks against India, encouraging India to take military action against Pakistan and use its nuclear weapons. It is therefore in the interest of both India and Pakistan to promote stable and democratic institutions within Pakistan. India and Pakistan should recognize this and rethink their relations with each other, which could initiate a new emphasis on enhanced economic and energy integration between the two countries.

An additional source of apprehension for both countries is which will have the preferred relationship with Afghanistan once U.S. occupation has ended.³⁵³ India and Pakistan have increasingly vied for supremacy in Afghanistan, with negative consequences for the Afghans. Thus, the second starting point from which India and Pakistan can begin to stabilize relations is to create an agreement that neither state will interfere with the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Such a statement would ease relative concern for both countries and promote better relations with the region as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to pursue policies that are most in line with the National Security Strategy's goals of disrupting, dismantling, defeating, and delegitimizing al-Qaeda and its ideology, the U.S. should enact upon the following recommendations:

- **Reduce troops starting in 2011.** The Obama Administration should continue with its plan to decrease troop levels in July 2011 with the intention of complete withdrawal by 2014. In the meantime, U.S. forces should focus their efforts on counterinsurgency with an emphasis on intelligence gathering and training local forces.
- **Shift counterinsurgency efforts to local Afghan forces.** It is important that local forces are skillful and confident because they will be the ones leading the fight against al-Qaeda in the years to come.

- **Support negotiations with the Afghan Taliban.** Recent analysis demonstrates that the bond between al-Qaeda and the Taliban may not be as strong as is commonly perceived. Incorporating the Taliban into the government would allow for increased government strength and security because the organization would no longer be fighting against the government.
- **Shift investment toward local rather than central governance.** The U.S. should adopt a stronger bottom-up approach to governance, investing in local leaders and power structures that best represent the local populations in lieu of the Kabul-centric approach now favored.
- **Reduce drone strikes in Pakistan.** Drone strikes have been a source of tension and anti-American sentiment in the country and very few Pakistanis support these actions. Animosity resulting from these attacks has the potential to fuel al-Qaeda's recruitment.
- **Encourage the strengthening of Pakistani civil institutions.** Despite a current civilian government, the Pakistani military still holds a disproportionate amount of power within the country. Pakistan's political sphere will ultimately be most stable if its citizens support its institutions.

BEYOND AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: RESPONDING TO AL-QAEDA'S THREAT IN YEMEN AND AFRICA

Written by: Matthew Paulhus

Since 9/11, the overwhelming majority of U.S. resources have been focused on fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This strategy was a result of al-Qaeda's centralization and planning of transnational attacks within these two countries. As a result of the pressure placed on al-Qaeda within Afghanistan and Pakistan, they have been forced to evolve into an organization committed to franchising their ideology. This franchising targets organizations that operate within ungoverned spaces of the Muslim world and address local grievances al-Qaeda is sympathetic to. With al-Qaeda's shift towards franchising their ideology, it is imperative that the U.S. focus on regions al-Qaeda affiliated insurgencies have begun to take root and remain attentive to new areas where al-Qaeda could potentially emerge.

The most immediate threats are from Yemen and North Africa—specifically, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Somalia—which have recently developed into new centers for planning attacks. The U.S. must develop a better plan for confronting the newly established threat in these areas and be aware of other regions where al-Qaeda could become influential.

YEMEN AND THE THREAT FROM AL-QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA (AQAP)

Yemen and Somalia are becoming the next major operational centers for al-Qaeda, where it can regroup, train, and conduct new operations after setbacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The goals of the U.S., according to the National Security Strategy, are to isolate those of al-Qaeda who carry out terrorist activities, to deny them a safe haven in Yemen, to strengthen Yemen and Africa's capacity to target violent extremists within its borders, and to continue to provide security assistance in support of those endeavors. America's goal in the short-term includes finding these cells and operatives and either killing or arresting them in order to prevent further attacks or allowing the Yemeni government to fail. A failed state in Yemen disrupts regional

security and promotes piracy in one of the world's most prominent shipping lanes. Terrorist networks are likely to grow as the state collapses, so an effective counter-insurgency strategy requires a long-term commitment to development, capable governance and state-building.

Al-Qaeda can become more prominent in Somalia if conditions similar to those in Yemen make it possible for the organization to extend its influence in this failed state. Al-Shabaab, the dominant violent Islamist group within Somalia, is a locally driven insurgent group. They are mainly focused on controlling Somalia, however, they are said to have ideological ties with al-Qaeda.³⁵⁴ At most, these ties include training and funding of al-Shabaab, however, the alliance with al-Qaeda may play a role in attacks outside of Somalia. U.S. operations in Somalia include training and equipping specialized counterterrorism and anti-piracy units to develop military capabilities and information sharing. The Combined Joint Task Force- Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti hosts approximately 3,000 U.S. and allied personnel at Camp Lemonier. CJTF-HOA, through Operation Enduring Freedom, sends teams throughout the East African region to build partnerships for countering violent extremism and improving regional security.³⁵⁵ The U.S. must also take into account that terrorism is not created in a vacuum, and the causes for al-Shabaab must be addressed in order to prevent al-Qaeda from gaining a more substantial foothold in the region.

The challenge for the United States is how to strengthen its ability to combat terrorism, counter the global extremist threat, and eliminate the grievances al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula uses to gain support while supporting necessary political and economic reforms in the countries this group operates in. The U.S. continues to strike al-Qaeda using aerial drone and missile attacks, and covert raids by Special Forces operations. The U.S. must balance its short-term need for counterterrorism against the long-term goal of stabilization in a way that reflects its values and strengthens its legitimacy. The U.S. wants more than just military ties to successful counterterrorism efforts in Yemen, Secretary of State Clinton said in a briefing before her trip to Yemen.³⁵⁶

“The U.S. must balance its short-term need for counterterrorism against the long-term goal of stabilization in a way that reflects its values and strengthens its legitimacy.”

The corrupt Yemeni government has knowingly diverted U.S. counterterrorism resources to fight separatists and fund other Yemeni priorities not shared by Washington, allocating efforts away from hunting down al-Qaeda. Specific examples of this corruption include two events in 2009: a Pentagon-trained counterterrorism unit was diverted to Yemen's north to fight Houthi rebels, who are outside the interests of the U.S., and ships donated by the U.S. to Yemen's coastguards were being rented out for commerce.³⁵⁷ This corruption undermines U.S. aid efforts in Yemen. These internal dilemmas demonstrate the country's internal priorities which can become America's priorities in dealing with al-Qaeda.

American advisors in Yemen provided intelligence, unmanned drones, and cruise missile launches as an aid to Yemeni forces. The main Yemeni counterterrorism offensive is targeted military action through the Yemeni Counter-Terrorism Unit with the aid of American and British funding, trainers, and intelligence.³⁵⁸ The United States has provided satellite and surveillance imagery and intercepted communications to help Yemeni security forces carry out air raids against AQAP. Yemen has set up these counter-insurgency units to engage al-Qaeda fighters where many are taking refuge in the desert regions outside the scope of the government. Yemeni government forces launched a major offensive against AQAP, targeting the organization's senior leaders and training camps in the provinces of Shabwa, Abyan, and Marib.³⁵⁹

The U.S. has adopted two paths: The Pentagon-led war of military force, occupation, and counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with a CIA-managed secret campaign of reconnaissance, interrogations, assassinations, and extraordinary rendition in both these countries but also in many other parts of the world as well.³⁶⁰ The U.S. has allocated money to the Yemeni government so that they may develop their own intelligence and security capabilities internally, but the U.S. government still operates unilaterally from time to time using drone and missile strikes.³⁶¹ The Pentagon has chosen the latter option in Yemen. Unilateral operations include Navy ships able to launch strikes into the region when targets are identified or hideouts are found. Remotely piloted aircraft also strike individuals or groups of known terrorist operatives.

Drone strikes from remotely piloted aircraft and Navy offshore missile strikes have been effective at eliminating mid-level leadership of AQAP.³⁶² In the long run, these drone strikes create the war zones that become grounds for extremism and bases for AQAP. Al-Qaeda used

these attacks for propaganda. One drone strike incident in December 2009 killed more non-combatants than it did combatants and demonstrates this conflict between long-term success and short-term goals. Likewise, more drone strikes do not destroy the root cause of militant extremism in Yemen and would have to be paired with other options. Secondly, drone strikes kill their target, preventing potential intelligence gathering that is possible in the alternative Special Forces raids.

President Obama said he has no intention of conventional U.S. forces to Yemen.³⁶³ The Pentagon is assigning more Special Forces personnel to Yemen to speed the training of the country's counterterrorism forces. American advisers do not take part in raids in Yemen but help plan missions, share intelligence and surveillance, develop tactics, and provide weapons and ammunitions.³⁶⁴ Special Forces troops are also working as liaisons between the Yemeni military command and the Pentagon, which relay intelligence from drones, satellites, and intercept militant phone calls and emails.³⁶⁵ Special operations units continue to train Yemeni security forces, as well as develop relationships with key Yemeni officers.

Intelligence sharing and assistance has been effective in targeting AQAP in Yemen. This is done unilaterally by improving Yemen's intelligence services or bilaterally by sharing information and technology. U.S. intelligence services help prevent acts of terrorism on American soil. Through ISR, the U.S. can capture top level al-Qaeda members, reducing al-Qaeda's expertise and effectiveness. Collecting actionable intelligence in Yemen requires the strategy and knowledge of the region, actors, local terrain, and issues. The bilateral approach will require other Western powers and support from the Yemeni government and neighbors, including cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

Yemen is the largest global recipient of the DOD's budget allocation, receiving \$252.6 million per fiscal year.³⁶⁶ Military aid includes \$38 million in 2010 towards Yemen's Air Force with a single CASA CN-235, an airplane used for carrying Special Forces into raids. Further, the DOD earmarked \$35 million to "tactical assistance" of Yemen's Special Forces counterterrorism division. The U.S. has more than doubled its allocation to Yemen in the past year, recognizing Yemen's importance in the fight against al-Qaeda. Foreign military funding throughout 2010 totaled \$155.3 million, while totaling \$67 million in 2009.^{367,368} Within USAID, foreign military

funding requests tripled to \$35 million, up from \$12.5 million in 2010.³⁶⁹ USAID to Yemen has doubled to \$106.6 million in 2011 from \$58 million in 2010.

In continuing with its foreign military funding, the U.S. will be sending money towards a corrupt government by funding and propping up Yemeni military. The Yemeni government is already distrusted and disliked by its people. For this reason, propping up the President will appear to the Yemeni people that President Saleh is a puppet for the United States. President Saleh is very cautious about the balance between U.S. ally for money and support and alienating his people from a pro-American regime. Past corruption included abuses by security forces and misallocation of the funds towards the fight against secession and rebel groups. Further, large-scale insistence on counter-terrorism objectives will backfire through al-Qaeda's anti-Western propaganda campaign, increasing support for al-Qaeda. If international donors, including the U.S., continue to only focus on the threat of AQAP in Yemen, at the expense of the other major issues in the country, it will only cause the Yemeni government to prolong the conflict to continue to receive financial assistance.

The U.S. should work with the Yemeni population by incentivizing local tribes in order to obtain information or use in psychological warfare. Effectively, persuaded tribes help to root out and delegitimize al-Qaeda from their territory.³⁷⁰ Local tribes can also function as intelligence sources. Funding would be minimal compared to the overall Defense Department's monetary aid allocation to Yemen. By working with top level officials and bottom level Yemeni tribes, the U.S. would avoid fueling anti-American sentiment within the region.

Military force, at times, may be necessary to defend the country or to preserve broader peace and security.³⁷¹ The U.S. must avoid direct military involvement to defeat al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen through an escalated use of U.S. troops. This would be the quickest way to defeat and dismantle al-Qaeda in Yemen, by allocating troops to be stationed in Yemen or Somalia, which would conduct operations against terrorist cells throughout Yemen's provinces. Ultimately, this could backfire for multiple reasons. Outside interference would help to delegitimize the already weak Yemeni and Somali TFG government. Further, an apparent invasion could boost AQAP recruitment and rally locals against the U.S. and the already unpopular central government. By invading, America would relive its mistakes of Afghanistan and Iraq by radicalizing and

militarizing the southern secessionist population and other local populations. U.S. forces would be spread too thin, reducing their effectiveness against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Finally, the popular clerics of Yemen reject foreign intervention, particularly at the cost of innocent lives, and would rally regional tribes to arms.³⁷²

The United States is allied with the government and people of Yemen in confronting al-Qaeda, committing to continuing the goal of security, economic and development assistance to Yemen. Yemen has an “open door on terrorism” policy in terms of intervention, meaning that President Ali Abdullah Saleh cautiously allows limited access by foreign troops.³⁷³ Since one U.S. goal is to prevent the deaths of Americans, the U.S. needs to work with these countries and develop their capability to fight al-Qaeda and maintain governance without American forces.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE THREAT FROM AL-QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQIM)

Al-Qaeda's presence in North Africa continues to present a threat to the U.S. Through its' support of organizations within weak states like Mali, Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco, al-Qaeda works to expand its' ideological reach. This exploitation is exacerbated by the fact that these states lack the sufficient technological, logistical and military capabilities to deter al-Qaeda's threat within their borders. Therefore, the role of the newly established U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), which provides military training and logistical support to African countries, will continue to play a fundamental role in foreign military training and intelligence gathering necessary to neutralize this regional threat from al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is primarily Algerian but stretches through the Sahel: Algeria, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Eritrea, Egypt and others. Al-Qaeda in Africa uses the porous borders in the region to move between countries and have even sent fighters to Iraq. Many fighters returning from Iraq use their skills in recruitment and warfare to encourage new recruits. These countries in West Africa are among the most impoverished in the world, most with a GDP per capita of less than \$5000. As a result, their militaries are poorly trained, poorly equipped, and unprepared to defend their own state or to conduct peacekeeping

missions. Al-Qaeda's violence has taken aim at tourists, residents, and security forces, extracting funding from tolling drug smugglers and traffickers as well as from ransom money.³⁷⁴

The U.S. policy for AFRICOM has been to sustain a security engagement with North African countries. AFRICOM's goal is to provide African armies an opportunity to partner with American defense forces in order to develop the country's peacekeeping capacity. Operation Flintlock, for example, trains Mali forces in patrolling, map reading, and marksmanship.³⁷⁵ This operation develops Mali defense capabilities to make their army more professional, capable of sustaining itself and thwarting militant organizations including al-Qaeda, drug traffickers, and warlords.

There is an effort underway between North African countries to combat al-Qaeda, using AFRICOM aid without direct implementation of U.S. armed forces. Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger have opened a joint military front to combat terrorism and trafficking across borders.³⁷⁶ In one instance, Mali did not object to Mauritania moving uninvited troops across the border to eradicate an al-Qaeda encampment.³⁷⁷ Many of the West African nations understand that the presence of al-Qaeda is a problem for regional security, though they lack the ability to effectively counter AQIM. This prioritizes Operation Enduring Freedom in scaling up AFRICOM forces to defeat al-Qaeda in Africa. Scaled up Special Forces operations could be highly effective and efficient, since al-Qaeda in the Maghreb number a few hundred operatives over a sparse territory in the Saharan desert. Corruption, lack of development and extent of the formal government within the vastness of the Sahara desert, as well as insufficient military capabilities, limit the effectiveness of African counterterrorism operations undertaken by these countries.

Long term efforts in West Africa may not be necessary as many of these countries have succeeded in unilateral counterterrorism operations, tapering the number of AQIM cells within West Africa. Large quantities of suspected al-Qaeda members have been killed or arrested, weapons seized, intelligence received and shared, border security improved, and threat of al-Qaeda reduced. The Moroccan government in January 2011, for example, arrested 27 people and dismantled a terrorist cell in Western Sahara, led by the local branch of AQIM.³⁷⁸ Algeria, leading the Maghreb in counterterrorism initiative with West Africa's largest military, urges the

removal of U.S. help and refuses the joint military exercises offered by AFRICOM forces.³⁷⁹ The countries consider AQIM a regional problem for West African countries alone.

The United States and its African partners have strong mutual interests such as promoting security and stability within Africa, maintaining oil and mining trade, and securing maritime trading zones for overall regional security and long-term advantage. For this reason, the U.S. must build partnerships with North African countries to respond to terrorism and check the expansion of al-Qaeda within the Islamic Maghreb.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In Yemen and Africa, the U.S. must balance its short-term needs of defeating al-Qaeda with its long-term needs of preventing failed states, enhancing development, and promoting cooperation. The U.S. should continue to build the capacity of foreign militaries while covertly targeting al-Qaeda in Yemen and North Africa. The U.S. should also work with these governments to help them increase legitimacy and governance through solving grievances and increasing their strength to counter the threat of al-Qaeda by themselves. To prevent acts of terrorism on American soil originating in Yemen and Africa, the US must expand the role of intelligence and counterterrorism forces. The U.S. must also be able to foresee where new threats will emerge.

- **Improve the capacity of foreign militaries to fight al-Qaeda.** A first option includes giving foreign military aid to Yemen and African countries in order to attain the capacity to better fight al-Qaeda in Africa and improve their own strength and legitimacy. This option includes programs designed to strengthen key relationships within Yemen, Algeria, Kenya, and Uganda and familiarize partners such as Mali, Mauritania, and the TFG with U.S. military techniques, tactics, and procedures they can employ to conduct counterterrorism. These programs enable foreign militaries in West Africa to use training and supplies they have received from America, like logistics, intelligence, communication, and de-mining capabilities to facilitate their ability to sustain counterterrorism operations independently.³⁸⁰ Further, this may include non-commissioned officer training, marksmanship, and policing capabilities, allowing for larger and more successful operations against al-Qaeda. In turn, this reduces their dependence on foreign

aid or assistance when conducting military operations against al-Qaeda. Foreign military funding in West Africa is working. For this reason, aid should continue through the AFRICOM program. These efforts allow the U.S. to focus on development, provide military training benefits, and help develop the humanitarian capacity of African countries.

- **Build trust with governments and local people.** The U.S. must be able to effectively work with the President of Yemen and leaders of African nations to deal with al-Qaeda multilaterally. The U.S. should simultaneously operate with the local tribes in ungoverned spaces to ensure al-Qaeda does not find legitimate spaces to operate or exploit local grievances. The U.S. must avoid propping up an unpopular government and stop any increasing anti-Americanism within the regions.
- **Expand intelligences to foresee emerging threats.** By subtly increasing covert action in the form of foreign military funding and special forces operations, the ability for AQAP to recruit, train, and operate in Yemen and North Africa will be hindered. Therefore, the U.S. should take on the minimalist approach towards military involvement. Expanded intelligence paired with an increase in drone strikes allow for a more effective and less damaging targeting of al-Qaeda. The U.S. should only pursue drone strikes when it is absolutely necessary. The U.S. overall approach should be quiet, sustained, and deliberate, focused on minimizing short-term threats and addressing long-term systemic challenges. The expanded role of Special Forces, here will allow covert, active operations in Yemen and North Africa.. The long term strategy should shy away from counterterrorism in order to not provoke a stronger al-Qaeda presence. America must also create incentives for the Yemeni government to remain accountable, stable, and capable of addressing their own issues.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE FINANCING OF AL-QAEDA

Written by: Joseph Corigliano

Since 9/11, the United States has succeeded in reducing al-Qaeda's funding within the U.S. financial system, but al-Qaeda has responded by utilizing the Islamic banking system and the international hawala network. Therefore, stricter terrorist financing laws, financial intelligence, and political will to prosecute financiers of al-Qaeda are still needed in the Gulf States. A primary source of al-Qaeda's funding comes from charities and individual benefactors in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and both countries lack the political will to treat al-Qaeda's financing as a priority. According to a classified government cable sent 12 December 2009 by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, Saudi donors represent, "the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide," whereas Kuwait serves as a strategic transit point for al-Qaeda's funds because Kuwait is the only Gulf State where terrorist financing is legal.³⁸¹ Since 2001, the U.S. has focused on designating al-Qaeda financiers and freezing assets, however, this method is no longer successful because al-Qaeda has responded by moving assets outside of the U.S.'s financial market. In response, the U.S. must pressure the Gulf States to adopt an intelligence strategy that focuses on implementing international counterterrorist finance controls (CTF) and anti-money laundering regulations (AML) to gain financial intelligence in order to track, trace and locate al-Qaeda operatives.

U.S. INTERESTS IN REDUCING AL-QAEDA'S FUNDING

One of the primary goals of the National Security Strategy is to

"[s]trengthen our own network of partners to disable al-Qa'ida's financial, human, and planning networks; disrupt terrorist operations before they mature; and address potential safe-havens before al-Qa'ida and its terrorist affiliates can take root. These efforts will focus on information-sharing, law enforcement cooperation, and establishing new practices to counter evolving adversaries."³⁸²

It is in the interest of the U.S. to combat al-Qaeda's financial resources and to establish foreign CTF and AML regulations in order to undermine the operational aspect of the organization, weaken the ability of al-Qaeda to spread its ideology and to gather preventative intelligence against al-Qaeda's operatives and financiers to disrupt their operations.

The U.S. benefits from the elimination of al-Qaeda's financial assets because the organization relies on the funding to carry out attacks and to spread its ideology. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, "the ability to raise and move the necessary money" is a requirement for a successful terrorist attack, therefore, if the U.S. can continue to eliminate sources of funding for the organization then the U.S. can also decrease the likelihood of an al-Qaeda sponsored terrorist attack.³⁸³ Furthermore, al-Qaeda's operations, such as: recruitment; training; and the spreading of propaganda requires significant financial assistance.

Financial intelligence is highly valued within the intelligence community in order to precisely locate al-Qaeda facilitators and operatives.³⁸⁴ Information obtained through human intelligence and communications intercepts requires vetting, but a financial transaction is concrete and irrefutable. With financial intelligence, investigators can follow a trail which often leads authorities to establish connections between terrorist organizations and facilitators.³⁸⁵ For example, in 2007 the British government published a case study that highlighted the importance of financial intelligence. An individual in the United Kingdom was suspected of providing bomb-making components to al-Qaeda by using multiple banking accounts. After an extensive investigation into the suspect's financial records, British authorities discovered that the suspect purchased high resolution maps of the target country by using multiple banking accounts, planned complex travel patterns, which ultimately arrived at the target country, and purchased components for improvised explosives over a three month period. The British authorities were able to notify the target country's government of the precise location of the al-Qaeda operative. The suspect was ultimately tracked and arrested in a bomb factory due to the analysis of financial intelligence.³⁸⁶

Following the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. focused on designating and detaining financiers of al-Qaeda and freezing their assets, but the strategy must shift towards an intelligence approach which focuses on regulating financial systems, intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing in order to

disrupt al-Qaeda and its affiliates.³⁸⁷ Although the U.S. has succeeded in designating al-Qaeda facilitators and freezing their assets, progress still needs to be made in establishing CTF and AML regimes in the Gulf States, specifically Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in order to monitor al-Qaeda's activities and deter further operations.

THE EFFORT TO DISRUPT AL-QAEDA'S FINANCIAL NETWORKS

Since 2001, the U.S. successfully used a number of measures to combat al-Qaeda financially. The International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) was implemented in order to block assets of individuals and organizations that supported al-Qaeda. The IEEPA helped the Office of Foreign Assets Control in the Department of Treasury to freeze the bank accounts of approximately 460 terrorist financiers and support networks between 2001 and 2007.³⁸⁸ The U.S. has benefited from the publicity that the IEEPA provides, but an over reliance on freezing assets detracts from the intelligence aspect of financial operations. Following the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. needed to quickly reduce al-Qaeda's funding to prevent attacks, but now, 10 years later, the U.S. must tactfully freeze assets and follow financial trails in order to gain financial intelligence.

The primary international organizations that are most influential in weakening al-Qaeda's financial networks are the Egmont Group and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The Egmont Group is an international organization that operates with countries around the world to establish Financial Intelligence Units (FIU), in order to combat money laundering and to combat the financing of terrorism. The organization was established in 1995 by a group of twenty countries led by the U.S. and Belgium.³⁸⁹ An FIU is a "central office that obtains financial report information, processes it in some way and then discloses it to an appropriate government authority in support of a national anti-money laundering effort."³⁹⁰ The FIU for the U.S. is the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). FinCEN has attempted to regulate the domestic U.S. financial network by requiring the U.S. financial community to report possible terrorist financing activities in Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs). According to John Pistole, the FBI's deputy director, 42 percent of FBI cases contain SARs or other financial reports.³⁹¹ Financial intelligence obtained through FIUs is critical in prosecuting terrorist suspects in addition to tracking and locating them. It is in the interest of the U.S. to establish FIU's in order to facilitate the sharing of critical financial intelligence.

Secondly, the FATF “sets and promotes best practices (put forward by the U.S. and the United Kingdom) in combating transnational financial crimes, and monitors the status of countries’ legislative and regulatory conformity with these standards.”³⁹² In 2001, the FATF added nine “special recommendations” to combat the financing of terrorism. The recommendations include criminalizing the financing of terrorism, freezing the assets of terrorists and protecting non-profit organizations from exploitation by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.³⁹³

AL-QAEDA’S FINANCIAL MODEL

According to a government cable sent 5 November 2008 from the U.S. embassy in Kuwait, al-Qaeda’s financial methods were discussed in a meeting between Deputy Treasury Secretary Robert Kimmitt and Kuwaiti Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al-Sabah. The Kuwait Prime Minister asked,

“How is Osama Bin Laden able to continue to finance his operations; how is he able to pay his supporters while hiding in Pakistan? Kimmitt explained that there was steady flow of illicit money to Pakistan, much of it from Gulf countries, through the banking system and charities. He said it could be tracked into Pakistan then it was converted into cash and moved through hawalas and by hand and that this movement was very difficult to track.”³⁹⁴

Al-Qaeda has established financial sources in the Gulf States and the organization has the means to move the funds covertly into Pakistan.

The flexibility of al-Qaeda’s financial network relies on three strengths: operational doctrine, knowledge of international financial systems, and funds from individual benefactors and Islamic charities.³⁹⁵

Al-Qaeda’s senior leaders understand the importance of maintaining the organization’s financial state in light of the increased pressure by the U.S. on al-Qaeda’s financial networks. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda had a finance committee and “Osama bin Laden reportedly paid close attention to financial matters.”³⁹⁶ In 2001, authorities seized an operational doctrine for al-Qaeda, known as the *Declaration of Jihad Against the Country’s Tyrants*. The manual recommended dividing operational funds into projects and investments, spending money only as needed, and

using proper protection while carrying large amounts of money. The manual warned against placing operational funds in one place and advised senior leaders not to tell other lower ranking members about the locations of the funds.³⁹⁷ According to seized documents from al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), operatives of the organization are required to submit forms explaining how al-Qaeda's money is used and managers are required to fill out financial statements that AQI audits.³⁹⁸ Al-Qaeda has responded after 9/11 by carefully managing its funds. Therefore, the U.S. must focus on financial intelligence to identify al-Qaeda's covert financial channels in order to gather accurate intelligence about the organization and to eliminate the organizations financial methods.

Osama bin Laden stated in an interview with a Pakistani newspaper that "al-Qaeda has three financial systems organized by bankers who are aware of the cracks inside the Western Financial System as they are aware of lines on their own hands."³⁹⁹ The three financial systems that bin Laden alluded to are the international banking system, Islamic financial system and the hawala network in the Middle East.⁴⁰⁰ As the U.S. has increased pressure in the international banking system al-Qaeda has adapted by utilizing the unregulated Islamic banking financial system in the Gulf States and the hawala system in the Middle East to transfer funds. The Islamic banking system serves as the "primary channel for investment and transactions into the Middle East."⁴⁰¹ Since Islamic banks operate under *sharia* law, most of the banks lack regulatory oversight compared to their western counterparts, and this enables al-Qaeda to utilize the banking system with a lower risk of detection. The hawala system is an "informal global network of individuals who transact cash for their clients, similar to a wiring service."⁴⁰² In this system, a phone call or fax is placed between two parties in order to instruct one of the individuals to send cash to the recipient via a single wire transfer.⁴⁰³ The hawala network has almost been impossible for the U.S. and the Gulf States to regulate since financial records are not kept in the transactions and many foreign workers rely on this method to send remittances. In 2000, foreign workers sent \$113 billion back to their home countries. By 2006, the figure exploded to \$255 billion.⁴⁰⁴ Due to the difficulties in monitoring the hawala network and foreign workers reliance on this system, there is little that the U.S. can do about the illicit funds being transferred through

"Al-Qaeda has adapted by utilizing the unregulated Islamic banking financial system in the Gulf States and the hawala system in the Middle East to transfer funds."

the hawala network. The U.S. must focus its efforts on combating al-Qaeda's funding from the source. If the U.S. can stem the flow of money flowing from the Gulf States, then the U.S. will significantly reduce al-Qaeda's budget. This requires close cooperation with the Gulf States, but Saudi Arabia and Kuwait continue to be the weakest links in the region.

A Treasury Department Secretary has noted that "al-Qaeda raises money in the Gulf by going to individual donors and through charities."⁴⁰⁵ The majority of the charities that the Treasury has fought to shut down are headquartered in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The charities include the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), the World Association of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the Muslim World League (MWL) and the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF).⁴⁰⁶ All of the charities have been cited by the U.S. either for knowingly diverting funds to al-Qaeda or unknowingly being victim to corrupt employees who divert funds to al-Qaeda. The current fight is ineffective because the organizations have historically reopened under new names and the U.S. has infuriated Muslims by black listing Middle Eastern charities. The U.S. must work with the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where a majority of the corrupt charities exist in order to successfully drain al-Qaeda's resources.

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

Currently, the fight against the financing of al-Qaeda requires CTF and AML measures in the Gulf States to regulate the financial market combined with sustained political will to ensure that these measures are enforced. A majority of the Gulf States, such as Bahrain, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, have taken steps to reduce al-Qaeda's funding but most of al-Qaeda's funding flows out of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait from corrupt charities and individual benefactors.⁴⁰⁷ In order to continue to reduce al-Qaeda's funding, the U.S. must pressure both countries to concentrate on eliminating the sources of al-Qaeda's funding. In the past, the U.S. has frozen assets of individuals and charities, but this method currently ineffective at reducing al-Qaeda's financial assets because many of the charities and individual benefactors are out of the jurisdiction of the U.S. Additionally, the U.S. has alienated Muslims by black listing charities in the Middle East. Therefore, the U.S. must pressure the Gulf countries to take the lead in managing corrupt charities and organizations that finance al-Qaeda. Furthermore, there is a need

to extend CTF and AML measures to the Gulf States in order to use intelligence gathered from these activities to further disrupt al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

SAUDI ARABIA

Several weeks after the 9/11 attacks U.S. authorities, aided by Bosnian Police, raided a Saudi based charity known as the Benevolence International Foundation in Sarajevo. Authorities uncovered information that linked BIF Executive Director Enaam Arnaout to Osama bin Laden. During the raid, authorities discovered a document referred to as the “Golden Chain” which listed al Qaeda’s twenty primary financial beneficiaries. Most of the individuals on the list were prominent Saudi businessmen.⁴⁰⁸ Saudi Arabia’s lax financial regulations and the absence of financial intelligence enabled Saudi businessmen to finance al-Qaeda without being detected. The funding received from these beneficiaries was vital in providing the necessary funds for the 9/11 attacks. In 1999 and 2000, the U.S. led two delegations to Riyadh to urge the Saudis to shut down charities that provide financial assistance to al-Qaeda. “Americans handed the Saudis a list of prominent charities, most based in the kingdom or in other Gulf countries, identified as sources of al-Qaeda funding. The Saudis, however, failed to act on the information.”⁴⁰⁹ Not only did the Saudis lack the financial intelligence and regulations to detect al-Qaeda financiers, but the government also lacked the political will to prosecute citizens accused of financing the organization. Since, the 9/11 attacks the Saudis have enacted a number of CTF and AML laws, but these measures have been enacted only to appease American officials. Most of the AML and CTF laws are not strictly enforced, and Saudi Arabia continues to be “a critical financial support base for al-Qaeda.”⁴¹⁰ In 2002 the Saudi government announced plans to establish a National Commission for Relief and Charitable Work (NCRCW) to oversee private Saudi charitable activities abroad, but the NCRCW is still not operational.⁴¹¹ On 6 February 2007, the difficulties of establishing the NCRCW were discussed in meetings between the U.S. President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Francis Townsend and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal. Saud said, “The SAG was leaning towards an organization that has direct responsibility for disbursing charitable funds. He noted that there are Islamic law implications, implying that these implications are slowing down the decision process but are important to consider carefully.”⁴¹² The U.S. must address the implications of Islamic law in order to establish

the NCRCW. This will require convincing the Saudi government to treat terrorist financing as priority. Currently, the Saudi's do not recognize the benefits in eliminating the sources of al-Qaeda's funding. For example, the leader of Saudi anti-terrorism activities, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef stated to special representative Richard Holbrooke in a May 2009 meeting that "if money wants to go [to terrorist causes], it will go."⁴¹³

The U.S. State Department's "Mission Performance Plans, for fiscal years 2006 to 2009 contains goals related to expanding the Saudi government's ability to counter terrorism and preventing financial support to extremists" but the goals have not been met and Saudi charities and benefactors continue to be important sources of funding for al-Qaeda.⁴¹⁴ Stuart Levey, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, stated that if he could cut off terrorist funding from any country, "it would be Saudi Arabia."⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, in September 2007 authorities raided an AQI safe house and seized documents which revealed that the group depended heavily on donations. Of the 23 fighters who contributed more than \$1,000, 22 were Saudi.⁴¹⁶ In February 2010, the American Embassy in Riyadh reported that "the Saudis remained almost completely dependent on the CIA for leads and direction on terrorist financing."⁴¹⁷ According to a U.S. Government Accountability Report, the Saudi Government set up a Financial Intelligence Unit to address the lack of Saudi financial intelligence known as the Saudi Arabia Financial Investigation Unit (SAFIU). Although Saudi Arabia appears to be combating al-Qaeda financially, a recent visit by U.S. Representative Sue Kelly revealed Saudi Arabia's inability to effectively stem the flow of terrorist funding. During her trip in 2005 to Riyadh, she toured the SAFIU and she said that "it consisted of an empty floor in a building under construction."⁴¹⁸ The Saudis believe that al-Qaeda's financing efforts do not pose a direct security threat to the nation, and therefore the government has not made serious strides in combating domestic financing to the organization.

The U.S. must convince Saudi Arabia to increase its CTF and AML measures in order to gain financial intelligence to accurately locate al-Qaeda operatives. Secondly, the U.S. must convince Saudi Arabia to establish the NCRCW to oversee all private Saudi charitable activities abroad.

KUWAIT

Financial support for al-Qaeda through charities and cash couriers in Kuwait continues to be a major source of funding for the organization.⁴¹⁹ Kuwait represents a key transit point for al-Qaeda's funds because terrorist financing is legal. In 2009, "several couriers were detained in Kuwait carrying tens of thousands of dollars destined for al-Qaeda."⁴²⁰ In 2008, the Treasury Department designated a Kuwaiti charity, the Revival Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), as a supporter of al-Qaeda. The Treasury Department concluded that "RIHS senior officials in Kuwait were aware that its funds were being diverted to terrorist groups."⁴²¹ According to a government cable sent by Secretary of State Clinton 12 December 2009, the problem is that the

"RIHS enjoys broad public support as a charitable entity. The GOK to date has not taken significant action to address or shut down RIHS's headquarters or its branches, which is consistent with the GOK tolerance of similar behavior by Kuwaiti citizens and organizations as long as the behavior occurs or is directed outside of Kuwait."⁴²²

Like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait lacks the political will to treat terrorist financing as a priority. For example, on 2 February 2009, the Kuwaiti Minister of Interior Shaykh Jaber al-Khalid al-Sabah explained that Kuwait is not interested in apprehending or detaining terrorist financiers. The government cable from the U.S. embassy in Kuwait cited that "[t]he Minister was as frank and pessimistic as ever when it came to the subject of apprehending and detaining terror financiers and facilitators under Kuwait's current legal and political framework. Persistent tensions between parliament, the PM and his cabinet make any changes unlikely any time soon."⁴²³

Al-Qaeda is able to easily cultivate funds in Kuwait because terrorist financing is legal in the country. On March 10, 2002 the Emir of Kuwait signed Law Number 35, which criminalized money laundering but, it did not cite terrorist financing as a crime.⁴²⁴ Furthermore, the current anti-money laundering law has been unable to be implemented due to inconsistencies in the law. Unlike most of the Gulf States Kuwait still does not have a formal FIU certified by the Egmont Group, therefore, the capabilities of the current FIU known as Kuwaiti Financial Inquiries Unit (KFIU) are largely unknown. The ability to share financial intelligence between the United States and Kuwait is difficult because the KFIU's access to information is limited due to the

inability to share information abroad without prior approval from the Office of Public Prosecution in Kuwait.⁴²⁵

Similarly to Saudi Arabia, Kuwaiti authorities do not view the financing of al-Qaeda as direct threat to the country, therefore, the United States must stress that the financial intelligence obtained through a formal FIU can be used to accurately locate al-Qaeda operatives which pose a national security threat. Secondly, the United States must convince Kuwait to criminalize terrorist financing and compel Kuwait to certify the KFIU with the Egmont Group in order to facilitate information sharing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Convince the Gulf States that financial intelligence obtained in counterterrorism financing measures can be used to track, trace and locate al-Qaeda operatives.** The U.S. must convince the Gulf States, specifically Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, that the financial intelligence gained in CTF and AML measures is vital to accurately locate al-Qaeda operatives and facilitators.
- **Pressure Saudi Arabia to establish the National Commission for Relief and Charitable Work to oversee all private Saudi charitable activities abroad.** Charities within Saudi Arabia continue to be a major source of funding for al-Qaeda. The U.S. must address the implications of Islamic law when crafting an organization to oversee charitable donations because this has been cited by Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal as the as the primary obstacle in establishing the NCRCW.
- **Demand that Kuwait criminalize terrorist financing.** Currently, terrorist financing is legal in Kuwait. The U.S. must pressure the county to criminalize terrorist financing in order to deter al-Qaeda from using Kuwait as a key transit point.

- **Compel Kuwait to certify the Kuwaiti Financial Inquiries Unit with the Egmont Group.** The KFIU must be forced to comply with standards of the Egmont Group. Incorporation into the Egmont group will facilitate financial intelligence sharing between the U.S. and Kuwait.

DETENTION AND INTERROGATION POLICY

Written by: Joelle Jackson

Detention and interrogation policy plays a central role in the fight against al-Qaeda. The U.S. gathers information from terrorist suspects by using detention and interrogation practices; however, there needs to be a balance between that interest and maintaining U.S. credibility in respect to international law. The use of Guantanamo Bay (GTMO) as a detention facility and extreme practices of interrogation seen in Army Field Manual 2-22.3 (FM)⁴²⁶, such as sleep and sensory deprivation, continue to produce faulty information and limited ally support⁴²⁷. Detention and interrogation policies have furthered al-Qaeda's message and undermined America's message war by shining a negative light on U.S. commitment to upholding human rights. Using short-term tactics, such as extreme detention and interrogation practices, and not abiding by international laws have had long-term effects on the fight against al-Qaeda. While not all policies have failed, it is important to recognize that aspects of the current detention and interrogation policy continue to damage and delegitimize U.S. efforts in effectively gathering intelligence.

The existence of GTMO, the use of unclear language and extreme practices in FM 2-22.3, and not giving detainees timely and fair trials in Article 3 courts all continue to undermine the fight against al-Qaeda. The application of these policies has created a backlash that hurts the U.S. strategy of apprehending terrorist suspects and gathering information from them. Jennifer Daskal, counsel to the National Security Division of the Department of Justice, states, "Virtually every Western ally of the United States has publicly called for Guantanamo's closure; and the operation of this prison camp has earned the United States condemnation by U.N. bodies and the European Parliament"⁴²⁸. Furthermore, Sarah Mendelson, director of the working group on Guantanamo and Detention and a Transatlantic Policy Dialogue on Human Rights and Counterterrorism, argues that, "Our enemies have achieved a propaganda windfall that enables

recruitment to violence⁴²⁹. Negative reactions by U.S. allies and other international actors should be addressed to allow for greater international information sharing and support.

The creation of a stronger, more unified body of international and domestic support has been challenged by the implementation of policies that allow for the continued operation of GTMO, trials of detainees only by Military Tribunals, and ineffective interrogation techniques. Waterboarding and cramped confinement at GTMO and Abu Ghraib have overstepped legal boundaries and foundations, feeding into al-Qaeda's message that the west is at war with Islam. Extreme interrogation tactics have been negated as producing unreliable information; however, FM 2-22.3 continues to allow for practices which are deemed acts of torture under international law⁴³⁰. The advancement of a stable and friendly international order in addition to protecting the U.S. from terrorist attacks hinges on re-examining detention and interrogation policies.

In order to make the current detention and interrogation policy strike a balance with U.S. goals, we must change our policies to make sure they strictly adhere to U.S. values. U.S. values, also stated in the 2010 National Security Strategy, can be outlined as: the prohibition of torture, adherence to international law to counter terrorism, balancing transparency and secrecy, and protection of civil liberties⁴³¹. It is critical that the U.S. synchronize its interests, values and needs. The U.S. needs to readjust the policies towards: closing GTMO, creating secure facilities for housing and transfer of terrorists in the U.S., the creation of a specialized terrorism court, and the reexamination of FM 2-22.3 with clearly defined practices that adhere to international law.

THE BUSH ERA: TIPPING THE BALANCE

When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, the emergence of new interrogation and detention methods became a large aspect of U.S. policy. James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen⁴³², both lead psychologists in the Air Force, reverse-engineered the Survival, Evasion Resistance and Escape program with the encouragement and aid of the CIA⁴³³. The SERE program, which originated after the Korean War,⁴³⁴ includes a variety of techniques used by U.S. forces to train soldiers how survive and withhold intelligence when captured by enemy forces. These techniques include: waterboarding, forced nudity, extreme temperatures, sexual and religious ridicule,

agonizing stress positions, and starvation-level rations⁴³⁵. Initially used as preparatory mechanisms for survival, the reverse-engineered SERE program was used for gathering information from detainees in the Global War on Terror; the result being, the creation of Enhanced Interrogation Techniques.

The news of Mitchell and Jessen's reverse-engineered SERE program spread and, "On December 2, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld granted JTF-GTMO 170's request to apply coercive tactics in interrogations...entitled JTF GTMO 'SERE' Interrogation Standard Operating Procedure"⁴³⁶. The techniques were: attention grasp, walling, facial hold, facial slap (insult slap), cramped confinement, wall standing, stress positions, sleep deprivation, insects placed in confinement box, and waterboarding⁴³⁷. In addition, the memos admit, "Each of the CIA's Enhanced Interrogation Techniques has been adapted from military SERE training, where the techniques have long been used on our own troops...techniques, however, are undeniably more extreme as applied in the CIA interrogation program"⁴³⁸. Unclassified Office of Legal Counsel memos substantiate, "...waterboarding was used with far greater frequency and intensity than advised, so much so that medical personnel could not confirm the safety of the detainees"⁴³⁹. The techniques administered, in some cases, produced false intelligence or coerced revelations of information. For example, author and reporter Katherine Eban, states, "The SERE methods it teaches are based off of Communist interrogation techniques that were never designed to get good information"⁴⁴⁰. The tactics used spread from CIA black sites, secret prisons outside of U.S. jurisdiction, where they were first applied, to Abu Ghraib in Iraq, and to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The application of Enhanced Interrogation Techniques served to perpetuate the fight against al-Qaeda, aiding their recruitment of angry radicals and adding to al-Qaeda's growth as an international network.

Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), arguably one of the most contentious issues surrounding Bush's detention and interrogation policies, has operated as a detainment facility since 2002. Under the advisement of the Justice Department, GTMO was considered outside U.S. legal jurisdiction⁴⁴¹. President Bush proclaimed that the detainees were not allowed protections asserted in the Geneva Conventions Common Article 3, which establishes specific rules to the treatment of prisoners of war, the sick, and the wounded⁴⁴². The conventions, "...passed in the wake of

World War II, are meant to guarantee minimum standards of protection for non-combatants and former combatants in war”⁴⁴³. Taking extensive legal advice from the Department of Justice, Bush found avenues by which he stripped detainees of all legal rights. By not adhering to international law, the U.S. has severely damaged its credibility and support from allies, inadvertently dissuading them from cooperating and giving the U.S. probable suspects. This resulted in distancing the U.S. from its goal and interests of security, values, and strengthening of international cooperation.

According to recently released Federal Bureau of Investigation reports, harsh and aggressive methods were commonly administered at GTMO by other non-FBI interrogators which served to further al-Qaeda’s retaliation⁴⁴⁴. The harsh and degrading treatments include: a U.S. Captain squatting over the Quran of a detainee, gagging a detainee with duct tape because he was chanting the Quran, sending a detainee to the hospital for hypothermia—induced after he refused to answer questions, another detainee was observed to have facial cuts and bandaged fingers, and a detainee was draped with an Israeli flag while being questioned⁴⁴⁵. The images of prisoners being shackled in stress positions, wearing goggles that prevent them from seeing, wearing headphones that prevent them from hearing, and images showing that their beards have been cut all entice al-Qaeda’s strategy and recruitment.

The Bush administration’s legal justifications and their reversal by the Supreme Court play a major role in understanding how the U.S. has lost credibility and effectiveness in intelligence gathering. Intentional ambiguity in Army Field Manual 2-22.3 left much to the discretion of military personnel. M. Cherif Bassiouni, Distinguished Research Professor of Law Emeritus, states that,

“The institutionalization of torture became a reality when President Bush authorized the establishment of Camp Delta at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, concluded that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to combatants seized in Afghanistan (Taliban and Al Qaeda), approved the use of “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques,” issued an Executive Order that bypassed Congress, and unilaterally established a new parallel system of justice to deal with “terrorists” through Military Commissions”⁴⁴⁶.

After three years of legalized harsh treatment of detainees, a series of court cases reversed the Bush administration's legal justifications. There were two landmark cases which began to unravel the arguments: *Rasul v. Bush* and *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*. In *Rasul v. Bush*, the Supreme Court found the Bush administration's argument that detainees were not entitled to statutory habeas corpus to be unfounded⁴⁴⁷. In *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, the Supreme Court, "...said its decision was based on both US military law and the Geneva Conventions – asserting for the first time in US law that the detainees were entitled to Geneva protections"⁴⁴⁸.

The previous legal justifications of the Bush administration have proven to undermine the U.S.'s strategy in directly fighting against al-Qaeda by not only appearing illegitimate internationally, but also domestically.

The continued use of harsh methods not only disrupts potential intelligence gathering, but they also shine a negative light on the U.S. We must reexamine our practices of information gathering to gain more credible information. For example, James Parco states, "...torture doesn't only produce more enemies to detain or kill; it produces extremely unreliable intelligence"⁴⁴⁹. As outlined in the previous Army Field Manual 34-52, "Experience indicates that the use of force is not necessary to gain the cooperation of sources for interrogation...it yields unreliable results, may damage subsequent collection efforts, and can induce the source to say whatever he thinks the interrogator wants to know"⁴⁵⁰. Col. Steven Kleinman, an Air Force reservist and experienced intelligence officer, argues that there is no empirical evidence which shows that harsh interrogation methods are effective⁴⁵¹.

In 2006, the Bush administration came out with the new Army Field Manual 2-22.3, a replacement for Field Manual 34-52 (1992), that removed the use of enhanced interrogation techniques. On the other hand, it left many approaches undefined and continued to allow various enhanced interrogation techniques to be performed under new names, leading to domestic outrage and international withdrawal of support⁴⁵². Dana Priest of the Washington Post states, "...in Europe, the reports set off a firestorm of criticism and government investigations in nearly every capital"⁴⁵³. The application

"The application of harsh interrogation techniques and their acknowledged illegality has continued to leave an imprint of ineffectiveness and unjust actions."

of harsh interrogation techniques and their acknowledged illegality has continued to leave an imprint of ineffectiveness and unjust actions which have negative implications for the current fight against al-Qaeda and its extremist ideology. The negative implications include: growth of al-Qaeda by infuriated radicals, diminished ally support due to a refusal to adhere to international law, and a growing disparity between the U.S.'s commitment to human rights and the authorization of harsh detention and interrogation practices. In addition, Brad Berenson, former associate White House Counsel under President George W. Bush states, "...the images coming out of Abu Ghraib and the practices which they depict and publicity about other similar practices at Guantanamo has imposed very substantial costs on the United States and on the United States war efforts"⁴⁵⁴. The challenges of the past have led to a new series of approaches by the Obama administration, some of which continue to harbor the use of harsh and ineffective interrogation techniques.

THE OBAMA APPROACH: A REVERSAL, AN APPLICATION, AND INDECISIVENESS

On 22 January 2009, President Obama used his executive power to end Bush era detention and interrogation policies and ordered a series of reversals to occur. The first order called for the closure of GTMO detention facilities "as soon as practicable" and no later than a year after the issued order⁴⁵⁵. Two years after the issued order, GTMO continues to exist as a detention and interrogation facility. The second order issued by President Obama was the removal of the CIA from the interrogation process in the direct fight against global insurgency⁴⁵⁶. For the most part, this order has been adhered to. In addition, the CIA was ordered to close all existing secret prisons, commonly known as black sites. The third order called for a re-examination of detention and interrogation policies, including trial and transfers, of suspected terrorists⁴⁵⁷. These three executive orders are particularly important for they signify the ineffectiveness of previous policies and they also highlight a return to U.S. values, leading the U.S. in a direction to better fight al-Qaeda.

Although President Obama made a large step in repairing the U.S. image by eliminating the legalized use of enhanced interrogation techniques, the current guide to detention and interrogation methods, Army Field Manual 2-22.3, still allows coercive and inhumane techniques

to be used. Many argue and prove that remnants of past techniques are ever-present in FM 2-22.3. For example, FM 2-22.3 allows for sleep deprivation, prolonged isolation, sensory deprivation, and inducing fear and humiliation of prisoners⁴⁵⁸ under Appendix M of the Manual⁴⁵⁹. These practices are enabled under the approaches known as “Fear Up,” “Incentive,” and “Futility”⁴⁶⁰. Not only are these methods damaging in trying to receive maximum actionable intelligence, but there is little evidence to substantiate that these practices are more effective than other, non-coercive and humane techniques. Stephen Rickard, the Director of the Washington Office of the Open Society Institute and writer for the Huffington Post wrote, “Language in the old [1992 Army Field] Manual clearly banned wall standing and other stress positions...[it] called sleep deprivation “torture”...it doesn’t flatly ban assaults... [it] does not ban using water or cramped confinement”⁴⁶¹. Rickard describes how under the auspices of a “new” FM, abuses that existed in the old FM were not explicitly banned and others which cited abusive methods were deleted.

The FM 2-22.3 has become the official guidebook for conducting detention and interrogation, yet it continues to use language that does not explicitly ban abusive techniques and it continues to leave particular techniques undefined. For example, FM 2-22.3 states, “Care should be taken to protect the detainee from exposure to: excessive noise, excessive dampness, excessive or inadequate heat, light, or ventilation, inadequate bedding and blankets, interrogation activity leadership will periodically monitor the application of this technique”⁴⁶². The inability to state in explicit terms the definitions of “excessive” or “inadequate” enable persons with authority to interpret those meanings however they see fit. The inadequate application of FM 2-22.3 as the official guide to military interrogation and detention practices has challenged U.S. goals and interests in the direct fight against al-Qaeda, damaging our ability to gather reliable intelligence from detainees, to treat them appropriately as to not entice radicals into joining al-Qaeda, and to receive much needed ally and domestic support.

There are advantages to creating an institution that combines aspects of both Article 3 courts and military tribunals. For instance, convictions in federal courts must be unanimous while military tribunals can convict on a two-thirds majority; different rules of evidence apply, with lower standards for admission in military tribunals; defendants are not guaranteed the right to appeal

convictions in military tribunals; civilian trials must be open to the public, while military tribunals can be held in private⁴⁶³. Furthermore, there lies a broad spectrum of people who become detainees; many are suspected members of al-Qaeda and others are world-renowned operatives. Matthew Waxman, an expert on international criminal courts and tribunals, states, “The success of France’s counterterrorism efforts is sometimes credited in part to its development of a specialized, centralized terrorism court”⁴⁶⁴. The creation of an all-encompassing body of judicial experts, who periodically review cases of indefinitely detained suspects, would legitimize the U.S. efforts in disrupting terrorist plots⁴⁶⁵. The need for an institution that can manage the wide range of suspects and subject detainees to the rule of law, including high-value detainees, is necessary and as demonstrated by France, can work.

Additionally, the U.S. should continue its use of special interrogation teams. When President Obama came into office, he created special enforcement and intelligence teams to facilitate the interrogations of suspects abroad and within the U.S.⁴⁶⁶. The High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) is headed by the F.B.I. which deploys Mobile Interrogation Teams⁴⁶⁷. The teams are, “composed of law enforcement, the Department of Defense, and Intelligence Community”⁴⁶⁸. The HIG program produced “valuable intelligence to investigators” from Faisal Shahzad, the suspect charged with the attempted bombing of New York’s Time Square in May 2010⁴⁶⁹. The furthered use of HIG teams will aid the U.S. in gathering information to better protect the U.S. from terrorist attacks.

The Obama administration, criticized for its inability to make firm and tangible solutions regarding controversial issues, has had to deal with a bigger and more complex al-Qaeda network. President Obama’s unfulfilled promise of closing GTMO as a detention facility, the issues surrounding military commissions, where to place current detainees, and many more unanswered questions and issues continue to plague the U.S.’s ability to directly fight the increasing threat from al-Qaeda. John B. Bellinger III, former Legal Adviser to the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, states, “On balance, Guantanamo does the American people more harm than good. It has come to symbolize abuse of Muslim prisoners and serves as a powerful recruiting tool for al-Qaeda. It also undermines vital counterterrorism cooperation from our Western allies, who view the prison as inconsistent with their own and U.S. values”⁴⁷⁰.

Consequences have occurred due to the Obama administrations failing to provide solid solutions to these large and crucial problems regarding: the continued existence of GTMO as a detention facility; practicing interrogation methods serve to enforce al-Qaeda's message, while indecisiveness on behalf of the Obama administration continues to block ally support and information sharing, and the inadequate application of FM 2-22.3 as the official interrogation and detention guidebook continues to deteriorate our ability to obtain crucial and cooperative information from suspects and from international allies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Close GTMO immediately.** If GTMO is not closed, a continuous rise in recruitment for al-Qaeda is more than likely, for it serves as a reminder of discrimination against Muslims. Loss of domestic and allied support will follow, loss of U.S. image will retract viability of the U.S. as a hegemonic power, and finally the U.S. will continue to waste extensive finances in ineffectual information gathering strategies performed at GTMO. GTMO should be subjected to the rule of law⁴⁷¹. By allowing GTMO to continue to exist, the U.S. is not adhering to the values, interests, and goals stated in the 2010 National Security Strategy; therefore, the consequences and implications of keeping GTMO open as a detention facility far outweighs the benefits of closing it.
- **Implement a clear and concise plan for the removal and transfer of detainees from GTMO.** President Obama should challenge the restrictions placed in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011⁴⁷². Although President Obama recently signed the Act, which blocks his ability to negotiate and plan for the removal, transfer, and overall closure of GTMO, he acknowledged that the ban is a major challenge to U.S. national security interests⁴⁷³. By opting to not challenge these restrictions, President Obama recognizes their continued undercutting of U.S. interests and values.
- **Conduct trials of detainees on U.S. soil before specialized terrorism courts.** President Obama reacted to the ban regarding detainee trials outlined in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011 by recognizing that it undermines the U.S.'s counterinsurgency

efforts⁴⁷⁴. Objectively prosecuting terrorist suspects in a specialized terrorism court will not only balance U.S. interests and goals but it also offers for more thorough and introspective reviews of the cases.

- **Re-examine and specify the Army Field Manual 2-22.3.** Better definitions of approaches, stated in explicit terms with firmly stated action to be taken if broken, should be inserted in the FM 2-22.3. A negative effect of this option is precisely that—all protocols are explicitly stated. This allows al-Qaeda operatives to train members not to succumb to specific techniques. As a positive effect, the opportunity to build long-term capacities for effective human intelligence gathering will be possible through not only non-coercive means, but through more international information sharing. Matthew Alexander, a former Air Force interrogator, recommends the implementation of relationship or confidence-building approaches used by FBI and other interrogators and maintains their high levels of effectiveness⁴⁷⁵. The continued use of the HIG program supplemented by the reexamination of FM 2-22.3, with the incorporation of techniques offered by experienced interrogators along with explicit definitions, is a viable option and will aid the U.S. in its goal of receiving maximum reliable intelligence by internationally recognized means.
- **Align detention and interrogation methods with international law.** Make detention and interrogation methods comply with international law. Although President Obama made significant changes and revocations of laws passed by President Bush, there still remains ambiguity and non-compliance with current practices in regards to international law, continuing to repel allies from intelligence sharing. In reexamining counterterrorism approaches and assumptions, the U.S. should display its commitment to adjust the errors and mistakes made in the past.

COMBATING AL-QAEDA'S THREAT AT HOME

Written by: Alexander Bezovics

THE FAILURE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

In the case of 9/11, the American government failed to serve its people. A myriad of failures, from transportation security to intelligence gathering and sharing, proved woefully inadequate to address al-Qaeda's plot. The 9/11 Commission did not identify one agency or individual that was primarily to blame, but rather, identified a chain of mistakes made on the part of government.⁴⁷⁶ Many of these mistakes have since been addressed, but at the time, airport security measures were comparatively poor, focused on checked baggage instead of on individuals themselves, and were unable to locate multi-tools with folding knives on the hijackers' person. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) protocols were unable to efficiently respond to the hijacking.⁴⁷⁷ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) did not identify and act against a plot before it was completed, due to inadequate sharing of information and an underestimation of the danger al-Qaeda posed.⁴⁷⁸ An overarching concept cited by the 9/11 Commission Report that contributed to al-Qaeda's success on 9/11 was a "failure of imagination" on part of American officials to identify the attack and stop it before it occurred.⁴⁷⁹

The failures of 9/11 proved that national security and homeland security policy needed a drastic overhaul. Many needed changes came in the next several years, as the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT or Patriot) Act was signed, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was formed, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was formed.

RESTRUCTURING THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The most immediate response taken by the government in the wake of 9/11 was the passing and signing of the Patriot Act in October 2001, with the purpose of deterring acts of terrorism and punishing the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks through an unprecedented expansion of law enforcement and state powers.⁴⁸⁰

The primary features of the Act were an increase in authority given to intelligence, security, and law enforcement entities to investigate and prevent terrorism, a reduction in restrictions on government surveillance, an increase in measures to combat the financing of terrorism, a consolidation of immigration authority, and increased penalties against convicted terror perpetrators.⁴⁸¹ The Patriot Act streamlined the issuance of warrants, permitting law enforcement to covertly read emails, tap phones, examine financial and medical records, and overall eased restrictions on the ability for the government to acquire domestic intelligence.⁴⁸²

President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act (HSA) in November of 2002, producing one of the largest reorganizations of the U.S. Federal government in recent memory, and provided the necessary structural changes for proper implementation of the Patriot Act. The HSA established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the newest cabinet position, the Secretary of Homeland Security. The new structures in the government placed a newfound emphasis on the importance of the security of the American society, considerably reforming: border protection, disaster response and preparedness, crisis management, and transportation security.

“The mission of the Office will be to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. The Office will coordinate the executive branch's efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States.”⁴⁸³

With the DHS's purpose being the protection of Americans at home, its' creation consolidated approximately 22 agencies into a new department. Most notably, DHS took over the U.S. Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, the TSA, the Federal Emergency

Management Agency, and the National Communications System. With homeland security under the organizational capacity of DHS, cross-agency communication increased significantly. One such example is the fact that U.S. Customs and Border Protection, previously under the Department of Treasury and Department of Justice, now coordinates directly with the TSA, as they function under the same authority.⁴⁸⁴

Although opponents of the Patriot Act have raised concerns that the Act gave the government far too much authority to invade the personal privacy of Americans and encroach on civil liberties,^{485,486} the results the Patriot Act has produced are undeniable. Since 2001, the United States has prevented over 30 plots, many with ties to extremist Islam.⁴⁸⁷ The easing on information sharing allowed American intelligence to identify terror plots in progress, and streamlined investigative process permitted law enforcement to disrupt cells.⁴⁸⁸ Former Attorney General John Ashcroft recognized the Patriot Act as instrumental in the arrest of 310 terror suspects, and President Obama supported has also supported its yearly reauthorization.⁴⁸⁹ The Patriot Act has become the keystone of American anti-terrorism policy.

“Since 2001, the United States has prevented over 30 plots, many with ties to extremist Islam.”

The DHS, which implemented Patriot Act, has come under fire for similar reasons as the Act. In addition, it has been labeled bureaucratic, accused of having a runaway budget and little regard for civil liberties and citizens. The fact that there has not been a major act of terror carried out within the United States since 2001 is by far more important when considering the success or usefulness of the restructuring. In addition, the department is barely ten years old, and will require time to become as well embedded and structurally efficient as other departments.

In addition to general security via the Patriot Act and DHS following the 9/11 attacks, considerable pressure was placed on the government to protect against the hijacking of airliners in the future. Transportation security was wholly reevaluated, both organizationally and functionally, resulting in the creation of the TSA.⁴⁹⁰

The TSA was signed into law with the 2001 Aviation and Transportation Security Act.⁴⁹¹ The intention of its formation was to fix the glaring problems with existing transportation security procedures, and to provide an efficient operational structure to protect American citizens as they

travel. With its creation, all security at airports in the United States became of the responsibility of the TSA, eventually leading to nation-wide TSA operated security screening. The TSA also assumed responsibility for the security of highways, ports, railroads, pipelines, buses, and mass transit systems, although a majority of its efforts have been in commercial aviation security.⁴⁹²

The TSA continues to build a reputable track record, despite some opposition to its practices. Since its inception, the number of individuals permitted on commercial aircraft with firearms, illicit substances, and dangerous objects has fallen, and the number of individuals flying with false identification has also dropped.⁴⁹³ Americans are flying safer than they were in 2001, as it is far more difficult for would-be hijackers to overpower flight crews and passengers. It is next to impossible that the 9/11 plot would succeed, were it attempted today. The TSA's success, however, has been overshadowed by claims from the public that screening procedures are excessive, intrusive, and violate civil liberties. The sources of these concerns—pat-downs, body scanning equipment, inconvenient or invasive searches—have been addressed in the past by the TSA, and the TSA has become one of the most sensitive organizations in the government to civil liberties.

THE CHANGING THREAT

While decisions undertaken by the government in the last nine years addressed the glaring security concerns that allowed the 9/11 attacks to occur, the threat al-Qaeda poses to the American people has been evolving as well. In the 1990s, al-Qaeda's operating strategy was to orchestrate terror plots across continents from safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁴⁹⁴ Due to the overwhelming American presence in the region, they lost the ability to do so effectively. While the U.S. constrained their operational capacity, the American presence in the Middle East and Asia encouraged the proliferation of al-Qaeda's ideology to new impressionable audiences.

The United States now faces a global network of al-Qaeda franchises, with an ideology that has been implanted even in the minds of some Americans. As much as the United States must be concerned with al-Qaeda operatives attacking our citizens abroad or coming to the United States to attack Americans, the United States has been increasingly forced to consider the possibility of attacks from within.

A 2010 report by the Rand Corporation identified 46 incidents of “domestic radicalization and recruitment to jihadist terrorism” in the last nine years.⁴⁹⁵ Although only approximately one out of every four plots had a direct or indirect connection to an al-Qaeda affiliate, each plot was motivated in some part by the al-Qaeda ideology. There has been an average of six cases of homegrown radicalization per year since 2001, an average which has been rising in the last few years,⁴⁹⁶ indicating that the threat from homegrown terrorism may be rising as a problem for the United States. In one such incident, a radicalized U.S. Army major committed a mass shooting in November 2009 in Texas.⁴⁹⁷

Homegrown radicalization is a growing threat to the United States and American interests. Al-Qaeda’s ideology has demonstrated its ability to spread within the minds of individuals living in the United States, to the great danger of the American people. Investigations into counter-radicalization indicate that a major contributing factor to the process is a feeling of alienation that individuals feel during the “pre-radicalization” phase. Patterns indicate that individuals who have become emotionally or psychologically vulnerable due to personal events are susceptible to accepting new world views, such as those espoused by al-Qaeda. What contributes to this is when individuals familiar with al-Qaeda’s preaching, have that world-view confirmed in something like discrimination against their religion.⁴⁹⁸ Such popular bigotry occurred during the popular uproar in the United States regarding the construction of a Muslim cultural center in Manhattan. The effect of such popular misunderstanding regarding Islam and fundamentalist movements is dangerous to the American people, because it incites domestic radicalization.⁴⁹⁹

The American Security Project has recommended that the United States embark on a nation-wide campaign to eliminate discrimination against Islam and Muslim people.⁵⁰⁰ The United States government has so far chosen to foster communication and build relationships with Muslim communities, and sought to avoid alienating infringements upon the civil liberties of Americans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When protecting the interests of the United States, maintaining homeland security, and successfully combatting al-Qaeda, the United States must take steps to address issues in a variety of key policy areas.

- **Continue to fund and support the TSA and DHS, re-authorize the USA PATRIOT Act, and encourage the implementation of measures that respect civil liberties.** The TSA and DHS have proven their worth to the American people by significantly limiting terror attacks in the last ten years. Both the TSA and DHS have proven to be important parts of American homeland security strategy. The Patriot Act has also helped the government stop a number of terror plots with its extended measures. The Patriot Act should continue to be re-authorized, and amended as necessary, as long as we continue to face a significant threat from al-Qaeda and like-minded organizations. Additionally, the TSA should accelerate the implementation of non-intrusive screening measures.
- **Create a counter-radicalization program under the Department of Homeland Security.** To limit antagonizing events and remarks originating from the United States toward Islam, and to prevent radicalization in the United States, a counter-radicalization program should be established with the following priorities: The coordination of relevant federal resources under the Department of Homeland Security to prevent homegrown radicalization; A purposeful effort to reduce or mitigate discrimination against Muslims and the effects of such discrimination; Increased Federal, State, and local communication with Muslim communities; The development of resources to assist law enforcement in prediction and prevention of radicalization. Counter-radicalization has never been codified by the United States, and with the recent rise in home-grown terrorist incidents, it would be more than appropriate to have it pursued by the Department of Homeland Security.
- **Pursue a “spotlight” policy, developing border policy around a need to focus resources on the highest risk areas and pursue infrastructure security as a national priority.** The bulk of discussion and disagreement on border protection is not so much in purpose, but in implementation. Border protection in the United States is an extensive effort, but cannot physically stop every individual with ill intent from crossing the massive expanse of American borders. Such perfection is nearly impossible and infeasible. Rather, the United States has a limited budget which it can allocate to the Department of Homeland Security for this purpose, with which it performs border

protection for the United States. Continuing to focus resources on high traffic border crossings, airports, shipping terminals, etc., maximizes results with taxpayer money.⁵⁰¹ American transportation networks, energy distribution networks, water management systems and communications structures must be considered when looking to minimize the damage al-Qaeda can do to the American people. The adoption of infrastructure resilience should be made a national priority. It may be necessary to incentivize infrastructure owners and communities to pursue resilience policies and improvements.⁵⁰²

- **Heighten regulation on private jet aircraft.** There is a lack of regulation on private aircraft, which can traverse no-fly zones in a matter of minutes, reaching most American landmarks faster than the response of a scrambled fighter jet. Crew vetting, as is done for commercial jets, would alleviate such a threat. Enhanced licenses, acquired following an in-depth screening process, should be required of pilots of all private jet aircraft in the United States.

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