WINNING THE UN-WAR: STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON TERRORISM

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Introduction

Because we use the shorthand phrase "war on terrorism" to describe the U.S. response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, it is easy to believe that this war – like all previous wars – can be won simply by killing the enemy, wearing them down until they are broken and capitulate. There are as many as 60,000 estimated al Qaeda members worldwide (based on the number of people thought to have trained in Afghanistan). Some 5,000 Afghan and foreign fighters were killed during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, including Osama bin Laden's right hand man, Mohammed Atef. Over 600 suspected al Qaeda have been captured and are currently detained at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. President Bush claims that two-thirds of al Qaeda's senior leadership have been captured or killed, including Abu Zubaydah, al Qaeda's director of operations, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, suspected mastermind of 9/11. Given that suicide terrorists are – by definition – undeterrable, it seems that we have no choice except to kill them before they kill us.

We call it a "war on terrorism," but a more correct description should be a "war against the terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001." It might

even be called the "un-war" because it is unlike any previous war we've fought. Our enemy does not wear uniforms or command military forces. They do not operate in or emanate from a specific geographic region. So U.S. forces with overwhelming military superiority and advanced technology will not be the appropriate instruments to wage this war. Precision guided smart bombs and cruise missiles are not smart enough to know who the enemy is and where they are. More importantly, Carl Von Clauswitz's seminal work *On War* (first published in 1832) is not a suitable manual for this war because he wrote about war between political leaders of nation states. The war on terrorism is not against another nation state and thus not "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."[2] Indeed, the war on terrorism is not "merely the continuation of policy by other means."[3]

This is a different kind of war that requires a different paradigm. We must shed conventional Western thinking conditioned by the European wars of the 18th and 19th centuries, two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Iraq. Instead of Clauswitz, the Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu's 2,300 year-old *The Art of War* is more applicable. "War" for Sun Tzu meant "conflict" as it occurs throughout all aspects of life. And the "art" of war is how to conquer without aggression: "Subduing the other's military without battle is the most skillful."[4] The lesson for the war on terrorism is not that aggression is unnecessary or should be avoided. In war, aggression is inevitable and this war is no different. But the weapons and skills for the un-war will be different. Special forces rather than armor or infantry divisions will be the norm. Unmanned aerial

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[2] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 75,
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[4] Sun Tzu, The Art of War, The Denma Translation, Boston: Shambala, 2002, p. 11.

vehicles patrolling expanses of desert or inaccessible mountain regions will often replace fighter pilots and foot soldiers. Arabic and Islam will be part of the syllabus for un-warriors.

Fighting the un-war requires a delicate balance. On the one hand, we must dismantle the al Qaeda terrorist network – operative by operative, cell by cell – working with countries around the world. At the same time, we must not engage in actions and policies that create sympathy and recruits for al Qaeda, *i.e.*, we must avoid needlessly giving Muslims reasons to hate America. The core issue is the question raised by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in his now famous October 2003 leaked memo: "Are we capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?"[5] With over a billion Muslims in the world, a strategy that focuses only on the former without addressing the latter is a losing strategy.

So what is a winning strategy?

In their book *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terrorism*, David Frum (former special assistant to President Bush) and Richard Perle (former chairman of the Defense Policy Board under Bush) contend that evil is at the root of terrorism and propose that the course of action for the United States in the war on terrorism is to eradicate evil. According to Frum and Perle: "[T]errorism remains the great evil of our time, and the war against this evil, our generation's great cause. We do not believe that

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[5] "Rumsfeld's war-on-terror memo," USAToday.com, October 22, 2003, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm, accessed on August 6, 2004.

Americans are fighting this evil to minimize it or to manage it. We believe they are fighting to win – to end this evil before it kills again and on a genocidal scale. This is no middle way for Americans: It is victory or holocaust."[6]

But terrorism is simply a tactic, not an enemy, and trying to eradicate it is a quixotic quest that does not focus on the actual group responsible for the September 11 attacks. It is exactly this kind of logic that led the Bush administration to wage an unecessary war against Iraq, even though the White House has conceded that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with 9/11 and its allegations of linkages between the former regime in Baghdad and al Qaeda are not conclusively unproven.

Instead of embarking on another Iraq (Frum and Perle specifically name North Korea, Iran, and Syria as targets and there is speculation that Iran would be the Bush administration's next target, especially after the 9/11 Commission Report noted that eight of the hijackers transited through Iran), a strategy for the war on terrorism must focus on the real threat to the United States: al Qaeda. Such a strategy would consist of three central elements, in ascending order of importance: homeland security against future terrorist attacks, dismantling and degrading the al Qaeda terrorist network, and a foreign policy that does not needlessly create new al Qaeda terrorists.

Homeland Security

A paramount responsibility of the federal government as set forth in the Constitution is to "provide for the common defense." The problem of trying to defend against terrorism, however, is best illustrated in a statement by the Irish Republican

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[6] David Frum and Richard Perle, An End To Evil: How To Win The War On Terror, New York: Random House, 2003, p. 9.

Army after a failed attempt to kill British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984: "Remember, we only have to be lucky once. You will have to be lucky always."[7] So homeland security starts with knowing that a perfect defense against terrorism is not possible.

Therefore, rather than trying to do the impossible or attempting to do everything and doing nothing well, homeland security must focus on those threats that pose the most catastrophic consequences and for which there are cost-effective defenses. First and foremost, that means not focusing on the last attack and disproportionately directing homeland security efforts against preventing the same thing from happening again. The March 2004 Madrid train bombings are proof enough that we should not be obsessed with hijacked airplanes. And even with airplanes, hijackings are not the only terrorist threat – shoulder-fired missiles are a real threat to commercial airliners and the effect of such a terrorist attack could be even more chilling for the airline industry and the economy than was September 11.

The first priority for homeland security must be to prevent terrorists from entering the country. This is the single most important thing that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) can do to reduce the likelihood of another terrorist attack. It is important to remember that none of the 19 hijackers sneaked into the country the way hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants come across the U.S.-Mexican border every year. Instead, they entered the United States via known points of legal entry, as millions of visitors to the United States do every year. Therefore, we need to put systems and

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[7] Quoted in Paul Brown, Colin Brown, Peter Hetherington, David Hearst, and Gareth Parry, "Cabinet survives IRA hotel blast," Guardian.com, October 13, 1984, http://www.guardian.co.uk/Thatcher/Story/0,2763,400986,00.html, accessed on August 6, 2004.

procedures in place so that known or suspected terrorists can be stopped at the border by the appropriate authorities. The most crucial aspect is ensuring that information from the appropriate agencies (*e.g.*, CIA, FBI, Interpol) about known or suspected terrorists is made directly available in real time to those people responsible for checking passports, visas, and other immigration information.

In theory, US-VISIT (Visa and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology) is supposed to be a program to screen for potential terrorists before they enter the country. In practice, however, it seems misdirected. When it was unveiled in January 2004, DHS secretary Tom Ridge claimed, "While processing more than 20,000 travelers..., US-VISIT has matched 21 hits on the FBI Criminal Watch List, including potential entrants with previous convictions for statutory rape, dangerous drugs, aggravated felonies, and several cases of visa fraud."[8] Instead of flagging garden variety criminals, what's really needed is a "Google search" at the borders where a person's name and passport number can be cross-referenced with U.S. and foreign terrorist databases. And biometric data screening – such as facial recognition technology to compare people to photographs in those databases – might be a useful technology to employ.

But in trying to make America "open to visitors but closed to terrorists"[9] it is also important not to create a system that indiscriminately singles out Muslims – being Muslim may be a criterion for suspected terrorists but it cannot be the only one. Such actions could inadvertently lend credence to the accusation that the United States is

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[8] Quoted in U.S. Department of State, "Homeland Security Chief Launches New Border Entry Procedures," January 5, 2004, http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2004/Jan/05-19561.html, accessed on August 6, 2004.
[9] *Ibid.*

waging a war against all Muslims, not al Qaeda terrorists. Even if such propagandist claims are not true, what matters is whether U.S. actions cause moderate Muslims to sympathize with al Qaeda's accusations against the United States.

In addition to dangerous people, homeland security must seek to prevent dangerous cargo from entering the United States. Although much of such an effort needs to be directed at weapons of mass destruction (WMD) since those weapons pose the greatest danger of catastrophic attack, it would be a mistake to be preoccupied only with WMD. For example, shoulder-fired missiles that are small enough to fit in a golf bag represent a real threat to commercial airliners and cannot be ignored. Ships, trains, and trucks carrying hazardous materials could be potential bombs (just as hijacked airplanes are potential missiles). The foiled Jordanian terrorist attack in April 2004 demonstrated how trucks laden with chemicals and explosives could be potent homemade chemical bombs. Of course, not every ship, train, or truck is a threat, and the need for security must be balanced by the need to ensure the free flow of goods, which is vital to the health of the U.S. economy. For example, in 2003, 37,000 trucks crossed the border between the United States and Canada and the two-way trade in goods and services between the two countries was more than $441 billion.

The rest of homeland security efforts must focus on protecting potential targets against terrorist attack – acknowledging that there are too many targets to protect and myriad ways in which they can be attacked. The reality is that it is impossible to protect every restaurant, coffeehouse, night club, and bus stop against terrorists. Instead, we must prioritize targets in terms of defending against catastrophic consequences. For example, nuclear power plants would be lucrative targets for terrorists, but it is not

simply a matter of providing increased security. The first concern is to safeguard nuclear material so that it can't be stolen for building a radiological weapon. Second, the plant itself must be protected to prevent terrorists from creating a disaster along the lines of Chernobyl. Similarly, security for chemical and biological facilities must be designed to prevent terrorists from creating an accident such as the 1984 Union Carbide chemical pesticide plant accident in Bhopal, India that killed more than 3,000 people.

Finally, homeland security officials must consider the civil liberties implications of proposed actions and policies. We must heed Benjamin Franklin's admonition that "they that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."[10] Before the government infringes on civil liberties, it must pass a litmus test: the government must demonstrate that any that any proposed new powers are essential, that they would be effective, and that there is no less invasive way to accomplish the same security goal.

Dismantling Al Qaeda

Although the United States must do everything it reasonably can to defend against future terrorist attacks, the war on terrorism cannot be fought solely as a defensive war. The United States must also aggressively seek to destroy the terrorists who would do us harm. As such, dismantling and degrading the al Qaeda terrorist network is the one part of U.S. strategy that involves killing or capturing the enemy. But

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[10] John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 16th edition, edited by Justin Kaplan, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992, p. 310.

we must first understand who the enemy is and what this so-called war is really all about. Not all Muslims are al Qaeda. Not all terrorists are al Qaeda terrorists. Not all Islamic fundamentalists are radical Islamists. In other words, we should not extend the terrorist threat beyond those who directly threaten the United States.

We must be able to understand and make these distinctions to be able to differentiate between those who pose a genuine threat, those who pose little or no threat, and those who might be helpful. For example, as part of the war on terrorism the U.S. military is assisting the Philippine government against the Abu Sayef guerillas. To be sure, some of the Abu Sayef may have graduated from al Qaeda's Afghanistan training camps and there are some known contacts between Abu Sayef and al Qaeda members. But the reality is that the Abu Sayef is a separatist group of financially motivated kidnappers rather than radical Islamists who threaten the United States.

Iran is ruled by a fundamentalist Islamic regime that calls the United States the "Great Satan," aspires to possess nuclear weapons, and supports anti-Israeli Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. But that does not necessarily make Iran an ally of al Qaeda and a target in the war on terrorism.

Part of the problem of using the phrase "war on terrorism" is that it implies the use of military force as a primary instrument of waging the war. But traditional military operations – such as Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al Qaeda – will be the exception rather than the rule. Al Qaeda is not an army that wears uniforms and operates in a specific geographic region. Rather, it is a loosely connected and decentralized network with cells and operatives in 60 countries around

the world. So President Bush is right: "we'll have to hunt them down one at a time."[11]

Although President Bush is also right to be skeptical about treating terrorism "as a crime, a problem to be solved mainly with law enforcement and indictments,"[12] the arduous task of dismantling and degrading the network will largely be the task of unprecedented international intelligence and law enforcement cooperation.   The reality is that to the extent the military is involved in the war on terrorism, it will be more the work of special forces in discrete operations against specific targets.

So where will the war against al Qaeda be fought?

First and foremost, the United States must get serious about mopping up the remnants of al Qaeda that fled Afghanistan to Pakistan – if for no other reason because Osama bin Laden and other key senior al Qaeda leaders are believed to be there. This means that the United States must take an active role in any operations. Successes against al Qaeda in Pakistan – the capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the September 11 attacks; Abu Zubaydah, operational coordinator for al Qaeda and responsible for recruiting and training; and Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, wanted in connection with the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and whose laptop computer provided information about possible attacks in the United States that resulted in raising the color-coded terrorist threat level to orange in August 2004 – have been the result of cooperative efforts between the Pakistanis and the United States. But when the Pakistanis are left to their own devices, they have largely come up empty-

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[11] Quoted in Associated Press, "Bush: Al Qaeda Captures Shows War On Terror Is Succeeding," FoxNews.com, March 4, 2003, http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,80149,00.html, accessed on August 6, 2004.
[12] George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," January 20, 2004, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-7.html, accessed on August 6, 2004.

handed. For example, Pakistani claims of having Ayman al-Zawahiri (bin Laden's right hand man) cornered and killing al Qaeda's spy chief Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah (one of the FBI's most wanted terrorists for his involvement in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya) in March 2004 were both false alarms.

With the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia is a logical place for al Qaeda both to blend in and recruit new followers. The October 2002 nightclub bombing in Bali and the August 2003 Jakarta Marriott bombing are both linked to al Qaeda via the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah. Eleven of the 19 hijackers who attacked the World Trade Center and Pentagon were Saudi nationals and the May 2003 car bombings in Riyadh have been attributed to al Qaeda. Suicide bombings in Casablanca may be linked to al Qaeda. Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen are weak states where al Qaeda has previously operated and could once again hide and reconstitute.

But al Qaeda's presence is not limited to Muslim countries or the Middle East and Africa. The March 2004 Madrid train bombings are attributed to Islamic militants sympathetic to al Qaeda. Subsequently, French authorities arrested 13 people connected to the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group accused of the Madrid attacks. An al Qaeda cell in Hamburg, Germany was allegedly involved in planning the 9/11 attacks. British authorities have arrested al Qaeda suspects on a number of different occassions. All these incidents point to al Qaeda operating in Europe, using the cover of peaceful and law-abiding Muslim populations (the Muslim populations in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom total more than 10 million people).

Finally, we must prudently assume that al Qaeda is operating in the United States (with an estimated Muslim population of 5-7 million people). Even Canada's

relatively small Muslim population (estimated at about 600,000) represents a way for al Qaeda to hide and perhaps gain access to the United States. So it is not simply a matter of "striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our country,"[13] as President Bush asserts.

Just as important as knowing where to hunt down al Qaeda is also understanding who the enemy is. According to Sun Tzu:

> One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be in danger in a hundred battles.
> One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes win, sometimes lose.
> One who does not know the enemy and does not know himself will be in danger in every battle.[14]

We tend to think of al Qaeda as an entity or structure – according to President Bush: "[I]f we're going to go after al Qaeda, let's have a comprehensive strategy as to how to deal with it, with that entity."[15]   But this is only a partial explanation and even our understanding is largely wrong because it is too easy to see al Qaeda as a centralized organization wholly dependent on the leadership for its existence and operation. Thus the general misbelief that all the nodes of the network are directly connected to the leadership and if the leadership is destroyed, then the organization can be collapsed. Hence hope springs eternal that the U.S.-Pakistani spring 2004 offensive will be a coup de grace by capturing or killing Osama bin Laden.

Certainly, al Qaeda has a leadership hierarchy. At the top is Osama bin Laden.

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[13] George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President at Bush-Cheney 2004 Luncheon," November 3, 2003, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031103-8.html, accessed on August 13, 2004.
[14] Sun Tzu, pp. 14-15.
[15] George W. Bush, "President Addresses the Nation in Prime Time Press Conference," April 13, 2004, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040413-20.html, accessed on August 13, 2004.

His most trusted lieutenant is Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian doctor who is the architect of al Qaeda's ideology and who has been indicted in the United States for his role in the U.S. embassy bombings in Africa in 1998. But if al Qaeda is not a centralized top-down hierarchical organization, then simply taking out the leadership will not be enough to destroy it or even degrade it so that it is less effective and able to attack the United States. Such an approach may work for regime change against rogue states ruled by dictators, but it would be a mistake to assume that it will yield the same results against al Qaeda. In fact, we already know that as elements of al Qaeda's leadership have either been captured or killed, new leaders have emerged.

The most remarkable example of the al Qaeda's resiliency and adaptability has been its ability to repeatedly replace the same key individual in the organization. In December 2001, Mohammed Atef, al Qaeda's No. 3 and chief of military operations, was killed by U.S. bombing in Afghanistan. Atef was replaced by Abu Zubaydah, who was subsequently captured in Pakistan in March 2002. The third No. 3, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was also captured in Pakistan a year later in a raid made famous by television and front page headlines featuring his picture, looking decidedly like John Belushi in National Lampoon's *Animal House*. The last known No. 3, Saif Al-Adel, is believed to be under arrest in Iran. If Al-Adel is no longer running al Qaeda's military operations, it is not publicly known who his successor might be.

According to one U.S. intelligence official: "The strength of the group is they don't need centralized command and control."[16] And without a single target (either an individual or part of the organization) within al Qaeda, according to a senior U.S. official:

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[16] Quoted in Susan Schmidt and Douglas Farah, "Al Qaeda's New Leaders," *Washington Post*, October 29, 2002; Page A1 .

"Now, instead of a large, fixed target we have little moving targets all over the world, all armed and all dangerous. It is a much more difficult war to fight this way."[17]

Thus, it is useful to visualize and conceptualize al Qaeda's structure as the honeycombs of a beehive – with the cells interconnected by multiple paths and able to be reconstructed if they are damaged or destroyed. As such, the task of dismantling the network will not be easy or quick – we should expect that it will take many years. Furthermore, we may not be able to destroy the network completely (*i.e.*, the proverbial question of: How do you know when you've destroyed the last cell?) and the best we can hope for may be degrading al Qaeda's capabilities so they do not represent a direct catastrophic threat to the United States.

But we must also understand that al Qaeda is more than just a terrorist organization, it is also an idea. Al Qaeda is representative of a radical brand of Islam, but what is underappreciated by most Americans – although largely understood by most foreign analysts – is that al Qaeda's real war is not primarily against America, but within the Muslim world. It is a struggle for the soul of Islam. Since the war is within the Muslim world (not the Muslim world vs. America), it may not be possible to win the war on terrorism in the traditional sense of winning and losing. But the United States could lose the war if by its policies and actions it creates the perception that the war on terrorism is being waged against all Muslims and polarizes the over one billion Muslims in the world to view America as the enemy.

And it is important to understand that al Qaeda's ideology has taken on a life of its own. What is unknown is the extent to which al Qaeda's radicalism has taken hold

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[17] Quoted in *ibid.*

throughout the Muslim world, but certainly the U.S. preoccupation with Iraq for more than three years after the September 11 attacks has given time and space for the cancer to spread, as well as a rallying cry to recruit more Muslims to al Qaeda's radical cause. According to Omar Bakri Mohammed, the London-based leader of the radical Islamic group al-Muhajiroun: "Al Qaeda is no longer a group. It's become a phenomenon of the Muslim world resisting the global crusade of the U.S. against Islam."[18] We know that al Qaeda has become a franchise of sorts, bringing other radical Islamic groups – such as Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia – into its fold. But it also now appears that a "reverse franchise" effect may be taking place. That is, other groups may conduct terrorist attacks citing sympathy to al Qaeda but without of any direct connection to or contact with al Qaeda (*e.g.*, planning, training, financing). The November 2003 car bombings in Turkey (the Abu Hafs al Masri Brigades and Great Eastern Islamic Raider's Front both claimed responsibility) and March 2004 train bombings in Spain (the Abu Hafs al Masri Brigades claimed responsibility, but Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group has been the primary target of the Spanish investigation) are signs of this phenomenon.

Foreign Policy

Understanding the al Qaeda threat also means challenging the conventional wisdom articulated by President Bush in the aftermath of September 11: "Why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber – a democratically elected government. They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech,

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[18] Quoted in Agence France Presse, "Madrid bombings are retaliation for Iraq, warns radical Muslim," March 12, 2004.

our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."[19] In other words, they hate us for "who we are."

To be sure, suicide terrorists who fly airplanes into buildings and kill thousands of innocent people do hate the United States. But it would be misleading to assume that people are driven to terrorism simply by such hatred. Throughout the world – even the Muslim world – there is admiration and appreciation for American accomplishments, culture, and values (including democracy and capitalism). But many of those same people hate U.S. policies. In other words, anti-Americanism is fueled more by "what we do" rather than "who we are," *i.e.*, our actions rather than our existence, which is supported by ample evidence in various polls (*e.g.*, Pew Research, Zogby International) conducted throughout the world.

More importantly, much of the anti-American resentment around the world – particularly the Islamic world – is the result of interventionist U.S. foreign policy. Such resentment breeds hatred, which becomes a steppingstone to violence, including terrorism. The obvious conclusion is that the United States needs to stop meddling in the internal affairs of other countries and regions, except when they directly threaten U.S. national security interests – *i.e.*, when the territorial integrity, national sovereignty, or liberty of the United States is at risk. Put another way: Afghanistan was a necessary intervention because Taliban regime supported and harbored al Qaeda, but Iraq was not.

The United States is in a unique geostrategic position – protected by two vast oceans on its flanks and bordered by friendly nations to the north and south – with no

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[19] George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," September 20, 2001, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html, accessed on August 13, 2004.

superpower rival and relatively secure from conventional military attack. Therefore, the guiding principle for U.S. foreign policy must be: if core U.S. national security interests – the American homeland, population, and way of life – are not threatened, the United States can minimize the risks of terrorism by being less involved in the problems of other countries. This is especially true in the Muslim world, most notably the Middle East. Accordingly, the United States must: withdraw troops from Iraq, disengage from its cozy relationship with Saudi Arabia, develop a more neutral approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and re-calibrate its relationships with authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world, including Egypt, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan.

Iraq

Whatever one thought of the wisdom of invading Iraq and the threat posed by Saddam Hussein (which is certainly debatable), this much should be clear now: Iraq is not a threat to U.S. national security. The threats inside Iraq are to the U.S.-led military occupation, not to the United States itself. For example, Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi army are resisting an occupying force and an Iraqi government seen as collaborating with a foreign power and not representative of the Iraqi people. Jordanian Abu al-Zarqawi – thought to be responsible for most of the terrorist attacks in Iraq – is leading a radical Islamic Kurdish separatist movement. Although the latter has alleged links to al Qaeda, the reality is that both are not threats that would travel thousands of miles to attack the United States.

Therefore, the United States should withdraw its forces as expeditiously as possible. In leaving, the United States should only have one requirement: do not

support or harbor al Qaeda terrorists who would attack the America (some might also add develop weapons of mass destruction). But the longer the United States stays in a futile quest to shape the outcome, the more new enemies we will make instead of dealing with the real enemy: al Qaeda. According to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll in April 2004, 57 percent of Iraqis wanted U.S. forces to leave Iraq immediately (a Coalition Provisional Authority poll showed 86 percent wanted U.S. forces to leave immediately or when a new government was elected) and 54 percent thought attacks on U.S. forces were justified. This is the basis for al Qaeda to opportunistically use the U.S. presence in Iraq to stir up anti-American sentiment in the region and throughout the Muslim world, just as bin Laden did with U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the United States must be willing to live with the outcome in Iraq. Creating and Iraqi democracy may be a noble cause, but U.S. security does not depend on such an outcome. Even a non-democratic Iraqi government does not necessarily have to be hostile to the United States. In the words of one Iraqi: "We thank the Americans for getting rid of Saddam's regime, but now Iraq must be run by Iraqis."[20] But to prevent that gratitude from turning to resentment and hostility, the United States must have the wisdom to leave as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the United States runs the risk of reliving its experience in Lebanon in the 1980s or, worse yet, an American version of the Soviet experience in Afghanistan – Arabs and Muslims from the region could flock to Iraq to expel the American infidel and the United States could be bogged down in Iraq for years.

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[20] Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Unelected Mayor Rallies Supporters Against Marines," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2003, p. A1.

Saudi Arabia

There is only one reason that Saudi Arabia is treated as a close U.S. ally: oil. The popular myth is that the United States is dependent on Saudi oil, hence the need for a close relationship. But nearly half of the oil imported into the United States comes from North and South America. Further underscoring the misconception of U.S. dependence on Saudi and Middle East oil is the fact that less than 20% of U.S.-imported oil comes from the Persian Gulf.

Even more important than the percentage of oil imported by the United States is the fact the oil is a fungible world commodity, which means that Saudi Arabia is not in a position to wield oil as a weapon against the United States. With no other source of revenue, the Saudis must sell their oil. Once the oil is sold on the world market, the Saudis cannot control where it ends up. Thus, the realities of the economics of oil do not justify the U.S. obsession with Saudi oil and the need for a special relationship with the regime in Riyadh to secure access to the oil.

But there is another good reason for the United States to recalibrate its relationship Saudi Arabia. U.S. support of the authoritarian Saudi monarchy (especially while extolling the virtues of democracy) is not only hypocritical but is a source of fuel for radical Islamists to direct their rage – and violence – against the United States. Instead the United States should adopt a more realistic and pragmatic approach to U.S.-Saudi relations. We need the Saudis to root out al Qaeda in their country and to crackdown on the funding of madrassas that churn out radical Islamists. But that does not justify a close and cozy relationship. As the 9/11 Commission stated: "Cooperation with Saudi Arabia against Islamist terrorism is very much in the U.S. interest." But

friendship between the two countries cannot be "unconditional."[21]

Israel

It is certainly understandable that the United States would want to support Israel, a liberal democracy in the Middle East. But the reality is that Israeli security is not a U.S. national security problem. And making Israel a component of U.S. national security strategy provides motivation for recruiting terrorists and increases the risk of terrorist attack against the United States.

Because Islamic terrorists site the plight of the Palestinians as a grievance, many people believe the terrorist threat to America can by alleviated by resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But this presumes that the United States is indeed capable of forcing both sides to reach a peace settlement. The reality is that until both the Israelis and the Palestinians are serious about negotiating a peace settlement, U.S. security interests would be better served by not becoming involved in a process that has little chance of succeeding. If and when both parties reach a serious willingness to reach a peace, the U.S. role should be strictly limited and neutral. Rather than attempting to steer the course of a roadmap for peace (in which the United States will never be seen as an honest broker by the Palestinians), U.S. involvement should be much more modest and detached.

U.S. interests would be better served by cutting the more than $2 billion in annual aid to Israel (similarly, aid to the Palestinians should also be cut for the U.S. to be truly neutral) that many Palestinians believe is used to underwrite the military equipment the Israelis use for military operations in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as for financing

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[21] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004, p. 374.

the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. This would reduce the likelihood that radical Islamists would be motivated to attack the United States and avoid creating a situation where Israel's terrorist enemies have a reason to make America a target. (If cutting aid to Israel is not feasible for domestic political reasons, the United States should at least condition its assistance to Israel to ensure that actions taken by that government are not counterproductive to U.S. interests in the war on terrorism against al Qaeda.)

Authoritarian Regimes in the Muslim World

During the Cold War, the United States backed all manner of unsavory regimes simply because they claimed to be "anti-communist," which was often mistaken for being "pro-American." Such a strategy may sometimes have been necessary during the Cold War to contain the spread of Soviet influence, but adopting a similar approach and turning a blind eye otherwise corrupt and undemocratic regimes in the Muslim world is counterproductive to U.S. national security.

The United States gives Egypt over $2 billion a year in military and economic aid. But from the Arab and Muslim perspective, the United States is "supporting a regime that crushes dissenting voices and limits individual liberties because to do so suits Washington's interests."[22] While the likely alternative to the Mubarak regime – Islamists in control of the Egyptian parliament and government – would certainly not be in the best interests of the United States, that same regime's repressive actions which limit political freedoms are part of what creates Islamic radicalism – which is also not in the

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[22] Michael Slackman, "Egypt Sees U.S. Going Cairo's Way," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 2002, p. A4.

best interest of the United States.

In June 2004, President Bush accorded "non-major NATO ally" status on Pakistan for its support in the war on terrorism. To be sure, the United States needs the Musharaff government to continue to aggressively pursue al Qaeda, especially since Osama bin Laden and other top al Qaeda leaders are believed to have fled Afghanistan to Pakistan. But some of the tactics employed by the Pakistanis – for example, bulldozing homes and expelling Afghan refugees – may have little or nothing to do with rooting out al Qaeda (and more to do with Musharaff trying to exert authority over local areas traditionally outside the control of the central government), which could increase Islamic radicalism inside both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Like supporting Mubarak in Egypt, the United States may not have a better immediate option in Pakistan (especially if the likely alternative to Musharaff is radical Islamists with nuclear weapons). Nonetheless, U.S. policy towards Pakistan cannot ignore the risks associated with supporting the Musharaff regime. It is important to remember that Pakistan helped nurture the Taliban in Afghanistan and Mushraff has hailed A.Q. Kahn – the man responsible for selling nuclear secrets to North Korea, Iran, and Libya – as a national hero.

In Uzbekistan, the Karimov regime has maintained a totalitarian secular state that represses all dissent, including religious expression (religious political parties are banned and Muslims – who comprise 90 percent of the population – are allowed to pray only at government-sanctioned mosques). The United States needs to be concerned that Karimov might use combatting terrorism (such as the extremist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU, which is a separatist movement allegedly linked to al Qaeda) to

justify a broader and more far-reaching crackdown on Muslims who practice Islam beyond the state restructions.   The result could be that moderate Muslims in Uzbekistan, who are repressed by a regime supported by the United States, become more radicalized and sympathetic to al Qaeda's ideology.

Egypt, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan are just three examples, but they highlight the problems associated with U.S. support for countries without regard to whether their internal policies help fuel the Islamic radicalism that underpins the terrorist threat to the United States. The United States may not have any choice but to provide such support in the short term, but it should be narrowly focused, done only out of necessity, and of limited duration. The United States must avoid lapsing into a Cold War mindset – just as America funneled millions of dollars to authoritarian regimes around the world because they were considered "anti-communist," America should be wary about providing ongoing support to Muslim countries simply because they profess to be "anti-Islamist" or "anti-terrorist." History should not be ignored: when the United States supported undemocratic and unpopular regimes during the Cold War simply because they were friendly to us, and when those regimes were overthrown, the results were often virulently anti-American successor governments (*e.g.*, Iran and Nicaragua). Ultimately – and paradoxically – U.S. support for countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan could end up doing more to breed terrorism than to prevent it.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, we cannot build a perfect defense against every potential terrorist attack and it is unrealistic to believe that we can simply kill each and every al

Qaeda terrorist. So no matter how successful the United States is in homeland security and dismantling al Qaeda, it will be wasted time, effort, and money if U.S. foreign policy does not change. More than anything else, U.S. foreign policy is at the core of virulent anti-Americanism that is the basis for terrorism and is the key to stemming the tide of growing anti-American sentiment overseas – particularly within the Muslim world. If U.S. foreign policy does not change, then the pool of terrorist recruits will grow and the United States will continue to be a target. And while changing U.S. foreign policy may not guarantee victory in the war on terrorism, but not changing it will certainly spell defeat.