

**THE SERPENT IN OUR GARDEN:  
AL-QA'IDA AND THE LONG WAR**

**Colonel Brian M. Drinkwine**

**January 2009**

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This work is dedicated to the memory of two heroic and courageous men of which I had the great privilege of knowing. Both were caring but firm leaders, great husbands and fathers to their children, and men of god—their god. Each died in Iraq and their efforts have served to inspire me and many others. They paid the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for basic freedoms and in the war on terror. May they both rest in peace.

Shaykh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, founder of the Anbar Awakening Council—Killed on September 13, 2007.

U.S. Colonel Tom Felts, Team Leader Military Transition Team to 1-6th Iraqi Army Division—Killed on November 14, 2006.

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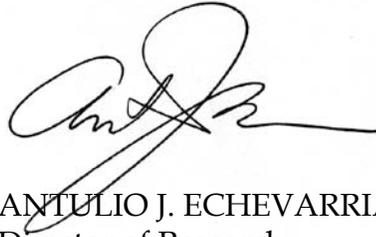
## CONTENTS

Preface .....	v
About the Author.....	vi
Abstract .....	vii
Introduction .....	1
Terrorism .....	2
Al-Qa’ida, Jihadis, Salafis, Islamists, and Islamic Fundamentalism .....	5
Ideology within Islam.....	6
Schools of Islam and Sources of Islamic Doctrine .....	9
<i>Sunni</i> Muslims .....	9
<i>Shi’a</i> Muslims .....	9
<i>Sufi</i> Muslims .....	9
Islamic Doctrine .....	9
Al-Qa’ida (The Base) and the Attacks of 9/11 .....	10
Present Day Al-Qa’ida and the Associated Movement (AQAM) .....	13
Al-Qa’ida’s Strategic Mission .....	14
Al-Qa’ida The Organization .....	15
Al-Qa’ida Strategy Towards the United States and Emerging Jihadi Doctrine.....	17
Al-Qa’ida Grand Strategy .....	17
Al-Qa’ida Strategy with Respect to the United States .....	18
Al-Qa’ida Emerging Doctrine and 4th-Generation Warfare (4GW) .....	19
The Strategy of Martyrdom Tactics (Suicide Bombers).....	20
Al-Qa’ida Strengths, Weaknesses – Vulnerabilities .....	22
Strengths .....	22
Al-Qa’ida Weaknesses – Vulnerabilities .....	27
Current U.S. Strategic Guidance, Policies, and Counterterrorism Strategies.....	31
Initiatives for Grand National Strategy and Campaign Planning in the War Against Al-Qa’ida, the Al-Qa’ida Associated Movement, Salafi-Jihadis and Islamist Extremist Terrorists.....	33
Grand National Strategy and Campaign Design-Planning .....	33
Strategic Objectives .....	35
Where to Fight .....	35
Reorganizing to Fight a Campaign against Al-Qa’ida, the Al-Qa’ida Associated Movement, and Islamist Terrorism .....	38
Mobilize the Government .....	38
Long-War Mindset .....	39
United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) .....	40
Bipartisan Support for the ILWCP and Enduring Foreign Policy .....	40
Join In and Fight In “The War of Ideas” .....	41
American Interests, Values, and the Democracy Agenda .....	41
ReBranding America .....	42
Defeat the Al-Qa’ida Ideology (Centripetal Force (COG) of AQAM) .....	42
Positive Themes to Enforce .....	44

Sustain the Offensive in the Ideological Fight with Al-Qa’ida and <i>Salafi</i> <i>Jihadis</i> .....	45
Identify and Exploit Strategic Opportunities .....	45
Dr. Fadl and the Recantation of Violence in the Name of Islam .....	45
Engage in a Dialogue with Islamic Theologians .....	46
Divulge and Exploit al-Qa’ida Marriages of Convenience .....	47
Challenge the Jihadi and His Beliefs .....	47
The 2004 Amman Message – Missed Opportunity .....	48
Steal, Read, Understand, and Counter the al-Qa’ida Playbook .....	48
Attack al-Qa’ida Weaknesses and Vulnerabilities .....	50
Targeting Priorities .....	51
Thoughts on Funding, Schools, and Prisons .....	55
Strategic Communications and Fighting in the 21st Century Information Environment .....	56
Strategic Themes .....	56
Strategic Messages.....	56
United States – Multifaceted Leader in the World .....	58
Use of Military Force .....	61
War in the 22nd Century and al-Qa’ida After Next .....	62
Conclusion .....	63
Endnotes .....	64

## PREFACE

The U.S. Army War College provides an excellent environment for selected military officers and government civilians to reflect on and use their career experience to explore a wide range of strategic issues. To assure that the research conducted by Army War College students is available to Army and Department of Defense leaders, the Strategic Studies Institute publishes selected papers in its “Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy” Series.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antulio J. Echevarria II', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II  
Director of Research  
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## ABSTRACT

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), caused Americans to realize that our sense of invincibility had been shattered. This paper will identify al-Qa'ida and *Salafi-Jihadists* as our enemy and will recommend new approaches to fighting terrorism. Colonel Brian Drinkwine will explore al-Qa'ida's organization, leaders, doctrine, and their radical ideologies. It is argued that the war we must fight is one against Islamist transnational actors who openly engage in terrorism or support terrorism. It will highlight that our current national and military strategies to combat terrorism are inadequate to take on an ideologically emboldened transnational foe. It is emphasized that we must refocus our efforts and prepare to fight a war of several generations (long war), and several initiatives will be recommended to include development of a cogent grand national strategy. These recommendations are intended to assist future planners in the development of a grand national strategy and an integrated long war campaign plan aimed directly at al-Qa'ida, the al-Qa'ida Associated Movement, and Islamist terrorists and executed through the application of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power by an unified interagency effort in coordination with our multinational partners, international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and regional security organizations.



# THE SERPENT IN OUR GARDEN: AL-QA'IDA AND THE LONG WAR

## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has existed for centuries, and governments have struggled to counter the violent extremist threat within their midst. In the immediate days following the unprovoked attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001 (9/11), President Bush and the majority of our prominent national leaders stressed the urgent need to go on the immediate offensive against the terrorists, deploy military forces, and promote democracy abroad. Now, going on 7 years in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), one can argue we have made credible tactical gains, but have fallen far short in defeating violent extremism as a threat to our way of life. Cooperation among the international community has resulted in genuine security improvements—particularly in disruption of terrorist organizations and finances, securing of borders with tighter security at points of entry, and the killing or capture of individuals of high value. We have seen greater cooperation among many countries and, internally within the United States, among the interagency organizations, to include some specific reforms. But despite these successes, significant challenges remain, and terror organizations like al-Qa'ida have adapted, are conducting transnational irregular warfare, and have grown stronger and more widespread than before the attacks of 9/11.<sup>1</sup> The most recent National Intelligence Estimate judges that the U.S. homeland will continue to face a persistent and evolving terrorist threat, mainly from Islamic terrorist groups and cells, and that al-Qa'ida will remain the most serious threat.<sup>2</sup> More important, the current administration's approach to the war on terror has created more terrorists than it has eliminated, and anti-American sentiment across the world and throughout the Middle East has skyrocketed, serving to fuel dissent and inspire Muslims to join or openly support terror groups. I believe we have failed to understand the true enemy who opposes us and the allure and appeal that they hold for the people of Islam worldwide. Our misguided efforts at engaging in a "war of ideas" have been clearly one-sided and not in our favor. Without a clear concept of what victory in a war on terror should look like, we will exhaust our resources, including our service men and women, in futility.

Our near enemy, al-Qa'ida, has been engaging in war for nearly 4 decades in order to achieve its overall strategic objective of a world-wide Islamic caliphate where the only law is *shar'ia* (Islamic law). Al-Qa'ida continues to evolve, has increased its global reach and appeal, and has inspired numerous other extremist groups while continuing to expand its worldwide network. Al-Qa'ida has been elevated to the status we would hold for an institution, not just the world's most feared terrorist group. But it is neither invincible nor invulnerable, and its members have stumbled momentarily more than once.

Today, our heroic military forces have fought tremendously and garnered numerous significant results and tactical victories on the operational fronts in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Philippines, and Northeast Africa (the Horn of Africa), some of which are clearly irreversible gains. We have also gained greater insight into this elusive organization and now understand some of the cracks or fissures within its foundation. This newly found understanding and comprehension by experts in the field of study of terrorism, as well as our national leaders, has enlightened us to the simple fact that we must prepare to wage a long war against the Al-Qa'ida Associated Movement (AQAM) and Islamist terrorism. This is a war that will incorporate all elements of national power in a cogent and executable strategy as well as build and leverage multinational partnerships. It is also a war where the United States is well resourced but, at present, ill-prepared to lead and to conduct.

This strategic research project will concentrate on terrorism past, present, and future and will thoroughly examine al-Qa'ida, the correct adversary, and how to counter it with the development

of a grand national strategy and long war approach. I will highlight al-Qa'ida's history and evolution over time; its structure, leaders, and doctrine; and its radically motivated ideology within the context of greater Islam, Political Islamists (Islamism), and *Sunni* fundamentalist ideologies. Al-Qa'ida is leveraging an ongoing internal struggle within Islam that is not about liberation, but about revival of the religion, and that is a part of a larger Islamic social movement. We are not at war with Islam, but will need to wage war against organizations that use terror as a primary means to achieve their desired ends and use Islam as justification for their actions. These organizations are a direct threat against our core national security interests as well as those of our friends and partners world-wide. I will argue that the war we must fight is not a global war against terrorism, but a war against select transnational actors or states that overtly or covertly support terrorism within the global arena context and through new forms of warfare. I will highlight that our current national and military strategies to combat terrorism are inadequate to take on an ideologically emboldened transnational foe, al-Qa'ida, and the movement it inspires. I will emphasize that we must reassess, reprioritize, and refocus our efforts and prepare to fight a war of several decades, or quite possibly several generations (long war). To better prepare to wage the long war, I will recommend several initiatives, to include development of a cogent grand national strategy against Islamist terror organizations that identifies attainable objectives (strategic ends), allowing us to clearly envision victory and the conditions under which that victory will be achieved. My recommendations will not eliminate terror in the world, but are intended to assist future strategic and operational planners and policymakers in the development of a much needed grand national strategy and a comprehensive and integrated long war campaign plan (ILWCP) aimed directly at al-Qa'ida, the AQAM, and Islamist terrorists (*jihadis*) and executed through the combined and coordinated application of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power supported by a cohesive, unified interagency effort in coordination with our multinational partners, various international governmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and regional security organizations.

## **TERRORISM**

Terrorism implies indiscriminate violence, panic, brutality, and evil. To label a group as a terrorist group or an individual as a terrorist, we seek to imply that the group or individual is immoral, or acts contrary to basic ethical principles. Terrorists attack governments that are legitimate, and they seek to undermine or destroy a political system or even a way of life.<sup>3</sup> It is no surprise that there are multiple definitions of terrorism, many complex and some simple. Defining terrorism has proven exceptionally difficult, thus policymakers, government agencies, and countries, as well as scholars, have no agreed-upon definition. For the purpose of this research project, the definition used throughout this paper is one derived from the works of Kushner, Claridge, and Hoffman, who approached terrorism from different perspectives, but between them address the key ingredients involved.

Terrorism involves political aims and motives. It is violent or threatens violence and is designed to generate fear in a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims of the violence. The violence is conducted by an identifiable organization. The violence involves a non-state actor or actors as either the perpetrator, the victim of the violence, or both. Finally, the acts of violence are designed to create power in situations in which power previously had been lacking (i.e., the violence attempts to enhance the power base of the organization undertaking the actions).<sup>4</sup>

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon or method of warfare and can be traced back to when medieval rulers hired assassins to murder political opponents. Terrorism is meant to deliberately create and exploit fear in order to attain political objectives and change. It is undeniably a form

of psychological warfare and is meant to instill fear and have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the target audience of immediate victims of an attack.<sup>5</sup> Governments and states have lived and dealt with terrorist groups for centuries, but with the evolution of science and technology in the past 50 years, to include commercial air travel, the new media explosion, and the Internet, new forms of terrorist activity have occurred that can instantaneously reach global audiences.<sup>6</sup> The modern news media and the World Wide Web remain the principal conduits of information for terrorist groups and acts, and both are vital components that facilitate terror groups' ability to affect their larger targeted audiences. As a result of the explosion of the World Wide Web, terrorist organizations have expanded their propaganda and information efforts and now control the communication process by determining content, context, and over which mediums their message is projected toward the multiple audiences they desire to influence.<sup>7</sup> Modern day terrorists measure success not by the metrics of conventional warfare (body counts, amount of military assets destroyed, or geography seized) but, rather the amount of attention they have attracted to their cause and by the psychological impact and effects they hope to exert over the target audience.<sup>8</sup>

To effectively fight terror in the 21st century, we must first look back and understand how *modern terrorism* has evolved throughout history. UCLA professor David Rapoport describes four clear waves of **modern terror** throughout history and how certain technology improvements have fostered evolutionary change. In the 1880s, the "*Anarchist Wave*" appeared and lasted some 40 years. Its successor, the "*Anti-Colonial Wave*," began in the 1920s and then largely disappeared by the mid-1960s. The "*New Left Wave*" grew out of the late 1960s and dissipated in the 1990s, leaving a few terror groups still active in Sri Lanka, Spain, France, Peru, and Columbia. The fourth wave, the "*Religious Wave*," exploded onto the scene with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and if past precedent holds true, will have another 20 to 30 years to run its course before a fifth wave appears.<sup>9</sup> The *first wave* of modern terrorism began in the late 19th century, largely due to doctrine and technology and the transformation of communication and transportation patterns. America became directly involved with the *second wave* of modern terror as an outcome of failure in Vietnam. The effectiveness of the Vietcong against the American Goliath armed with a huge technological advantage inspired hope on the part of many of its anti-colonial adversaries that the West was vulnerable.<sup>10</sup> In the *third wave*, radicalism and nationalism were often combined. Groups like the American Weather Underground, Italian Red Brigades, French Action Directe, and Basque Separatists viewed themselves as leading the vanguard of violent political activism. Airline hijacking and embassy attacks, as well as high profile kidnappings (409 kidnappings – 951 hostages taken from 1968-82),<sup>11</sup> were the tactics of choice. As revolutionary terrorists were defeated in country after country and the *third wave* ebbed, the *fourth wave* exploded with the Iranian Revolution and fall of the Shah of Iran. Islam is the most important religion in this wave and, with the success of the overthrow of the Shah, inspired other Islamic terror movements in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Kuwait. Two important factors started with the *fourth wave*: the introduction of suicide bombing or self-martyrdom, introduced by Shiites in Lebanon, and an American military presence in the Middle East region. Assassinations and kidnapping persisted in the current wave of modern terror, but suicide bombing was the most radical and prolific tactic. Terror groups during this period focused primarily on large scale attacks on military and government installations.<sup>12</sup>

The European Union's (EU) Terrorism Working Party (TWP) systematically tracks and analyzes terror acts and groups across the member nations and presents its findings annually to the European Parliament. The TWP's categorization by major type of terrorist organization is widely accepted by other agencies when tracking terror acts back to groups and motivations. The four major groups of terrorist organizations are: (1) left-wing and anarchist groups, (2) right-wing groups, (3) Islamist terror groups, and (4) ethno-nationalist and separatist groups.<sup>13</sup> This research

project will focus primarily on the most dangerous group: Islamist terrorism, which is a clear and present danger to our national security and way of life.

Terrorist groups do not rise randomly; there must be motive and intent (political ends) as well as a common belief or ideology that binds together individuals who commit acts of terror. Over the past 40 years of research, a common theme suggests that terrorist attacks are a product of two primary elements, motivation and capabilities.<sup>14</sup> But a more comprehensive analysis must be undertaken, one that considers the ideologies and leaders-scholars that influence terrorist groups, as well as the socio-political dynamics of terrorist objectives and the social dynamics of the people they draw their support from, in order for researchers to clearly understand all the motivators of why terror groups come into being.

Poor living conditions and socioeconomic factors, as well as political repression, are often the motivation for individuals to join terror groups or cells, but they are not the only reasons. The Islamic based terror groups we face today have gained in number and capacity because of four major root causes:

(1) Political repression within Islamic governments that have close relationships with the United States.

(2) Lack of monetary financial sharing within Islamic states. The elites maintain the wealth; the masses are economically repressed.

(3) Resentment of the West due to the perceived exploitation of Islamic countries, primarily by the United States.

(4) The increasing credibility gap between Muslims (primarily in the Middle East) and the United States.

The majority of individuals and groups that become motivated to pursue terrorism do so because they envision and long for a future that they believe will not materialize unless they resort to violence. The perception of the United States as a primary adversary, us versus them, is an underlying theme that has given rise to anti-American sentiment and provided an incentive for Islamist-based terrorist groups. Islamist terrorism gained prominence and rose over other terror groups during the decline of leftist ideology as Islamists used their religion as the vehicle for dissent. The Soviet-Afghan War helped to stimulate and then elevate Islamist terrorism to the forefront in three major ways:

(1) The war provided skills and experience to Arabs and Afghan fighters who came to wage *jihad* (holy war).

(2) The ultimate network for extremism arose during this opportunity to wage war as *mujahidin* (holy warriors of God), against the Soviets (*jihadis* came to Afghanistan to fight).

(3) The lesson that violence can win, demonstrated by the defeat of the Soviet regime and the Afghan Najibullah regime, which fell in 1992.<sup>15</sup>

The ultimate victory of the Afghan *mujahidin*, aided by their Arab brothers who joined them in battle, and the 1979 Iranian revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini against the Shah of Iran, were symbolic victories that provided future *jihadis* the proof that weaker groups committed to a cause that was just could topple more powerful regimes despite overwhelming odds.<sup>16</sup>

Since the 9/11 attacks, the nature of Islamist terrorism has become increasingly varied and more complex. Islamist terror organizations are more secretive, compartmentalized, and difficult to comprehend as terrorism continues to evolve both as a tactic and a strategy. Military response has been marginally effective against today's terrorists, but may not be effective against tomorrow's. Western response to terrorism and the attacks of 9/11 has been reactive or event-driven, and we must progress towards a cogent campaign plan by utilizing an objectives-driven strategy in order to have a reasonable chance of winning. Effectiveness against terrorism cannot

be measured in terms of the numbers of terrorists killed or captured (as can be done in war and violent crime), but rather by our ability to counter the psychological impact and political effects.

Brian Michael Jenkins, noted terrorist scholar who has researched and written on terrorism since the late 1970s, makes the following observations in the new age of terrorism:

- Terrorism has become bloodier, more violent, and more lethal.
- Terrorist groups have developed new and innovative ways for financial support, thus becoming less dependent on state sponsors.
- New models of organization are evolving and continue to adapt.
- Terror campaigns are becoming more global, due to technology, the Internet, and globalization.
- Terrorists are effectively exploiting new communications technologies.<sup>17</sup>

Although his observations are relevant and important to analyze in order to determine trends; patterns; and, most important, vulnerabilities, they do not afford a looking glass for accurate prediction of future terrorist attacks. Looking back over the past 25 years, it is unlikely that we could have accurately predicted the current state of terror groups in the world today, or that the United States would be in the midst of waging a global war against terrorism. However, it is extraordinarily important that we comprehend how much more sophisticated terror groups will become and how local, regional, and transnational terror groups will achieve greater interconnectivity, thus achieving greater overall effects: a dynamic that is a direct result of the movement inspired by al-Qa'ida and its core leadership.

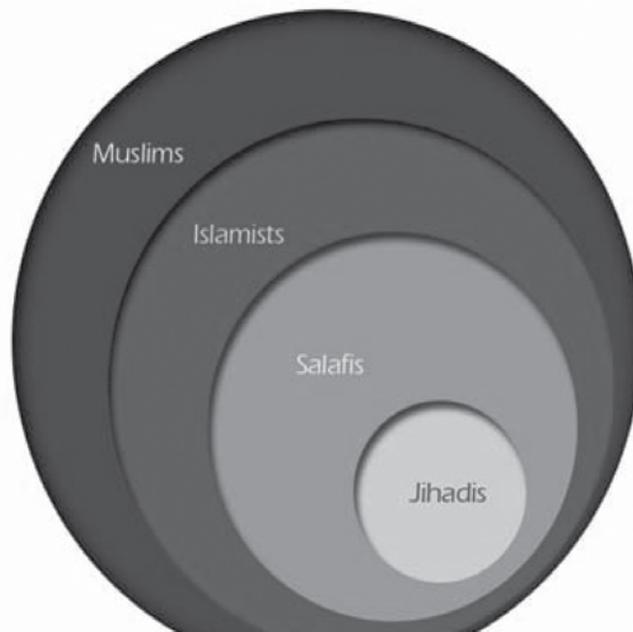
## **AL-QA'IDA, JIHADIS, SALAFIS, ISLAMISTS, AND ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM**

Al-Qa'ida is arguably the first multinational terrorist group in this century that also presents an apocalyptic threat to the world order. The AQAM is a global network of Islamist terrorist groups capable of mobilization and escalation of conflict to unimagined levels that has moved terrorism beyond an instrument of violent political activism to compete with and challenge Western power and influence in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup> Founded in 1987 by Palestine-Jordanian ideologue Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (mentor of Osama bin Laden), it evolved out of the remaining Arab fighters and veterans of the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Bin Laden and Azzam cofounded the *Maktab al Khidmat lil Mujahidin al-Arab* (MAK, or Afghan Service Bureau) in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1984. Together, they disseminated propaganda, raised funds, and recruited members through networks worldwide, to include the United States. The MAK housed, trained, financed, and fought the anti-Soviet Afghan *jihad*, ultimately succeeding in expelling Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Azzam envisioned the redirection of the *mujahidin* into an ideologically motivated group, empowered to come to the aid of Muslims worldwide.<sup>20</sup> Azzam, then the spiritual leader of international Islamists everywhere, established the founding guidelines for training al-Qa'ida, which he saw as a secretive, pious group and pioneering vanguard of holy warriors. As the Soviet *jihad* culminated with the defeat of the "evil Soviet empire," many fighters were zealously driven to precipitate radical change in certain Arab social and political societies. In order to engage successfully in conflicts involving Muslims, al-Qa'ida established ideological, financial, military, and political influence over several Islamist terror groups. As the group was establishing itself on an international level, Azzam was assassinated in Peshawar in November 1989. Many believe this was sanctioned and due to the influence of Ayman al-Zawahiri on Osama bin Laden. With Azzam out of the picture, this clearly ended the irrevocable split between bin Laden and his former mentor and professor, and bin Laden would be the driving influence behind the future path for al-Qa'ida. Azzam had advocated the traditional fundamentalist interpretation of the nature of *jihad*; the reclaiming of once Muslim lands from non-Muslim rulers in places like

Palestine and southern Spain. The militants who supported bin Laden advocated a much more radical approach, the violent overthrow across the Middle East of governments they claimed were “apostate” and repressive.<sup>21</sup> Osama bin Laden would soon emerge as the modern face of terror and leader of a much larger *jihadi* movement. It is now imperative to understand how al-Qa’ida fits within the larger continuum of *salafi-jihadi* and Islamist movements.

### Ideology within Islam.

The Combating Terror Center (CTC) at West Point, New York, provides a useful framework with which to better understand the *jihadi* movement within greater Islam. The CTC situates the *jihadi* movement within the various Muslim constituencies that *jihadi* leaders target to persuade and influence. The variety of constituencies is best envisioned as a series of nesting circles. (See Figure 1.)



**Figure 1. Jihadi Constituencies.**<sup>22</sup>

Each constituency responds to the leadership in the broader constituencies of which it is a part, but each also has its own internal ideologues or thinkers who are situated to best influence their base. The largest group is comprised of Muslims, those who are followers of the *Qur’an*, teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and the *Sunnah-Hadith* (source of Islamic doctrine).<sup>23</sup> This group includes the *Sunnis* (those who follow examples of the Prophet) and *Shi’as* (those who follow the Prophet and the descendants through his son-in-law, Ali), and the *Sufis* (mystics who formed brotherhoods and added idol worship to the practice of Islam). Muslims range from secularists to fundamentalists and form a group so enormous that no one or two scholars or ideologues shape opinion across the broader spectrum of individuals.<sup>24</sup>

Islamists, Muslims who want Islamic law (*shari’a*) to be the primary source of law and cultural identity within the state, comprise the next smaller group. They differ to some extent on the meaning of this idea and over how to achieve their goals. Among the *Sunnis* (largest majority of the world’s Islamic peoples), the Muslim Brotherhood is the most influential group, with Yusuf Qaradawi as their most influential spokesman.<sup>25</sup>

*Salafis* are *Sunni* Muslims who want to establish and govern Islamic states based solely on the first generation of interpretation of the teachings of the Prophet and the *Qu’ran*, and to abandon modern secular governments. However, *salafis* diverge with respect to the final form of the

desired states and the proper methods of achieving a unified collection of states (caliphate). The *salafi* movement is closest ideologically to the Puritan movement in America and England. The Saudi clerics are the most influential *salafis*.<sup>26</sup> The *salafi* movement draws its theology primarily from the *Hanbali* school of Islam. The movement has also attracted the more militant and radical of Islamists.

The Holy Warriors or *jihadis* are today's most recognized terrorists and are a part of the greater *salafi* movement. Jihadi thinkers draw legitimacy for their actions from the *salafist* ideology. The most influential present day thinkers that are influencing the *Salafi-jihadis* are:

(1) Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (Jordanian-Palestinian writer), best known as the spiritual mentor of Jordanian born terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Maqdisi is currently in the custody of the Jordanian government, but curiously runs and maintains the main al-Qa'ida Internet site (*Tawhed*) of pro terrorism *jihadist* ideological readings.<sup>27</sup> Through his writings on *Tawhed*, al-Maqdisi attempts to set the agenda for a variety of *mujahidin* groups to follow as they enter into *jihad*.

(2) Abu Basir al-Tartusi, another prolific modern scholar from Syria, who is slightly more moderate and lives in London. He has provided scholarly arguments to legitimize armed resistance against tyrannical rule, or the employment of *jihadi* tactics, while living in accordance with *shari'a* law.<sup>28</sup>

(3) Abu Qatada al-Filistini, born in 1960 in the West Bank, now living in England. Al-Filistini is an example of a cleric who encourages *jihad* against apostate rule in accordance with the *shari'a*. His writings contend that it is every Muslim's individual obligation to overthrow and expel any secular government from Muslim lands through violent means (bombings, sabotage, or terror) to advance the implementation of the *shari'a*. He is alleged to be a member of al-Qa'ida's *Fatwa* Committee, but is currently fighting extradition to Jordan.<sup>29</sup>

(4) 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, born in 1950 in Upper Egypt. After serving in Peshewar with other *jihadis*, he founded and became the first leader of al-jihad al-Islami fir Misr (Islamic *jihad* in Egypt), until Dr. Zawahiri took over in 1991. Indications exist that al-Zawahiri published some of al-Qadir's writings under his own name, and therefore likely split over this controversy. Al-Qadir authored "*Rislat al 'umda fi I'dad al-udda li'l-jihad fi sabil allah*," an important *jihad* manual which numerous terrorist cells have embraced.<sup>30</sup>

(5) Noted Saudi clerics who use *salafi* teachings in their mosques or in writings to inspire *jihad* among the Muslim communities. These individuals possess significant influence on *jihadi* organizations, and they are also in the best position to condemn violence and denounce *jihadi* organizations that revert to terror to achieve their aims. Denouncements of prominent *jihadis* by other prominent *jihadis* or ideologues is extremely damaging and often demoralizing.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to understand that al-Qa'ida draws upon both modern day and historical writers and scholars to fashion its ideological messages. The most influential medieval and modern day Muslim authors were largely scholars known for their rigid interpretations of the *Qu'ran*. *Jihadis* develop their militant interpretations of the *shari'a* and Islamist theology by narrowing their delineations of proper Islamic beliefs and practices.<sup>32</sup> Additional noteworthy thinkers who have influenced al-Qa'ida and *Salafi-jihadis* are:

(1) Ibn Taymiyya (born 1263 in Harran in present day Turkey, died 1328). Taymiyya is a most influential scholar of the late Hanbali school of Islam, and a widely prolific writer and often-cited polemic of the *salafi* movement who was extremely critical of the *Sufis*.<sup>33</sup> His writings are considered omnipotent in that they laid the foundations to justify fighting *jihad* against foreign invaders (an al-Qa'ida core theme).

(2) Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (born 1703 in Saudi Arabia, died 1792). Wahhab's writings were dedicated to the purification of Islam from the innovations or idolatry worships that had over time corrupted Islam from its inception – the struggle to return to the ways and beliefs of Islam's

“pious forbearers.” The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded upon the 18th century *Wahhabism* reform movement, and is the prominent form of Islam within the Kingdom and Qatar.

(3) Sayyid Qutb (born in Egypt 1906, died 1966). Having worked in education and studied in the United States, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood and began to articulate through writing a militant anti-modernism within the context of early Islamic interpretation. Qutb is credited with establishing the discourse for *Salafi-jihadi* doctrines. Qutb believed that, because of the lack of *shari'a* law, the Islamic world was no longer Muslim, and to restore Islam, a vanguard movement of pious Muslims was needed to rid the world of all non-Islamic influences, such as concepts like nationalism and socialism. Following his execution, he achieved martyrdom status, which served as a catalyst for widespread growth of the Muslim Brotherhood and other modern Islamist political movements. His narrow interpretation of a true “Islamic identity” helped establish *Takfir*, or excommunication.<sup>34</sup>

The scholars and ideologues mentioned above have played a pivotal role in the greater *jihadi* movement that is not widely understood and often overlooked by Western leaders when developing policy or strategies in the current war on terrorism. The writings of these scholars, which are their personal interpretations of the *Qu'ran* and *Sunnah*, are what are weaved into the stream of *jihadi* ideology and violent rhetoric that binds the core al-Qa'ida organization together, along with creating strategic links across the wider al-Qa'ida movement and among terror groups. Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri (born 1951 in Egypt), a former surgeon and current deputy and theoretician to bin Laden, is often portrayed as the current brains of the *jihadi* movement, but is a relatively insignificant theologian when compared to the aforementioned writers and ideologues. In December 2001, he published “*Knights under the Prophet's Banner*,” extolling al-Qa'ida's strategy, which draws from all of the above scholars' prominent works (most notably those of Qutb) and outlines a coherent framework of his interpretation of *jihad*. Both al-Zawahiri and bin Laden are atypical of modern terrorists in that they both come from educated and well-to-do families, demonstrating the ideological appeal of al-Qa'ida to all strata of Muslim society.<sup>35</sup>

The *jihadi* movement can be described as an informal network of *Sunni* Muslims who desire to overthrow secular states and replace them with theocracies.<sup>36</sup> Like *takfir*, other strands of Islamic history and theology have proven useful to *jihadi* groups. For example, *bay'a*, an oath of loyalty to Muhammad required of his followers, has often been used by *jihadis* to tighten alliances among different groups.<sup>37</sup> What the West has yet to fully comprehend is that the *jihadi* movement is not an aberration of Islam but is a movement integral and born within Islam. The modern-day *jihadi* movement has emerged from both historical conflict and recent conflicts of Islamists with secular Arab governments and reflects a very strong connection between radical Egyptian Islamism and al-Qa'ida. Islamists perceive that all Muslims have suffered at the expense of the Western industrialized world and actively voice that Islam is under siege, which fuels radical and fundamentalist ideology. While Islamic fundamentalism has been brewing for centuries, it will continue to thrive as long as Jerusalem is contested, Muslims perceive Islam as threatened by outsiders or “infidels” and allow radicals to preach violent rhetoric, brainwashing millions through mosques and *madrassas* worldwide. While a fundamentalist may also be labeled an Islamist, an Islamic fundamentalist is a “political individual” in search of a return to original Islam.<sup>38</sup>

At the core of many extremist Islamic fundamentalists we can find a transformation of hatred into idealized love towards the Prophet through Islam and the submission of self to the religion.<sup>39</sup> It is upon these individuals that al-Qa'ida preys, encouraging these Muslims to join the greater *jihadi* movement as holy warriors, often through self-martyrdom. But the *jihadis* are vulnerable with regards to the true meaning of *jihad* according to the *Qu'ran* and other Islamic doctrine, if America chooses to fight the war of ideas like a real war.

## SCHOOLS OF ISLAM AND SOURCES OF ISLAMIC DOCTRINE

Understanding the different schools and sects of Islam as well as the major sources of Islamic doctrine is important when developing effective counterstrategies to the radical and extremist ideologies of Islamic fundamentalists.

### **Sunni Muslims.**

*Sunni* Muslims follow *Shafi*, *Hanifa*, *Malik*, and *Hanbali* schools. *Sunnis* are approximately 83 percent of all Muslims and are considered to be main stream or traditionalists.

– *Maliki Madhab School*. Imam Malik was born in Medina, and this school of Sunni thought is most prevalent in North, Central, and West Africa.

– *Hanafa Madhab School*. Founded by Imam Abu Hanifa, out of Iraq. Most prominent in the Arab Middle East and South Asia.

– *Shafi'i Madhab School*. Imam Shafi'i inspired but was also taught by Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik. Prominent in East Africa.

– *Hanbal Madhab School*. Originated in Baghdad under Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who studied under Imam Shafi'i. Most prominent in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region. Closely mirrors *Wahhabi* doctrine.<sup>40</sup>

All four Sunni schools have numerous similarities, but differ in their finer interpretations, mainly due to each founder's individual interpretations of Islamic doctrine.

### **Shi'a Muslims.**

*Shi'a* Muslims follow the *Jafari* school of Islam and comprise only 15 percent of all Muslims. *Shi'as* split from the *Sunnis* over the dispute over who is the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. *Shi'as* strictly interpret the *Qu'ran*. They believe in the 12 Imams and that the 12th Imam has gone into hiding and will reappear in the future when certain conditions are met.<sup>41</sup>

### **Sufi Muslims.**

*Sufi* Muslims are a small minority, about 1 percent of all Muslims, who generally believe in the mystical interpretations within Islam, to include idolatry worship. Followers, formed in brotherhoods, believe God will speak to them directly through the practice of dance and mysticism.<sup>42</sup> One aim of all *Sufi's* as described in the *Qu'ran* is to undertake all things, because of ones motivation and love of God. A *Sufi* muslim follows specific rules of worship and should abandon a belief in self for the greater belief of unity with God.<sup>43</sup>

### **Islamic Doctrine.**

There are two major and two lesser sources of Islamic Doctrine that Muslim scholars, clerics, and people draw from. The major sources are the *Holy Qu'ran*, and the *Sunnah-Hadith* (a collection of sayings by the Prophet recorded after his death). The minor doctrinal works are *Qiyas*, or analogies within Islam, and *Ijma*, general consensus among clerics and religious scholars.<sup>44</sup> A final influencer is each Muslim's personal interpretation and understanding of all of the above.

Latter-day and modern-day *jihadi* writers have used Islamic doctrine in conjunction with select schools of *Sunni* Islam to develop their own radical ideologies and writings. An important learning point is that all emerging writers and authors who inspire today's *jihadis* have developed rhetoric either directly or indirectly from Islamic doctrine. This is one major reason why their rhetoric appeals to the larger Muslim audience. It is also why al-Qa'ida appeals to those who are disenchanted with their own situation and each individual's perception of the current state of Islam.

## AL-QA'IDA (THE BASE) AND THE ATTACKS OF 9/11

Even from the beginning in the aftermath of the *mujahidin* anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida has struggled and has been at war with itself. The struggle emerged out of two factions, one committed to manning and equipping an effective guerilla organization, and the other intent on establishing al-Qa'ida as a movement and global brand – a battle standard that could be taken up by any group involved in Islamic resistance.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, bin Laden prevailed as al-Qa'ida moved forward to become a globally recognized transnational terrorist entity. Notwithstanding, internal disagreements remained among the elites within his *Shura* Council over bin Laden's direction.

Osama bin Laden was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1957 to a wealthy and highly respected Arab family. His father was a favorite of the Saudi King Saud, and his family had close ties with the Saudi royal family. At the time of his father's death in a helicopter crash, it was estimated that Osama, then 11 years old, inherited between \$80 and \$300 million (U.S.).<sup>46</sup> It was during his time at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, where he studied under Professor Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, that he was introduced to Islamism.<sup>47</sup> Both he and Azzam would eventually leave Jeddah and travel to Peshawar and then fight in the Soviet-Afghan War. After the Soviets were defeated and withdrew, Arab fighters under the command of bin Laden took part in the siege of Jalalabad, which ultimately became a senseless bloodbath for his men and highlighted his tactical ineptness. The failure to win the battle of Jalalabad in 1989 set the stage for a war of attrition between the Afghan communist regime and the Arab and Afghan *mujahidin* fighters. It would take until April 1992, with the final fall of Kabul, before ultimate success by the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan was achieved.<sup>48</sup>

After Afghanistan, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia and was witness to Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Armed Forces invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Upon the occupation of Kuwait, the valuable Saudi oilfields were easily within easy striking distance of Iraqi units. Bin Laden offered King Fahd his *mujahidin* veterans to protect the country, but was refused, and the King opted to allow U.S. forces and other allies to deploy on Saudi land. Bin Laden was greatly angered, and after speaking out publicly, was quickly exiled to Sudan with his citizenship revoked. His hatred for his native country and its ruling elite would remain a constant fire within him for many years to come.

From 1992-96, the bin Laden-led al-Qa'ida "central" operated from Sudan under the protection of the radical Islamic regime in Khartoum, until massive international pressure on the Sudanese Government caused them to expel both al-Qa'ida and the Egyptian Islamic jihad (EIJ). But it was during this time that al-Qa'ida would first gain international recognition as a by-product of the failure of U.S. efforts in Somalia, where al-Qa'ida played a noteworthy role.

Somalia is one of the world's poorest and least developed countries, and much of the Somali people's suffering has been at their own hands. In 1969, General Mohammed Siad Barre seized power during a military coup, aligned himself with the Soviet bloc countries for military arms, and engendered a repressive and corrupt regime.<sup>49</sup> In the late 1980s, various clans arose and violently opposed the Barre regime, ultimately overthrowing it in 1991, plunging the country into

chaos. Fiefdoms arose from the ashes, rival warlords battled openly, and the country plummeted into a violent civil war. By late 1992, the war-torn country had become a huge humanitarian crisis, and unofficial reports indicated that close to 300,000 Somalis had died due to starvation, disease, or violence.<sup>50</sup> The United Nations (UN) Security Council authorized an emergency humanitarian mission in August 1992, but due to deteriorating security relief efforts, was hindered, and supplies were often plundered by warlords. To rescue this operation, President George H.W. Bush ordered the Pentagon on December 9, 1992, to undertake Operation RESTORE HOPE, a humanitarian mission designed to reinforce the UN efforts that would ultimately involve 25,000 U.S. service members.<sup>51</sup>

As Operation RESTORE HOPE alleviated famine conditions the newly-inaugurated Clinton administration expanded the short-term mission into a more expansive nation-building effort, and it was this policy decision that triggered broader unintended consequences. Unknown to American intelligence at the time, al-Qa'ida had a presence in Somalia and the Horn of Africa. In 1991-92, bin Laden ordered extremists to Somalia to help the Somali Islamic radical group *al-Ittihad al-Islamiya* (Islamic Unity) form an organized militia in preparation to seize control of the war-torn country. As Operation RESTORE HOPE was making the nightly news worldwide, bin Laden announced to those who were listening (Muslims in Arab states), that U.S. intervention in Somalia was an attempt at colonial occupation and a direct threat to Islam. Al-Qa'ida's first known terrorist attack against Americans occurred in the December 1992 bombing of a Yemeni hotel in Aden used by American soldiers traveling to Somalia to participate in Operation RESTORE HOPE.<sup>52</sup> By early 1993, bin Laden issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) calling upon all Somalis to attack American forces and eject them from their country. He also dispatched several of his well-trained cadre, including Mohammed Atef (planner for the 9/11 attacks), to train Somalis in military and terror tactics. The situation on the ground continued to worsen, and on June 5, 1993, during a routine inspection of weapons storage facilities, UN peacekeepers were attacked by militia under the control of warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid, resulting in 25 Pakistani soldiers killed and several wounded. Over the next 4 months, Aidid's followers would continue to conduct nightly mortar attacks into UN compounds, random sniper attacks, and direct assaults on compounds, as well as small scale ambushes in order to constantly harass the peacekeeping efforts.<sup>53</sup>

On June 6, one day after the attack on the Pakistanis, the UN swiftly passed National Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 837 (Somalia), condemning Aidid and his Somali National Alliance for the atrocity, and calling for the arrest and trial of those directly responsible.<sup>54</sup> The United States acted rapidly as well, and under the auspices of UNSCR 837 formed a Joint Task Force under the United States Special Operations Command (USSOC) to capture Aidid. Task Force Ranger, a joint force consisting of special operators from the Army, Navy, and Air Force special operations communities, deployed in August 2003 to Mogadishu airfield. But it was in the battle on October 3 during Operation GOTHIC SERPENT (the raid to capture Aidid at the Olympia Hotel) that al-Qa'ida would catapult itself to the forefront of terror.<sup>55</sup> For it was over a 48-hour period that al-Qa'ida-trained Somalis would shoot down U.S. Special Operations helicopters using a perfected technique of the Soviet-Afghan War (air burst modified rocket propelled grenades [RPGs]), killing 19 American warriors and wounding another 73, causing U.S. policymakers to quickly abandon the mission and order the immediate redeployment of forces.

The strategic second-order effects of the Battle of Mogadishu were extensive and ultimately set the tone for future foreign policy decisions by the Clinton administration. President Clinton would remain very reluctant to use military landpower for three future trouble spots (the Rwandan Civil War between the Tutsis and Hutus, the Bosnian War, and the Kosovo War), largely due to an overwhelming fear of losing American Soldiers in combat and not wanting to suffer a repeat of Somalia. Another direct outcome of the policy decision made by President Clinton to withdraw at the first sign of casualties was not lost on al-Qa'ida leaders. Osama bin Laden and other radical

Islamists would draw the conclusion that the way to drive the United States out of the Middle East was to kill American soldiers and use the media to achieve a greater psychological effect and influence the willpower of the American people. The perceived victory against the U.S. hyperpower in Somalia served as a catalyst to further inspire radical Islamist groups, as well as to increase anti-American sentiment among Islamic activists.

In the 1990s and on the heels of the Somalia conflict, al-Qa'ida increased its activities, to include deploying numerous Arab fighters to Bosnia to fight alongside their Muslim brothers.<sup>56</sup> Arab-Afghan *mujahidin* commanders arrived in Bosnia under the leadership of *Shaykh* Anwar Shaaban and *Amir* Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros. Using the Afghan war model, commanders built camps and aggressively recruited and focused on training in both military tactics and fundamentalist ideology.<sup>57</sup> It was during the *jihad* in Bosnia that Islamic charities and NGOs served a greater purpose by funneling unaccounted-for funding to support *jihadi* organizations. The roots of the modern al-Qa'ida financial network grew out of the Bosnian conflict, as wealthy Arab organizations provided significant funding, and terror financing networks appeared and grew roots.<sup>58</sup> Not only did the Arab *mujahidin* begin to win battles against Serb forces, but with the partnership of Muslim (Bosniak) and Croat forces and threat of NATO airpower, a favorable outcome was finally achieved. Even as the frontline against Serbian forces was closed upon the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, a new generation of battle-tested *mujahidin* with the seeds of hatred and violence was being unleashed. The implementation of the Dayton Accords caused the Arab *mujahidin* to either go underground or leave the Balkans, with many heading back to Afghanistan. It was also during this time in the late 1990s that terror attacks worldwide were increasing monumentally as new terror cells continued to emerge and grow quietly across Europe and the Middle East. It was not until late 2000, when President Clinton was briefed on the failed millennium terrorist plot, that the West truly understood the extensiveness of the underground Bosniak-Arab terrorist network.<sup>59</sup> The Bosnian War resulted in several significant advantages for al-Qa'ida. The first was that recruits could train and hide from foreign law enforcement. Second, detailed planning for future operations could occur outside of the targeted countries, and, finally, al-Qa'ida was one step closer to infiltrating and establishing terror networks throughout Western Europe. The war also provided the ultimate meeting ground for North African Islamic cells and Saudi, Egyptian, Algerian, and Yemeni foreign fighter-leaders, greatly enhancing and advancing the al-Qa'ida terror network. Bosnia would also serve as a historical battle cry and motivation for young Muslim recruits for future wars, to include the current *jihad* against the United States. For it was on the heels of the Bosnia War that bin Laden issued his next *fatwa*, openly declaring war against the United States.

Bin Laden's 1996 *fatwa* was first published in *Al Quds Al Arabi*, a London newspaper, in August 1996 as the "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places."<sup>60</sup> On the heels of the June 25, 1996, bombing of Khobar towers located in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, the *fatwa* was a clear declaration of al-Qa'ida interests and objectives and condemnation of U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia. The lengthy discourse described an Islam under siege, and portrayed Muslims on the defensive, with no other option but to defend their religion through a call-to-arms and by violence.

On February 23, 1998, al-Qa'ida issued its next *fatwa* signed by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, *emir* of the *jihad* group in Egypt, and cosigned by three other prominent Islamist leaders: Sheikh Mir Hamza, secretary of the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan*; Abu Yasir Rifa'l Ahmad Taha, head of the Egyptian Islamic Group; and Fazlur Rahman, *emir* of the *jihad* movement in Bangladesh.<sup>61</sup> Although the basic message was consistent with that of the previous *fatwa*, it summarily stated:

Under the banner of the "World Islamic Front for Combat Against Jews and Crusaders" (*al-Jabbah al-Islamiyya al-'Alamiyya li-Qital al-Yahud wal-Salibiyyin*) declaring the ruling to kill Americans and their allies both civilian and military, is the individual duty for every

Muslim who can fight in any country in order for their armies to move out of the lands of Islam and to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem) and the holy mosque (in Makka) from their grip. This being in the words of almighty Allah.<sup>62</sup>

Just 6 months later on August 7, al-Qa'ida would strike again killing hundreds of civilians in near simultaneous car-bomb explosions outside the U.S. embassies in the African capital cities of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya. The attacks were conducted by local members of the growing greater al-Qa'ida network of terrorist organizations. It was only after the African embassy attacks that the United States finally recognized al-Qa'ida as a viable and extremely capable adversary.<sup>63</sup> The United States responded to the attacks with cruise missile attacks deep into Afghanistan, near Khost, but failed to destroy or impede the Taliban and al-Qa'ida training camps nor achieve the desired effect of deterring future terrorist attacks against the United States.

Based on the administration's limited military response and failed U.S. foreign policy in Somalia and Vietnam, bin Laden summarily detected a monumental vulnerability in the United States. He also understood that changes in U.S. policy in both the Vietnam and Somalia conflicts were due to the overwhelming influence of the willpower of the American people: ultimately the center of gravity (CoG) of the United States. The significance of this insight is key; since terror historically targeted at intimidating and influencing a larger audience (people) would now become a mainstream of al-Qa'ida's philosophy toward planning future targets and a key component within their overarching strategy against the United States.

In 2000, bin Laden turned his attention to Yemen, his ancestral homeland, and planned for the next attack against U.S. military power and Navy warships. On October 20, 2000, al-Qa'ida-aligned suicide martyrs would pilot a bomb-laden skiff into the USS *Cole*, a Navy destroyer refueling in the port of Aden, resulting in the deaths of 17 sailors, while another 39 were wounded.<sup>64</sup> The success of this attack would further embolden and inspire al-Qa'ida and other Islamist terrorist groups. Bin Laden and his followers rejoiced in Afghanistan at the success of the USS *Cole* attack, and the silence that followed from the United States (no military response) was again perceived as weakness of America and its national leaders. Planning efforts for an even larger attack against the United States continued in earnest and in secret.

The attacks of 9/11 are well documented and in one day had an undisputable impact on the American psyche. America's sense of invulnerability and well-being was irreversibly shattered. Horrific images of the World Trade Center towers collapsing killing hundreds of innocent civilians will remain emblazoned in the minds of many, not only here in the homeland but also worldwide. For my generation, it was our day of infamy (much like the generation that experienced at first hand the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941). Al-Qa'ida had manifested itself as the premier violent *jihadist* movement, capable of global attack against the world's only remaining superpower (hyper-power). They had ceased being a utopian group of *mujahidin* attempting to destroy existing political order and had joined an exclusive club of apocalyptic terror groups where they were the sole member. What al-Qa'ida failed to predict was the ferocity of the U.S. response and its iron resolve in the wake of 9/11. They would soon find themselves and the Taliban bitterly embattled in Afghanistan and under fire. American forces fighting alongside Northern Alliance Afghan fighters would quickly rout the Taliban and al-Qa'ida-aligned fighters in Afghanistan and cause bin Laden and his core leadership cadre to take refuge in the remote areas of Northwestern Pakistan, where they remain well-hidden and shielded today.

## **PRESENT DAY AL-QA'IDA AND THE ASSOCIATED MOVEMENT (AQAM)**

To better understand the present-day al-Qa'ida Associated Movement (AQAM), we will

undertake an approach of analyzing the organization in “their own words and writings.” Coalition forces fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have uncovered an overabundance of documents authored by al-Qa’ida members that are stored and catalogued inside the Department of Defense (DoD) “Harmony Project.” Beginning in late 2005, the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point was allowed access to numerous unclassified documents within the Harmony database and proceeded to study al-Qa’ida texts, *jihadi* images, video clips, statements, and websites, as well as numerous other documents to include personal letters from AQAM senior leaders.<sup>65</sup> The Harmony Project, together with the proliferation of research over the past decade, has revealed much about the strategic objectives, ideology, and organizational structure of both al-Qa’ida and the AQAM—the greater networked terror movement. By studying our enemy through their own words, we can better understand them in order to effectively fight them. It is intrinsic to Al-Qa’idas future efforts to continue to engage their supporters through a variety of mediums, to include the internet and new media.

### **Al-Qa’ida’s Strategic Mission.**

The strategic mission of al-Qa’ida is through waging a *jihad* to: (1) eject Western influence (specifically the United States), out of Muslim states, especially the holy land (land of Mecca and Medina), (2) topple Arab and Muslim regimes that are corrupt and apostate (anti-Islamic), and (3) install fundamentalist Islamic rule through a single Muslim nation (Caliphate) that would strictly govern in accordance with the *shari’a* (Islamic law). The strategic vision voiced by Osama bin Laden and echoed by his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is that al-Qa’ida, or “*the base*,” will serve as the vanguard or *base* from which a greater worldwide global *jihad* will be fought.<sup>66</sup>

*Key Themes (Essential Tasks or General Goals).*

- Spread *jihad* throughout the Muslim nation.
- Prepare and train qualified Muslim personnel for *jihad*.
- Support, aid, and help local *jihadi* movements around the world.
- Coordinate international *jihad* movements so as to create a united global *jihad* movement.<sup>67</sup>

*General Policies.*

- Full adherence to the *shari’a* and the principles of all of our beliefs according to the *Qu’ran* and *Sunnah*, and the interpretations of the al-Qa’ida scholars.
- To observe *jihad* for the sake of God as a method of change and for each to strive for it and exercise it by all means necessary and available.
- To not have relations with world idols, the secular and national parties, or anything that resembles them. They are our enemies until at which time they believe in anything but God. We will not negotiate with them or agree to half-solutions.
- Our relations with the true *jihadi* Islamic groups are based on cooperation, faith, and love of faith. We will continue in our efforts to unite and merge these groups and accept nothing less than cooperation and friendship.
- Relations with *non-jihadi* Islamic groups will remain cordial; we acknowledge their good deeds but also tell them of their shortcomings if required.
- We will maintain complete independence, and we will not follow any other party. We will maintain economic independence and not rely upon others for resources.
- With relations to our beloved Muslim scholars, we will show them love and respect and take only the good from them and advise them of what is incorrect.
- Secrecy is of utmost importance and is vital to our operations. We shall only reveal what

we absolutely must reveal.

- Take an avid interest in the role of Muslim nations in *jihad*, and attempt to not agitate them in order to gain support for *jihad*. We reject regionalism and fanaticism. We are willing to perform *jihad* anywhere within in the Muslim world if necessary.<sup>68</sup>

## **Al-Qa'ida The Organization.**

We have learned much about al-Qa'ida through the work of our intelligence agencies over the past seven years. The organization has proven exceptionally resilient and also extremely pragmatic when necessary. Al-Qa'ida has evolved from a centrally controlled and directed organization into a worldwide franchiser of terrorist groups and cells.<sup>69</sup> They have also selected a comparable lean business model for their internal organizational structure, which is extremely secretive and shadowy. A basic understanding of roles and responsibilities of the core organization of al-Qa'ida is important so we can identify and exploit any weaknesses in the future. The core of al-Qa'ida is best defined through the major components of the organization.

1. The *Emir* (The Commander). Osama bin Laden is the *Emir* (General or Commander) of al-Qa'ida, as well as the face of terror worldwide today. His duties are more in line with interpretation of spiritual guidance (he is not considered a theologian), strategic vision and direction, oversight of operational fronts, preeminent leader, and most respected member.<sup>70</sup> In many Muslim states, he is nearing almost mythical status, to some a visage of a modern day prophet who exudes influence through his inner circle of the trusted few, the *shura council*.

2. *Majlis al-shura* Council. The role of the *shura* is to address issues of strategic importance, develop and recommend important policy that is consistent with the *Qu'ran*, religious documents (for example, the writings of Qutb), ensure guidance from the *Emir* is followed, approve *fatwas*, and authorize major terrorist operations.<sup>71</sup> It is within this council, the most powerful entity within al-Qa'ida, that the strategic vision and directives are formulated and agreed upon. The bylaws of the council are binding, as is the principle of *shura* (consultation), which is stipulated in the *Qu'ran* and was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad. Sessions are considered legal if and only when a quorum is reached, through regularly-scheduled or emergency sessions and by preserving the principle of secrecy—often decided by secret ballots.<sup>72</sup> All *shura* members are handpicked by the *Emir* and all must have immeasurable experience with waging *jihad*, first hand. Many were with bin Laden during the early formulation of al-Qa'ida in the 1980s. The council is purposely small and is comprised of the *Emir* (bin Laden), his deputy (al-Zawahiri), a general secretary, and averages between 7 and 10 total members.<sup>73</sup> The *shura* is as close as one can get to an identifiable CoG for al-Qa'ida. The *shura* also oversees the work of the separate committees.

3. Al-Qa'ida Operational Committees. Al-Qa'ida has proven to be a patient, well-organized, and determined adversary. Six major committees (Military, Political, Information, Administration-Financial, Security, and Surveillance) serve to oversee the execution of day-to-day operations as well as other matters.

*Military Committee.* Responsible for preparing young Islamic freedom fighters, training and organizing them for combat, and teaching them tactical and technical skills. Also develops and implements procedures for the greater fighting forces in accordance with Islamic law. The committee is subdivided into five separate divisions of the President, training-combat, training-operations, nuclear weapons section, and library and research section.<sup>74</sup> The general goals of the committee are organization and supervision of combat participation on the battlefield, recruitment and enlistment, upward development and mobility of *jihadi* fighters, and ensuring al-Qa'ida fighters are experts in resistance warfare.<sup>75</sup> The mere fact that there exists a nuclear operations section is more evidence that al-Qa'ida is fully determined to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

*Political Committee.* Responsible for the spreading of political awareness among all members and between al-Qa'ida and Islamic republics. This committee also conducts research and political studies and is principally responsible for interaction between al-Qa'ida and other *jihadi* organizations. The organizational structure consists of a president of the committee, a representative to the president, a political section, and operational political officers.<sup>76</sup> The common themes promulgated by the committee are achievement of the political goals of the al-Qa'ida movement and that the movement of *jihad* is the reinforcement of God's solution and rightful path of Islam. The foundations of religious interpretation married within the political context is the major work of this committee, with the ultimate goals of spreading awareness and inspiring collective efforts within the greater *jihadi* movement. The work of this body is also a vulnerability, which I will address later in this paper.

*Information Committee.* A recognized significant strength for al-Qa'ida, this committee is concerned with all matters involving the means of communicating information to all categories of Islamic people. The goals of the committee are to:

- That God calls upon all Muslims to embark on a personal *jihad* in the name of Islam.
- Spread and enforce the general rules and concepts of al-Qa'ida ideology (includes *salafism*, *Qutbism*, and when necessary, *takfir*).
- Conduct *information operations* to spread the ideology and ignite global *jihad*. Attack the West wherever and whenever possible and do so in accordance with the *shari'a*.
- Uncover, reveal, and exploit the weaknesses of secular governments and nationalist parties. Reinforce the importance of Islamic *jihad* as each Muslim's individual mission.<sup>77</sup>

The committee is responsible for the overall strategic communications of al-Qa'ida and its leadership targeted at both Islamic and non-Islamic audiences. The United States needs to address this al-Qa'ida strength and our weaknesses in this area in order to make headway and counter this al-Qa'ida strength. At present, al-Qa'ida has purposely hijacked the true peaceful messages of Islam and has waged a an effective worldwide information campaign in order to press its messages and further its strategic interests at the expense of the majority of moderate or nonviolent Muslims.

*Administration and Financial Committee.* This committee functions to undertake the different administrative services for al-Qa'ida members and their families to include salaries, vacations and leave, disability and medical benefits, as well as severance benefits. In addition, they are responsible for all accounting, to include safeguarding funding as well as tracking payments and costs and providing loans if needed, while overseeing financial policies and services for the organization.<sup>78</sup>

*Security Committee.* The security committee is responsible for providing the necessary operational security for the leadership, operations, installations, and personnel. It routinely collects information, conducts counter-intelligence operations required for the protection of senior leaders and the organizations overarching operations. It also facilitates security procedures related to any host country in accordance with bylaws, legal laws, and regulations. Within this committee, security bylaws are crafted and implemented to preserve the integrity and capability of the greater organization. With respect to dangerous matters, the committee looks at possible infiltration and corruption as well as vulnerabilities. Led by a committee chairman, the committee is comprised of a lesser council and an executive branch that includes an investigations section, imprisonments and torture section, documents section, and coordination and relations section. The guard detail also falls within the purview of this committee as does the passports section and responsibility for security education.<sup>79</sup> Arguably, this vital committee has excelled at its duties due to the mere fact that the senior leadership of the *shura* council remains protected and safe, even after 7 years of waging a war with the United States.

*Surveillance Committee*. The details of this committee are classified as well as its full range of responsibilities and capabilities. However, we can assume that this functional arm of the inner organization has an extremely important role, specifically with regards to reconnaissance, surveillance, and target recommendations for future large scale Al-Qai'da attacks.

What is important to understand is that although al-Qa'ida "higher headquarters" closely mirrors other historical examples of insurgent organizations (most closely to that of Mao Zedong during the Chinese Revolution and the Vietcong), it is extremely adaptable and quickly learns from its vulnerabilities; therefore, to date, it has been elastic enough to overcome any inefficiencies or vulnerabilities. The organization is also less rigid today within the context of the greater movement (AQAM). The *emir* openly seeks operational recommendations from field commanders, subordinates, and partnered *jihadi* groups. It is the uniqueness of this (decentralized) form of command and control structure that makes normal Western CoG targeting methodology ineffective at best. Through its global efforts al-Qa'ida has inspired and created a greater movement, or al-Qa'ida Associated Movement (AQAM), through the collective forming of Islamist *jihadi* organizations (sans the *shura* and primary committees) into a loose global-network of interrelated ideological groups that engage in *jihad* and terror (a common theme) for either local, regional, or global objectives. Al-Qa'ida exploits these groups to carry out what is currently called a global insurgency or global holy war. It is only through our understanding of the internal and externally affiliated organizational structure, the mission and objectives of the organization(s), ideological underpinnings, and its importance within a greater movement that we can begin to identify and then exploit their vulnerabilities through a comprehensive approach.

## **AL-QA'IDA STRATEGY TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES AND EMERGING JIHADI DOCTRINE**

Al Qa'ida strategy is not fueled solely by hatred nor are its desired ends inconsistent with their methods and means to engage in protracted *jihad*. But rather, their strategy is very consistent and nested within their ideology, and they make strategic decisions with detached methodical precision, constantly assessing alternative approaches as well as seeking additional means or methods. Analysts have uncovered several indicators that al-Qa'ida continues to prepare and plan for another large scale synchronized attack against the United States, while the AQAM will continue to plot and execute numerous smaller scale attacks, likely against soft targets in the near future, which is more broadly in line with the general aim of punishing nonbelievers.<sup>80</sup>

### **Al-Qa'ida Grand Strategy.**

Jordanian analyst Bassam al-Baddarin believes al-Qa'ida has formulated a strategy out through 2020. Referencing the assorted writings of Muhammad Makkawi (better known as Sayf al-Adel, former Egyptian Special Forces Colonel and now one of al-Qaeda's senior strategists), al-Baddarin presents a coherent long-term strategy that ties together the events of 9/11 and the current fronts on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Initially, the head of the military training branch, al-Adel is believed to have surpassed Abu Hafs al-Masri as the new al-Qa'ida #3 behind al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's Deputy. Al-Adel's writings indicate a strategic campaign formulated against America, aimed at leveraging a *jihadist* "triangle of terror" beginning in Afghanistan, passing through Iran and Iraq, and ending in Southern Turkey. The 9/11 attack, which commenced the opening phase of war against America, was intended to drag the United States into Islamic lands to enable al-Qa'ida to wage a long war of attrition against the West, utilizing the awakening giant of the greater Islamic nation.<sup>81</sup> Baddarin hypothesizes that al-Qa'ida knowingly intentionally abandoned the Taliban and transferred a significant part of its Arab fighting strength to Iran and Iraq, expecting

a swift response into Afghanistan by U.S. military forces. He argues that al-Qa'ida predicted the U.S. response against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (both host and bed partners with al-Qa'ida), and would then pursue a more comprehensive military effort against Iraq.<sup>82</sup> Adding credibility to this theory is the importance of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi leaving Afghanistan in 2002 and establishing a base of operations in Northern Iraq, well before the Coalition invasion of Iraq in March of 2003.

An additional published work available on the Internet with significant insights to a greater al-Qa'ida grand strategy in the Middle East is Abu Bakir Naji's "Management of Savagery." Published by the Center of Islamic Studies and Research (an al-Qa'ida affiliated entity), Naji's work outlines the progressive stages of establishing a true Islamic state. Naji is a well-respected *jihadi* author, as many of his writings are published on the *Sawt al-jihad* online website as well as his background and experience in *jihad*.<sup>83</sup> The Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University in partnership with the West Point CTC, commissioned William McCants to translate this important strategic text. A "Path towards Empowerment" is an underlying theme that serves to unite all *jihadi* organizations and *mujahidin*. In it, Naji embeds numerous quotes from *Qu'ranic* text to further his arguments and strategy. What follows is the genesis of Naji's grand strategy for *jihad* in the Middle East.<sup>84</sup>

Naji identifies three distinct phases with goals:

1. **The Destruction and Exhaustion Phase.** The *mujahidin* will exhaust the United States by over-commitment, as well as attract new recruits by exploiting successful attacks such as the bombings in Bali (a nightclub bombing that claimed 200 lives),<sup>85</sup> Al-Muhayya (residential compound in Saudi Arabia in 2003),<sup>86</sup> and the attack on the Djerba (synagogue in Tunis in 2002).<sup>87</sup>

2. **The Management of Barbarism-Savagery Phase.** After defeating Western forces, the *mujahidin* will establish internal security; ensure the people have the necessary food, supplies, medical access, and support; achieve economic sufficiency; and begin infrastructure improvements. It is also during this phase that implementation of *shari'a* justice begins; fighters are prepared for external attacks as well as defending against internal hypocrisy and deviant opinions and enforcing strict obedience. Alliances will be made with neighbors who have yet to conform.<sup>88</sup>

3. **The Empowerment Phase.** This phase features a continuation of the major objectives of the previous phase while at the same time logistic links are established with the various zones outside the immediate zone of conflict. An important objective of this phase is the development and execution of a powerful media and information campaign in order to win support and increase recruitment, as well as push others in the middle ranks to join in *jihad*.<sup>89</sup>

Numerous other writings and messages are available by researching the many *jihadi* websites across the Internet. What is significant to the U.S. counterterrorism effort and should not be overlooked is that the al-Qa'ida leadership is clearly not hiding their strategy, their objectives, or their desire to create a wider global effect of interlinked terror groups conducting terror campaigns. Further analysis of this literature reveals that the emerging strategy against United States is aimed at our strategic center(s) of gravity: our economy and willpower.

## **Al-Qa'ida Strategy with Respect to the United States.**

The operational strategy for neutralizing the United States combines both passive and active activities. Al-Qa'ida strategists have studied and clearly understand the vital interests of the United States and are developing a comprehensive strategy to attack our two centers of gravity: (1) our economic well-being/survival, and (2) American willpower or the staying power to endure a protracted war against terror. To accomplish these goals, al-Qa'ida will continue to orchestrate and order direct attacks against the U.S. homeland, U.S. citizens at home and abroad, its military,

and its economic interests. In addition, they intend to ensure the Muslim world is inhospitable for U.S. business interests as well as for political engagement with Islamic leaders.<sup>90</sup>

Bin Laden and al-Qa'ida fully intend to wage war against what they perceive as our primary vulnerabilities. Bin Laden claims that since the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, Western Crusades have worked to prevent the true believers (Muslims) from establishing an Islamic state. Much of his rhetoric also labels the United States as most responsible for the ocean of repression and injustices toward Muslims and argues that the al-Qa'ida attacks of 9/11 were warranted and just.<sup>91</sup> The attacks against iconic American targets on 9/11 were clearly intended to cripple the economic, political, and military power of the United States, as well as severely hamper our ability to respond. The emblematic importance of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the object of the third attack (White House, Congress, or the Three Mile Island Power Plant) was essential for Al Qa'ida and their desire to achieve a greater psychological impact than on those persons directly affected in both New York and Washington. The attack in New York alone not only impacted the American economy, but many experts believe severely affected the world economy to the tune of trillions of dollars in losses.<sup>92</sup> The financial backlash of the 9/11 attacks was momentous (mostly felt in tourism, financial markets, and the airline industry) and arguably contributed to a national recession.<sup>93</sup> Al-Qa'ida leaders learned many important lessons from the 9/11 attacks and will likely continue with a terror campaign focused on soft targets that greatly impact the American people economically and will attempt to make this a long, endless struggle and violent clash of civilizations that cannot be won by the United States.

In October 2005, Abu Mus'ab al-Najadi, a Saudi and active member of al-Qa'ida, authored a document entitled, "Al-Qaida's Battle is Economic not Military." He argued for attacking soft targets of high economic interest. Al-Najadi's words are very telling:

The Islamic nation has entered through al-Qa'ida's war with America a new period that is different from all other periods experienced by Muslims against their enemies. This period is based on economic war due to the peculiar nature of the adversary in this ferocious battle. Usually wars are based on military strength and victory belongs to those who are militarily superiors on the battlefield . . . But our war with America is fundamentally different for the first priority is defeating her economically . . .<sup>94</sup>

What we are likely to experience in the future are attacks on targets that will create a huge psychological impact upon Americans, as well as a corresponding economic ripple. Terror attacks on our subways, railways, and the airline industry will certainly create hysteria, cause panic, and incite fear while costing the United States millions of dollars. Attacks within the Middle East against oil infrastructure or shipping would wreak havoc in world markets as well as cause skyrocketing crude oil prices, further causing economic backlash as global markets scramble to absorb these blows. The methods of attacks are also important to understand, for it is clearly evident that al-Qa'ida has adopted and is following a doctrine of 4th-generation (4GW) warfare.

### **Al-Qa'ida Emerging Doctrine and 4th-Generation Warfare (4GW).**

Al-Qa'ida associated terror cells have shown a mastery of operational ingenuity in their selection of hard and soft targets (political, military, economic, iconic, and religious). Through their application of the fundamentals of 4GW, they have continued to achieve small tactical victories and avoid defeat at the hands of Coalition forces in a complex and austere environment. 4GW is the evolution of warfare over time, starting with the 1st-generation (Napoleonic warfare—conscripted and firepower) through the 2nd-generation (U.S. Civil War/World War I—age of firepower and nation-state-aligned resources), through the 3rd-generation (World War II—maneuver and armored warfare), and up to a 4th-generation near the end of the 20th century.

4GW is considered the reduction of nation-state warfare and is fought primarily by ad-hoc warrior cells that have embraced the following concepts:

- Undermine your enemy's strength (avoid direct attacks or attacks on operational/ tactical centers of gravity – aka von Clausewitzian doctrine).
- Exploit your enemy's weaknesses and vulnerabilities.
- Fight utilizing asymmetric operations (weapons and tactics will differ substantially from those of your enemy).<sup>95</sup>

The methods of 4GW warfare are unmistakably apparent on the front lines of the war on terror in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) as well as suicide bombers (martyrdom tactics) are two prominent methods used by radical insurgents to counter Coalition strengths such as overwhelming firepower and formations built upon maneuver-firepower based doctrinal concepts. Both of these tactics are relatively low cost, are easy to execute, have a high payoff, and have a greater psychological effect on both military forces and Americans at home. Americans, who are being greatly influenced through watching horrific images of the aftereffects of an IED attack on their televisions in the comfort of their homes. 4GW is intended to exhaust one's opponent and cause him to use up his resources through slow attrition while fighting over a protracted length of time. We may, in fact, be witness to a 5th-generation of warfare (5GW) that emerges in this century, and is one where advances in technology, to include the new media and explosion in information warfare, and proliferation of weapons of mass effects in the hands of transnational or nonstate actors, becomes the norm.

Further evidence that al-Qa'ida has adopted a form of 4GW as its primary doctrine of modern warfare can be found in the writings of *jihadi* ideologue Abu Musab al-Suri (aka Mustafa Setmariam Nasar). Posted on *jihadi* websites, his January 2005 work titled "The Global Islamic Resistance Call" provides a strategic template for global *salafi-jihad*.<sup>96</sup> Based on his writings and his first-hand experience in Afghanistan, the primary tenets of Al-Suri's adaptation of 4GW lie within the philosophy of *nizam la tanzim* (system not organization). This phrase mirrors a number of tenets of 4GW and demonstrates a clear understanding of decentralized operations, commander's intent, and dispersal of leadership and *mujahidin* fighters across countless battlefields. Al-Suri believes that his model for warfare and adaptation of Western 4GW doctrine will allow for the implementation of a self-sustaining global insurgency.<sup>97</sup> The current trend we are witnessing today is one of a decreasing reliance of terror cells worldwide on operational guidance and logistical support from the core al-Qa'ida leadership.

## THE STRATEGY OF MARTYRDOM TACTICS (SUICIDE BOMBERS)

Suicide terrorism has had a long and unequivocal role in politics and conflict throughout history. Suicide tactics are not new to modern warfare. In 19th century Japan, *Inin-Shishi Ronins* led by Miyabe Teizo conducted close quarters battle suicide attacks against legitimate forces and authorities of the Shogun,<sup>98</sup> while the early 20th century Muslim Malays (*Moros*) were known for their favored chaotic suicidal tactics to include frantic close combat knife fighting with American soldiers in the Philippines.<sup>99</sup>

Japanese Kamikaze pilots in World War II are one of the more prominent cases of suicide tactics in warfare; however, unlike Islamist terror groups who sponsor and encourage suicide attacks, the Kamikazes exclusively attacked legitimate military targets, as opposed to noncombatants. During the last stages of war with Japan, suicide pilots were enlisted as a strategic weapon to incite fear within the American Navy and achieve a larger psychological effect in American willpower and national leaders. Air attacks against the U.S. Navy managed to sink 34 ships and damage an additional 368, while killing an estimated 3,900 sailors; all at the cost of 2,800 suicide

pilots.<sup>100</sup> Al-Qa'ida inspired suicide bombers (Islamist martyrs) in Iraq have focused an estimated 90 percent of their attacks against Iraqi civilians and security personnel (the other 10 percent were against Coalition forces). An estimated 2,006 U.S. service members have been killed as a result of these suicide attacks since 2003, while Iraqi estimates of civilian deaths are well over 10,000.<sup>101</sup> Although both the Kamikazes' and Islamic martyrs' goal was to create a psychological effect of fear among a larger audience ultimately in hopes of a change in policy and to force an end to the conflict (U.S. ceasing attacks against Japan, or U.S. retreating from Iraq leaving the country vulnerable to a civil sectarian war), each targeted different groups to achieve that effect, yet both failed to achieve their objectives.

Al-Qa'ida espouses the tactic of suicide bombers (martyrdom) as a fundamental element of their strategy of terror for the following reasons: (1) the symbology of the attack method (bomber is a martyr in the context of a religious *jihad-Holy War*, one that is justified by *Qu'ranic* interpretation), (2) a suicide attacker is the ultimate "smart" bomb that is inexpensive and efficient, (3) such attacks enhance the image of both the organization and the individual bomber (the reward of heaven and entitlements afforded to martyrs), (4) they are nearly impossible to stop or defend against, and (5) they are effective in that an attack almost always reaches a larger audience and achieves larger effects. Al-Qa'ida-inspired *jihadis* have expertly exploited the religious, social, cultural, and political symbols of martyrdom to appeal to a wider Muslim audience beyond the core of al-Qa'ida loyalists.

Yoram Schweitzer, a former Israeli intelligence officer and now a researcher at the Jaffee Research Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS), Tel Aviv University, conducted 97 formal interviews of Palestinian suicide terrorists captured by the Israelis. Of the 80 males and 17 females he interviewed (31 were actual bombers, the others were cell members of suicide attack cells), he concluded that every operation was executed in order to achieve political effects to weaken the legitimacy of the group's adversary: the government (of Israel or the United States – the mightiest of adversaries).<sup>102</sup> Al-Qa'ida has adopted the suicide attacks as a key component of its overarching strategy, and this is most evident in their ongoing campaign in Iraq against the *Shi'as*.

Dr. Mohammed M. Hafez, in his book *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*, thoroughly analyzes the ongoing suicide phenomena and al-Qa'ida's suicide campaign in Iraq against the broader international implications for the future. Dr. Hafez's most significant observations are:

- Although suicide attacks did not exist in Iraq before the U.S. occupation, correlation is not causation of the ongoing phenomena.<sup>103</sup>
- While previous suicide attacks by Palestinian groups (for example, the Lebanese Hizbullah attack on the U.S. Marines and French forces in 1983 in Lebanon) were a component of a strategy for liberation against democracies with forces who posed an imminent threat to control territory that the terrorists viewed as their homeland, *salafi-jihadi* terrorism is intended to incite a secular civil war in Iraq,<sup>104</sup> a civil war that the United States would find untenable and from which it would subsequently withdraw. This would allow al-Qa'ida to establish a base for future *jihad* in the region as well as move forward along the path toward a true Islamic state or caliphate.
- Psychological trauma is likely one root cause of volunteers of suicide attacks, but is not the motivation for *salafi-jihadi* organizations to plan, coordinate, and conduct suicide terror attacks.
- The majority of suicide attacks in Iraq are aimed at defenseless *Shia* noncombatants. The *Shi'a* response to this indiscriminate bombing campaign was conducted by the Sadr (Muqtada al-Sadr) militia, specifically, covert death squads that engaged in abductions, torture, and extrajudicial murder against everyday *Sunnis*.<sup>105</sup>

- Al-Qa'ida or *Sunni* groups that promote suicide attacks have used writings, ritual, and ceremony to foster a cult-like status for martyrs. Fanaticism is deeply rooted in the Saudi *Wahhabi* doctrine and *takfiri* extremism. The preponderance of *Sunni* suicide bombers are not Iraqis by birth, but have come from outside Iraq and volunteered as martyrs to wage *jihad*.<sup>106</sup>
- The logic of former *emir* of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQIZ), Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to promote suicide tactics in Iraq was a deep desire to spark sectarian violence in order to drag the hesitant *Sunni* population into the conflict. Upon achieving this, he could then establish the conditions for foreign *jihadis* to operate freely among the host *Sunni* populace.<sup>107</sup>

Martyrdom attacks continued to flourish by the hands of al-Qa'ida and transnational would-be martyrs flocked to Iraq, largely due to the major shocks that occurred to Iraq in a relatively short period of time. Rapid regime change, collapse of the entire security apparatus and rule of law, growing disenfranchisement of the populace, ineffective government and deterioration of the security situation, and resentment and fear among a sectarian populace (*Kurds, Shi'as and Sunnis*) provided fertile ground for al-Qa'ida to grow roots and thrive among the *Sunnis*. But the answer to the question of why suicide attacks are a central component to current al-Qa'ida strategy is best comprehended by understanding the pragmatism of al-Qa'ida leaders and the adaptability and evolution of the organization.

Dr. Hafez argues that 1st-generation *jihadis* of the Soviet-Afghan War did not adopt suicide terrorism as a key component to their overall strategy. But the current generation (2nd-generation) clearly understood the success of the Palestinians' acceptance of the tactic during conflicts in Lebanon and Palestine. Martyrs were afforded special recognition and legitimacy mainly because religious scholars argued that these acts were a legitimate form of *jihad* and devotion to the Islamic faith.<sup>108</sup> Muslims have come to support the tactic from the ideological stance that these methods are legitimate through *Qu'ranic* interpretation, and they are legitimate weapons against regimes or powers with more capable military forces and technological superiority. In straightforward terms, the *jihadi* "smart weapon" is a low cost, highly accurate, and high payoff weapon of choice. It is extremely likely that the next or next generation of *jihadis* will expand suicide terrorism to include a WMD. Al-Qa'ida has the motivation, desire, and aspirations to achieve apocalyptic transnational terror status and will continue to pursue the capability unless they are stopped or destroyed.

The strategy of waging asymmetric warfare through suicide attacks is a clear strength of al-Qa'ida and the *salafi-jihadi* terrorist groups. It is also a significant vulnerability in that its legitimacy with regards to Islamic jurisprudence and can be directly challenged through *Qu'ranic* interpretation by true Islamic scholars.

## AL-QA'IDA STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES – VULNERABILITIES

With a solid comprehension of who our enemy is (al-Qa'ida) and of their organizational structure, strategy, and doctrine, we can now identify and address the strengths and vulnerabilities of our transnational foe.

### Strengths.

Al-Qa'ida has numerous strengths, but the following six are indispensable to their organization and their greater associated movement.

1. Decentralized Execution—Hidden Terror Cells. As previously stated, the structure and organization is one that is less a hierarchical command and control apparatus than it is one of

senior leadership providing strategic guidance, general direction, and intent for the greater movement. *Jihadis* and terrorist cells are slowly multiplying and spreading worldwide like cancer and, because of their exceptional operational security methods, it is extremely difficult for counterterrorist forces to identify, track, and kill/capture these elements. The AQAM is a loosely connected network of terror groups and cells that share common ideological goals and a universally agreed method of achieving their political ends – through violence.

2. Ideology and Doctrine: Nested within the *Qu'ran* and Islam, al-Qa'ida ideology is one that has evolved over time and is a by-product of three prominent undercurrents within *Sunni* theology. Al-Qa'ida's loyal *jihadis* consist of radical activists whose unswerving commitment to violence is part of a larger struggle to defend *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam – the area of the world historically subject to Muslim rule), and the defense of the *umma*, against infidel enemies.<sup>109</sup> The three currents most present in AQAM terror groups are as follows:

- The *salafiyya al-jihadiyya* (*salafi jihadis*), composed of radicalized Muslims who believe in the Egyptian strand of *Sunni salafi* ideology and who embrace violence and wage the *jihad*.
- The *al Qutbiyyan* (*Qutbists*), composed of extremist Muslims who believe in the ideology born of Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, and who focus on the nearer enemy, or local apostate regimes such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, before fighting a “*Global Jihad*” against the far enemy (Israel and the West).
- *Hizb ut-Takfir al-Islami* (*Takfir*) or those extremists who openly practice the calling of unbelievers or Muslims who have abandoned Islam, *kafir*.<sup>110</sup>

Al-Qa'ida strategy and doctrine is built upon the foundations of all major schools of *Sunni* teachings with a heavy reliance on militant *salafism*. The *salafis* are opposed to both *Shi'a* and *Sufi* doctrines and reject Western ideologies such as Socialism and Capitalism, political parties, and social justice. As described earlier, the *jihadis* come from the constituency of the *salafists* who are a subset of the greater group of Islamists. *Jihadis* draw upon the noted scholars and theologians of each sect in order to craft their ideology and subsequently their operational doctrines. Speeches, *fatwas*, and web postings by senior al-Qa'ida leaders and operational field commanders always include quotes from the *Qu'ran*, further adding legitimacy to their words since every Muslim respects the writings of the *Qu'ran* as the irrefutable words of God. The operational doctrine formulated and then followed by al-Qa'ida is firmly entrenched within their ideology, and this is easily the greatest strength of the movement.

Ideology also plays the pivotal role in recruitment for al-Qa'ida. Driven by their particular vision for the future, al-Qa'ida uses images, Islamic text, videos, etc., to appeal to potential recruits as well as for support from a great Islamic audience.<sup>111</sup> Universities, mosques, and the worldwide network of *madrassas* and *pesantren* (Muslim boarding schools) are the fertile grounds in which the extremist ideology is being planted, with the goal of growing future terrorists and supporters of their greater cause.<sup>112</sup>

3. Opportunists and Pragmatists – Catalyst within Islam. Islam has long been a religion of conflict, and the Middle East has been a region that has borne witness to near-constant conflict since well before the Roman legions arrived in the 1st century AD. The current struggle within Islam today is one of either accepting modernity into society or rejecting it, for fear of it surpassing the role of religion.<sup>113</sup>

Quinton Wiktoriwicz, in his work *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, proposes that by utilizing a social movement theory approach as a guiding framework for researchers, we can better analyze the ongoing trend of Islamist activism. He contends that the process, dynamics, and organizations of Islamic activists can be better understood as critical elements in contention with one another that transcend Islam.<sup>114</sup> Islamic activism, the mobilization

of support for Muslim causes, is undoubtedly the greater ongoing phenomenon that al-Qa'ida is leveraging to increase its appeal and support base. One important consistent factor Wiktoriwicz and a collective of Islamic activism social movement theorists observed is that current Islamic activists are blaming the West and Western values for a wide variety of societal problems, such as rising unemployment, increasing debt, inadequate or insufficient housing, stagnant economic growth, etc.<sup>115</sup> The effects of globalization have also given rise to Islamist activism.

Globalization and the advancement of communication technologies that came with it have afforded Islamist activists a greater voice in the Middle East as well as across the Islamic nation. But the West continues to muddy the waters by misidentifying and stereotyping Islamic activists with *jihadis* or fundamentalists.

Islamism is synonymous with "Islamist activism or Political Islam," the act of asserting and promoting beliefs, norms, laws, and policies that are held to be Islamic in character.<sup>116</sup> Western dialogue tends to identify "Islamic activism" as a singular phenomenon, and erroneously label it Islamism or "Political Islam" or worse "Islamic Fundamentalism."

The term Political Islam is a Western idiom which came into our lexicon about the time of the Iranian Revolution. It is critical to grasp that Islam is not only a religion, or a religion of peace, but it is also a religion of law, therefore, it is inherently concerned with both governance and politics.<sup>117</sup> Islam permeates everything, to include politics and economics, as well as social and legal systems.

By mistakenly juxtaposing all Islamists into one single group, we are overlooking essential factors that differentiate how Islamists outwardly express their convictions. Islamists can range from militants or fundamentalists to moderates, and everything in between in a wide-ranging continuum. Al-Qa'ida exemplifies the militant extreme and fundamentalist end of the spectrum of Islamist activism.

Al-Qa'ida views itself as the vanguard of change and is serving as the catalyst by drawing the United States into a greater Islamic insurgency through the attacks of 9/11. A large segment of Islamists are considered "moderates," thus the extremists are the minority. Moderates can be recognized by two separate attitudes: (1) those who believe that a peaceful path to change exists and is achievable, or (2) those that believe Islam can reform and reconcile itself with Western modernity. The current problem is that al-Qa'ida and the radical extremists have uniformly hijacked all Islamic dialogue. The voice of the moderates is drowned out and cannot be heard over the violent sandstorms of radical rhetoric.

Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, are not only militant radical *jihadis* inspired by *salafi* and *Qutb* ideological writings, they are also extremely pragmatic in their strategy towards a global *jihad*. Bin Laden's pragmatic and adaptive leadership methods are evident through his loose management style and infrequent communiqués to the growing coalition of *jihadi* organizations. He has implemented very few regulations and non-negotiable rules, but sternly demands compliance.

The relationship with the now deceased Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a true *takfir* radical extremist, was built on a marriage of convenience to inspire additional recruits, as well as to continue to tie-down and exhaust American military power in irregular warfare in Iraq. What bin Laden and al-Qa'ida central did not expect nor approve was the beginnings of a sectarian civil war in Iraq that was ignited by the February 2006 bombing of the *Shi'a* Al-Askari Mosque ("Golden Dome Mosque") in Samarra, Iraq. Considered worldwide as one of the holiest *Shi'a* shrines, al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQIZ) *jihadis* planned and executed attacks that would incite a civil war in Baghdad between the *Sunnis* and *Shi'a* militias.<sup>118</sup>

Today, al-Qa'ida senior leaders appear to be continuing along pragmatic lines, as there is increasing evidence that al-Qa'ida is reaching across ideological lines to establish relationships with *Shi'a* terror groups such as Hamas, as well as entering into a strategic relationship of

convenience with Iranian leaders (Persian *Shi'as*).<sup>119</sup> Hamas and al-Qa'ida are both modern offshoots of the original *jihadi* organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, and share many links dating back to pre-9/11 attacks.<sup>120</sup> Al-Qa'ida and Hamas have a history together, but an Iran and al-Qa'ida connection could further be exploited by the West if this relationship was exposed, thereby negatively impacting al-Qa'ida credibility because of their *salafi* and *Qutbist* ideological underpinnings.

4. No Center of Gravity (a counter to U.S. warfighting doctrine). In the past three decades, the warfighting concept of center(s) of gravity (CoGs) has become an integral part of our joint and service doctrines. Identifying enemy CoGs and protecting our own has become a cornerstone of the operational art of our maneuver-and-firepower-based doctrine. The origins of the CoG concept were forwarded by the notable Prussian military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz in his seminal work, *On War*.<sup>121</sup> However, there exists a minority of professional military thinkers, to include this author, who believe von Clausewitz's original intent of CoG has been misconstrued by U.S. military doctrine writers and senior leadership. Colonel (Retired) Antulio Echevarria, an U.S. Army officer, argued in his 2002 published work *Clausewitz's Center of Gravity: Changing Our Warfighting Doctrine – Again!*, that Clausewitz's concept of CoG was not intended as a strength or a weakness, nor even a source of strength, but that the CoG was the **one** element within a combatant's entire structure or system that has the necessary centripetal force to bind and truss the entire system together.<sup>122</sup> This centripetal force states Echevarria, is what Clausewitz theorized when powerful strikes oriented against this CoG would have the most significant effect, as opposed to solely a mechanical or scientific explanation of force against an enemy's CoG that would ensure success. Echevarria argues that Clausewitz intended the CoG not as a basis of strength or a key function or capability, but more a central point that is essentially effects-based, as opposed to capabilities-based. Attacking an adversary's CoG through mass and with overwhelming force will cause your enemy to lose his balance and then eventually topple and fall. A CoG is not a source of strength, but more a factor of balance.<sup>123</sup>

To date our strategic and operational strategies have been focused on identifying and attacking the CoGs of al-Qa'ida, which has resulted in numerous tactical gains, but minimal strategic or operational victories. The al-Qa'ida core leadership and funding for Islamist terrorist organizations have been misidentified as the source of their strength, or CoGs. These are certainly strengths and must be both targeted and influenced to achieve specific effects, but the source of balance or centripetal force binding al-Qa'ida together is something less visible or concrete, and much harder to comprehend and counter. The force in question is their ideology. A violent and extremist ideology which infuses a common hatred of apostate Muslim regimes and anti-American sentiment both among its core members and supporters, and throughout the larger Islamic audience.

5. Information Operations and Strategic Communications. Al-Qa'ida is exceptionally adept at communicating and influencing larger target audiences with its themes and messages. Our government officials agree that our efforts at public diplomacy continue to be outmaneuvered by our foe. Al-Qa'ida is extremely adept at influencing the *jihadis* within its organization and the supporters of *jihadi* cells, local population areas, the Arab community, the greater Islamic community and, in general, the world population. The rapid expansion and significant improvements in communications technology that have been the major drivers of globalization have benefited al-Qa'ida in its efforts to build and maintain trust and credibility with Muslims. Clearly, its messages are multiplied and exponentially reproduced across the entire media spectrum and especially through the internet and across the worldwide web.

Gabriel Weimann, Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), provides an interesting glimpse into how terrorist organizations are using the Internet. In his book, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, The New Challenges*, Weimann highlights the advantages that the World

Wide Web affords terrorist groups and the challenges of and options available to countering terrorist use of the Internet.<sup>124</sup> A summary of his observations are:

- The Internet affords *jihadis* ease of access, little or no regulation—government control or censorship, large potential global audiences, limitless—fast information flow through a multimedia format, and anonymity.
- All active terrorist groups are established on the Internet (hundreds to thousands of web sites and increasing daily).
- Dynamic interaction on the web: sites emerge, modify, then abruptly disappear—or appear to disappear but only change the uniform resource locator (URL) address to enhance security and communications.
- Three distinct target audiences have been identified: current or potential supporters, international public opinion, and the adversary public (opinions and political will).
- Over exaggeration of the cyber-terrorism threat (impending cyber attacks), at the expense of the more common routine use of terrorist communications and strategic communications—information operations.
- Eight most common methods in which terror groups use the Internet: psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, fundraising, recruitment and mobilization, data mining, networking, information sharing, and planning and coordination.
- Future measures to control cyber-terrorism and Internet usage by terrorist entities, will not only be costly and difficult, but will inevitably flirt dangerously with civil liberties and freedom of speech.<sup>125</sup>

An irrefutable strength of modern-day Islamist terrorist organizations such as al-Qa'ida is that they focus on multiple target audiences with specific messages for each to influence and co-opt them, and that the themes and subsequent messages are embedded within their unique interpretations of the *Qu'ran* and the *Sunnah* (interpretation through the living example of the Prophet Muhammed).<sup>126</sup> The United States has little to no credibility in the Muslim world, and al-Qa'ida has seized this opportunity to control the dialogue and ensure their messages are heard and that they resonate. Jihadis have convinced Muslims that local conflict, as well as American intervention into the Middle East, is part of a larger struggle between the West and Islam, and all Muslims are required by the *Qu'ran* to defend Islam.

6. Branding al-Qa'ida as an Institution. The final significant strength of al-Qa'ida today is the **branding** of their organization, *al-Qa'ida*, and its rise to near institutional status worldwide. Osama bin Laden is directly responsible for driving the organization on a successful campaign of taking what was once viewed as an allegiance-based guerilla force, into an emblem or *brand*<sup>127</sup> signifying an ideological banner that inspires the growth of terror cells worldwide as well as serving to influence Muslims to join the *jihad* or support the ongoing radical extremist movement. Al-Zarqawi was effective at using the brand of al-Qa'ida in order to recruit local Iraqis to either join his organization or to provide resources and support during his tenure as leader of AQIZ.

The branding of al-Qa'ida has afforded the organization the ability to inspire and influence a greater movement among a loose confederation of fundamentalist entities. This effort has taken precedence over internal matters such as growth, increased command and control, and resources for terror cells.<sup>128</sup> The strategy has been successful at elevating local and regional conflicts into the greater context of Islam under siege by the West, and has catapulted al-Qa'ida into the terror stratosphere, or the level of apocalyptic terror—willing to acquire and use WMD.

Conversely, the **brand** image of the United States has slowly deteriorated over the past two decades and then plummeted as a result of the war in Iraq, as evidenced by recent survey results of the Pew Global Attitudes Project. During its most recent 2007 public opinion survey of 47 countries, the following were determined: (1) global support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism continues to drop and is at its lowest since 2001, (2) the United States is the nation most often

blamed for hurting the world's environment, and (3) anti-American sentiment is continuing to rise not only in Muslim nations, but also in those countries we consider to be our allies or friends.<sup>129</sup> Not only are we failing in the war of ideas in our global war on terror, but we have also lost significant ground with both Middle Eastern and other countries and our image has suffered dramatically.

### **Al-Qa'ida Weaknesses – Vulnerabilities.**

Al-Qa'ida and the greater AQAM are not without their weaknesses and, like any organization or movement, they have vulnerabilities that can be influenced or exploited. Critical vulnerabilities or "cracks" that we must look to exploit are listed below and then specific recommendations on how and with what means we can exploit these fissures will be addressed later in this paper.

*Splintering.* Analysis of the Harmony Project documents has revealed a surprising level of infighting and conflict internal to al-Qa'ida. Not all core members are motivated toward the same goals and predilection divergence is evident. Most notably, the influence of al-Zawahiri on bin Laden caused the irrevocable split between bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam (cofounder of al-Qa'ida with bin Laden) and ultimately led to the shadowy death of Azzam and his sons by unknown murderers in November 1989, one year after al-Qa'ida had been discretely founded. Azzam and bin Laden envisioned two differing paths toward the creation of a greater Islamic Caliphate, and ultimately bin Laden, under significant influence by extreme Arab radical hardliners, realized that, with Azzam out of the picture permanently there was no prominent voice to counter the direction that bin Laden desired.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, in Peshawar, Pakistan, during the early years, friction existed in the precursor to al-Qa'ida, the Afghan Services Bureau. The Bureau was plagued with bureaucracy problems as well as arguments over funding, resourcing, and prioritization of projects.<sup>131</sup> It is arguable that over time all organizations are forced to deal with friction and internal resistance. One case study of a terrorist organization may provide insight to a possible future for al-Qa'ida. In the late 1970s in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) spawned at least six different splinter groups, to include the Provisional IRA, Official IRA, Real IRA, Continuity IRA, Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), and the Catholic Reaction Force (CRF).<sup>132</sup> The Harmony documents have revealed convincing proof that significant disagreements over strategic direction and doctrine exist, and that the current loosely cohesive structure of Islamist terrorist groups is extremely tenuous.<sup>133</sup> Additional study and analysis of intelligence and information provided through al-Qa'ida's media campaign and information warfare efforts will allow us to identify further cracks and then exploit them in the future.

*The Perpetuated Lie about Islam "In the words of a Terrorist."* Islam is the world's fastest growing religion, and since the 9/11 attacks has come under greater scrutiny than ever before. Although there is a deliberate effort in Western culture and politics to separate terrorism from Islam, the fact that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance is overlooked due to the deliberate actions and messages by radical Islamist extremists, principally the *ihadists*. Al-Qa'ida and other *salafi-jihadi* terrorists groups have deliberately misinterpreted and twisted the messages of the *Holy Qu'ran* and the *Sunnah* in order to rally Muslims under a banner of "Islam under Siege" and to justify their actions (violent use of terrorism and killing of innocents). Terrorism is an act against God!<sup>134</sup> Moderate Islamic clerics and scholars state that the words of *Qu'ran* and the words of all true Muslim rulers, to include the Prophet Muhammad, are that Islam forbids terrorism, and its ultimate aim is to bring peace and security to the world.<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately, the *ihadis* have surreptitiously hijacked both the religion and its overt messages by cloaking Islamic sacred canon in a blanket of lies and hatred. *Jihadis* are currently the only voices being heard throughout the

Islamic nation. A clear vulnerability for the AQAM is that Muslims condemn the actions of Islamic terror groups and their justification against the use of terror to achieve political ends is clearly against the main tenets of the religion and the teachings of the Prophet.

*The Zarqawi Effect.* In 1966, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (born Ahmad Fadil Nazzal Al-Khalayleh), was born and raised in Zarqa, Jordan, amid an environment of growing Islamist activism. By the early 1990s, Jordan was overflowing with radical currents, especially among those who believed in *salafist* ideology.<sup>136</sup> As the country nose-dived deeper and deeper into economic and social crisis, al-Zarqawi journeyed to Afghanistan by way of Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>137</sup> While in Pakistan, he was introduced to Osama bin Laden and bin Laden's mentor Abdallah Azzam. Al-Zarqawi would arrive in Afghanistan in time to see the liberation of the city of Khost and the retreat of the defeated Soviet forces. It was also during this time that he made a lasting relationship with Abu Mohammed Al-Maqdisi, who would, ultimately, assume the role of spiritual father to Zarqawi (much like Azzam was to bin Laden).<sup>138</sup> Upon returning to Jordan from the Soviet-Afghan War, al-Zarqawi was eventually incarcerated, and his virulent hatred for the "apostate" Jordanian government would grow as would his hatred of the United States, which he perceived was covertly bankrolling Jordan and thus was unconditionally corrupted. The deprivation of liberty and harsh treatment in prison further convinced him of the *salafi* path and that he was to embark on a personal journal and struggle (*jihad*) against unbelievers, to include Christians, Jews, Shiites, and Hindus.<sup>139</sup>

Upon returning to Afghanistan in 2000, he arrived at an al-Qa'ida training camp in Herat along the Iranian border and far from the Taliban controlled government in Khandahar. As camp director, he surrounded himself with trusted agents, and his network began to mature as did his influence over his constituents and externally. His reach went deep inside Iran, Jordan, and Iraqi Kurdistan, and he assumed the status of one of a triumvirate of leaders of Ansar al Islam, a Kurdish terrorist group based out of Northern Iraq.<sup>140</sup> Following the attacks of 9/11, al-Zarqawi and al-Qa'ida leaders met one November night in Afghanistan, where he narrowly escaped death during a U.S. military missile strike. He would then proceed to flee the country with Iranian help through Iran and into Iraq.<sup>141</sup> It was during this time in late 2002 and early 2003 that the United States argued the case in international forums that al-Zarqawi was a legitimate link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qa'ida, but this has never been proven and remains extremely unlikely. Ultimately, it was during late fall of 2003 and early 2004 that he emerged as the new face of terror of al-Qa'ida in Iraq.

In October 2004, al-Qa'ida publicly released a letter from Zarqawi declaring *bayat*, or a pledge of loyalty, to Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. He subsequently adopted the name of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQIZ) – "*Land of the Two Rivers.*" His allegiance to bin Laden and al-Qa'ida came about after eight months of deliberations to overcome serious strategic and tactical differences between bin Laden and Zarqawi. Zarqawi's personal theory was that calling for *jihad* is not as important as actually taking action or the conduct of *jihad* – a possible hidden subtlety and jab at scholars, specifically al-Zawahiri, who were far from frontline combat and the act of engaging in *jihad*. He also voiced that true *mujahidin* (such as himself) took orders only from God, and not men, no matter how wise.<sup>142</sup> Al-Zarqawi would quickly become the face of al-Qa'ida as he waged a vicious terror campaign in Iraq that included beheadings, kidnappings, murder, suicide-bombings, intimidation, and eventually escalation of the conflict to a civil war with the *Shi'a* by overtly attacking them (civilians and militia alike). Al-Zarqawi's campaign against the *Shi'as* in Iraq was in direct contradiction of the larger al-Qa'ida strategic theme of pragmatic alignment of all Muslims (*Sunnis and Shi'as*), fighting together against the apostate regimes and the United States. The July 2005 highly controversial letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi (released by the Director of National Intelligence in October 2005), rebuked the leader of AQIZ and further

exposed a fissure in the larger movement.<sup>143</sup> It is certain that future opportunities to exploit rifts will arise as al-Qa'ida-associated groups fighting regional conflicts may have differing objectives than al-Qa'ida strategic goals as they apply to the larger movement.

In his letter to al-Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri outlined four objectives for *jihad* in Iraq: (1) expel the United States from Iraq (near-term), (2) establish an Islamic authority and develop it into a caliphate (short-term), exerting influence over as much of Iraq as possible, (3) extend the *jihad* to Iraq's secular neighbors (mid-term), and (4) extend the *jihad* to Israel (long-term).<sup>144</sup>

To achieve these objectives, al-Zawahiri believed that the popular support of the *umma* in Iraq and neighboring countries was the most important weapon. He advised that the only way to garner popular support was to avoid acts that the *umma* does not approve of or understand (e.g., beheadings). To avoid disaffecting the *umma* he offered this counsel: (1) consult with as many factions as possible in governance and decisionmaking, (2) minimize the excessive violence, (3) strive for unity within the *ulema* (Muslim legal scholars or those involved with Islamic studies), (4) foster unity among all the *mujahidin*, and (5) refrain from attacking the Iraqi *Shi'as*.<sup>145</sup> Arguably, al-Qa'ida in Iraq has failed in all recommended objectives and has made little progress over time in advancement of al-Zawahiri's recommended strategy.

The Zarqawi-bin Laden relationship was normally tenuous at best, as they each held diverging views on *jihad*. Bin Laden believed that the United States (far enemy) support for Arab regimes in the granting of legitimacy, financing, and weapons sales were the source of these Arab governments' apostate political power, therefore, he prioritized attacks against the United States. Al-Zarqawi, however, focused on the near enemy or the apostate regimes' cultural and political influences within Islam, which he viewed as a clear and separate issue from U.S. Government support. Eventually, both men would agree on a mutual and ultimate goal of the establishment of a true Islamic state, the caliphate, thus their relationship became one of strategic convenience where both the near and far enemy could be fought in Iraq.<sup>146</sup> Still, al-Zarqawi answered only to God, and his ego would continue to blur his future decisions.

A prime example of al-Zarqawi's indifference to al-Qa'ida's central guidance was the November 9, 2005, bombing attacks of three hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing 60 and wounding 115.<sup>147</sup> The attack against three American hotels, the Radisson, Grand Hyatt, and the Days Inn (all symbols of U.S. economic influence and tourism), conducted by al-Qa'ida in Iraq *jihadis* was intended to inflict terror toward a larger audience, the economies and tourism of both America and Jordan (Zarqawi's place of birth). The attack was quickly and widely condemned both in Jordan and in other Arab states, primarily because one of the bombs detonated amid a wedding party.<sup>148</sup> The silence that followed from al-Qa'ida central was deafening, and a clear message of tacit disapproval was apparent.

Ultimately, al-Zarqawi's days were numbered, as he was unable to overcome his *takfir* and extreme *salafi* extremist beliefs, which proved to be his undoing. His indiscriminate killing and use of terror tactics to coerce the *Sunnis* to align with his *salafi-jihadis* for fear of *Shi'a* retribution eventually backfired.

*Further Mistakes by al-Qa'ida in Iraq.* On June 7, 2006, a Coalition air strike hammered its intended target, and the world's most-feared terrorist, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, lay mortally wounded. It would later come to light that his whereabouts were determined as a result of Jordanian and American intelligence collection efforts, and that AQIZ had been effectively penetrated.<sup>149</sup> With their *emir* of Iraq killed by the hand of the infidel (American military power), the AQIZ leadership would face a dilemma in choosing their future path towards their stated goals. Should they continue their tactics of brutal attacks against the *Shi'as* and sustain martyrdom suicide operations to maintain secular conflict between *Sunnis* and *Shi'as*, or should they adjust their strategy to something more in line with the approaches outlined by al-Zawahiri in his 2005 letter to Zarqawi?

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq reorganized and assumed the name of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in October 2006 in an attempt to rebrand itself, to move away from the brutal tactics inspired and demanded by al-Zarqawi, and to broaden its appeal to Sunnis in Iraq as well as to senior *jihadi* scholars living outside of Iraq.<sup>150</sup> The paradox facing the ISI is the simple truth that they cannot control or co-opt the *Sunnis* without modifying or adapting their own ideology, and conversely, their *jihadi* ideologues will not be satisfied unless they subject all *Sunnis* and Muslims in Iraq to Islamic law in its purist form. Abu Umar al-Baghdadi emerged as al-Zarqawi's successor and new *emir* for ISI. Claims by his followers that he was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad were meant to further legitimize the new *emir* in the eyes of the *umma*.<sup>151</sup>

Nevertheless, attempts by the ISI to unite all *Sunni* insurgent factions, as well as to appeal to the multiple constituencies (both inside and outside Iraq), failed miserably. On July 4, 2007, Coalition forces captured ISI's minister of information, Khalid Umar al-Mashadani. Consequently, he revealed that al-Baghdadi was fictitious and did not exist, and that the *emir* was a fabrication to appeal to a wider Iraqi audience.<sup>152</sup> Not only was this a strategic blunder, it severely damaged the credibility of both ISI and al-Qa'ida central. ISI failures have further alienated *Sunnis* and, more important, have exposed vulnerabilities in the foundation of the greater al-Qa'ida movement by the mere fact that the core al-Qa'ida leadership can be held accountable for the actions and words of their franchises, such as ISI and other al-Qa'ida-aligned terrorist groups.

In addition to the waning appeal of ISI, the recent *Sunni Awakening* in Al Anbar Province and overt rejection of al-Qa'ida by *Sunni* secular tribal leaders and populace is further evidence that al-Qa'ida is far from reaching its stated objectives in Iraq.<sup>153</sup> ISI was created from the remnants of al-Zarqawi's group, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, the Victorious Sect brigade and other lesser-known groups. ISI was al-Qa'ida's first step toward merging organizations-groups and forward movement in the path to the creation of the caliphate in the region.<sup>154</sup> ISI used terror and fear in an attempt to co-opt the ongoing *Sunni jihadist* movement in Iraq. To gain legitimacy, ISI claimed to be a state. ISI brutalized the Sunnis to include assassinating Sheikh Hareth Zaher al-Dhari, the son of Sheikh al-Zobai of the Sunni al-Zobai tribe. ISI murder and intimidation tactics spread throughout al-Anbar and was directed against senior leaders within the tribes. Sheikh Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi, of the prominent Rishawi tribe of ar-Ramadi, lost his father and several brothers to the brutal tactics of al-Qa'ida. Sheikh Sattar was the first to organize the tribes, 25 of 31 in Anbar, to join forces and unite under the Anbar Salvation Council in September 2006. Through Sattar's leadership and influence tribal men joined forces with legitimate police forces throughout Anbar and worked closely with the Coalition forces to turn the tide on al-Qa'ida in Anbar, and set the conditions for the greater *Sunni Awakening*.<sup>155</sup> *Sunni* groups did the majority of the work and not Coalition forces in Anbar. Since the "Awakening" ISA and al-Qa'ida's efforts throughout Iraq have suffered greatly and many believe the corner has turned as their ability to influence has been greatly diminished. Yes, al-Qa'ida is still very active and continues to wage brutal attacks mainly through suicide-bomber tactics, but strategically they are losing in Iraq as the general *umma* continues to reject them, and the core al-Qa'ida leadership continues to remain aloof, almost disinterested, from the ongoing *jihad* in Iraq. What bin Laden and his *shura* council may not realize is the strategic importance of winning in Iraq. Ultimately, failure by al-Qa'ida in Iraq can be exploited not only by the West, but the entire moderate Muslim community worldwide. Through strategic communications, both democratic leaders as well as Muslim leaders can articulate the failures and illegitimacy of both al-Qa'ida and violent extremist *salafi-jihadism*.

*Failure in the Horn of Africa.* The Horn of Africa was deemed important by al-Qaeda in the early 1990s and combat-experienced *jihadis* migrated there in secrecy over several years. Al-Qa'ida fighters played a minor role in the Battle of Mogadishu in October 1993. But with the

hasty withdrawal of American forces after the Battle of Mogadishu, al-Qa'ida internalized the important lesson that America could be dealt a critical strategic blow by waging irregular warfare or 4GW. Post American withdrawal, Somalia, a failed state, appeared ideal as a host sanctuary for operatives and could afford resources and training camps away from Western influence or human intelligence collection. The al-Qa'ida leadership in Afghanistan expected that Somalia would prove a fertile source of recruits to follow the *salafi* ideology and wage *jihad* on al-Qa'ida terms. What actually transpired was that many of al-Qa'ida's members fell prey to extortion and betrayal. They held deep suspicions of the locals and found themselves caught between immutable clan conflicts. Logistical lines of communication were hazardous and long and the costs to run operations and training easily exceeded everyone's expectations.<sup>156</sup>

Ultimately, al-Qa'ida's efforts failed in Somalia in the 1990s because: (1) they were mostly Arabs, looked upon as foreigners, and distrusted by the Somalis, (2) the African franchise failed to comprehend and work with local power structures and ignored local Islamic customs and norms, and (3) they hugely underestimated the costs of operations in a failed state with no trustworthy or supportive government. I would argue that the leadership on the ground in Somalia and also in Afghanistan failed to comprehend the nature and strength of the Somali tribal culture and that the region was predominantly tribal and followed moderate *Sufi* Islamic teachings. The benefits of joining a purist *salafi*-motivated *jihad* offered nothing beneficial in return for Somali allegiance.

According to recent media statements by al-Qa'ida's deputy, al-Zawahiri, Somalia is to become a new front for *jihadis* to wage holy war against the West.<sup>157</sup> Given the past history of the region, one that is prone to terrorist attacks, as well as the past misadventures of al-Qa'ida in Somalia, opening a new front could prove disastrous if countered by the United States and then exploited through a synchronized and effective strategic communications campaign oriented on exploiting this al-Qa'ida vulnerability.

*Suicide Martyrdom.* Addressed previously in this paper, Islamic religious scholars and clerics can argue that the strategy of promoting and conducting suicide bombing against noncombatants is un-Islamic. A unity of effort, to include *fatwas* and edicts by respected and influential clerics, announcements by respectable Islamic scholars as well as Islamic national leaders condemning the practice, is both necessary and essential.

## CURRENT U.S. STRATEGIC GUIDANCE, POLICIES, AND COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES

The U.S. foreign policy mishaps and airline security or intelligence failures that allowed the attacks of 9/11 to occur are beyond the scope of this project and have been well-documented. In the decade that immediately followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and defeat of communism, globalization became a major driving factor of change and the pattern became one of dynamic growth in the number of local or regional small conflicts and violent struggles. The 9/11 Commission Report correctly identified that Osama bin Laden had orchestrated the planning and authorized the attacks which were carried out by Islamist extremists. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, mastermind of the original plan (dubbed "the planes operation"), proposed his plan to bin Laden in late 1998 or early 1999.<sup>158</sup> The commission also identified that the enemy is not "terrorism," but rather that it is the specific threats posed by bin Laden and other radicals who promulgate Islamist terrorism. The commission recommended that a global strategy be developed that should include the following objectives: (1) attack terrorists and their organizations, (2) prevent the continued growth of Islamist Terrorism, and (3) protect against and prepare for terrorist attacks.<sup>159</sup> The commission also highlighted that there must exist a unity of effort and a common set of goals across the government and thus recommended five specific areas for improvement:

1. Unify strategic intelligence and operational planning against Islamist terrorists across

foreign-domestic lines with the standup of a National Counterterrorism Center.

2. Unify the strategic intelligence community with a new National Intelligence Director to oversee the national intelligence agencies and centers to promote unity of effort for information sharing.

3. Unify the many participants and increase information availability by implementing a network-based information system that overcomes traditional stovepipe systems.

4. Unify congressional oversight to improve accountability and quality of work.

5. Strengthen the Federal Bureau of Investigation and homeland defenders.<sup>160</sup>

These recommendations were timely and invaluable as the Bush administration worked quickly to implement them as well as to make visible changes in the homeland security – homeland defense, intelligence, and counterterrorism efforts. Militarily, the United States responded quickly, deploying special operations forces and air power, as well as limited conventional forces. U.S. forces partnered with Northern Alliance Afghanis, swiftly defeated the Taliban and al-Qa’ida *ihadis* were forced to either die while fighting or exfiltrate and fight another day. Al-Qa’ida central, after a brief time in the Tora Bora region of Southeast Afghanistan, quietly slipped away across the border and into Pakistan, where today they are believed to be operating out of the federally administered tribal areas (FATA), well protected amongst friendly tribes. But not resting on success in Afghanistan, the administration rode this wave and quickly oriented on Iraq, deploying combat forces that swiftly attacked into Iraq in March 2003, to topple Saddam Hussein and the oppressive *Sunni Baathist* regime.

Now, after nearly five long years of fighting in Iraq and with a heavy commitment to counterinsurgency (COIN) and nation-building in Afghanistan, the United States is arguably still a very long way from achieving the recommended 9/11 Commission goal of preventing the growth of Islamism. Conversely, direct intervention into the Muslim world (Operation IRAQI FREEDOM) has exponentially elevated both the stature of and support for radical Islamists. Additionally, blunders with significant strategic impact and blowback (the Abu Ghraib scandal and Guantanamo Bay unlawful detainment debates) have inadvertently furthered the al-Qa’ida agenda and inspired a new generation of *ihadis*. Equally important is the slow realization that although we have recently published a National Security Strategy (2006), National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (2006), and National Military Strategy for the War on Terrorism (2006), all are lacking in detail and direction with regard to the formulation of a grand national strategy to defeat al-Qa’ida and the greater Islamist terrorist movement it has inspired.

The major criticisms of our current national strategy on combating terrorism are threefold. First, the term Global War on Terror (GWOT) is extremely inadequate for articulating the war we need to fight, which is a combined effort to defeat al-Qa’ida and its movement. We are certainly not fighting every possible terrorist group worldwide (such as the Basque nationalists or Tamil Tigers). The groups that we should prioritize our resources and strategic thinking against are the radical Islamist terrorists, among which al-Qa’ida reigns supreme. Moreover, the masterful strategic communications campaign of our true enemy, al-Qa’ida, has manipulated our GWOT strategic communication messages into a perception of a U.S. lead global war against Islam, which has done much more damage to our cause than we could have ever predicted.

The second major criticism of our National Strategy for Combating Terrorism is that we have grossly erred in assuming that the advancement of effective democracies in the Middle East is the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism.<sup>161</sup> Terrorism is a tactic. Salafism, Qutbism, and Wahhabism are ideologies that inspire radical Islamist groups to use terror as a way to advance their political agendas to achieve their stated ends. Our public diplomacy and national strategies emphasizing “bringing democracy” to Islamic societies are seen as self-serving duplicity by Muslims of the Middle East. American messages of “Promote Freedom” are considered patronizing and suggest that Arabs are enslaved and without sufficient human rights. Furthermore, in the

minds of Muslims, the “occupations” of Afghanistan and Iraq have not led to democracy but have led instead to chaos, suffering, and greater instability.<sup>162</sup>

The final criticism of our current overarching strategy to combating terror is that although we have identified national objectives to be achieved, we have failed to develop a comprehensive supporting and enduring strategy (ways and means) to achieve them. Promoting Democracy has proven caustic and untenable in the Middle East. Are we not better served to promote ideals that do not place state versus religion or Democracy versus Islam in direct conflict?

Our current GWOT efforts are not fully synchronized and, although we have made significant changes in our bureaucracy since the 9/11 attacks, more are needed. What we lack is a grand national strategy against al-Qa’ida and Islamist extremists. A grand national strategy would provide not only purpose but, more importantly ends, ways, means as well as direction and logical lines of operation-effort; outline prioritization of resources; measures of effectiveness and establish a unity of effort among all branches of government to include the cabinets, agencies, departments, and Congress. The remainder of this paper will present several initiatives for consideration to be implemented in the development of a grand national strategy and an ILWCP with the objectives of defeating al-Qa’ida, the AQAM, and *salafi-jihadi* terrorist organizations and containing Islamist extremism through capacity building with numerous multi-national partners.

## **INITIATIVES FOR GRAND NATIONAL STRATEGY AND CAMPAIGN PLANNING IN THE WAR AGAINST AL-QA’IDA, THE AL-QA’IDA ASSOCIATED MOVEMENT, SALAFI-JIHADIS AND ISLAMIST EXTREMIST TERRORISTS**

### **Grand National Strategy and Campaign Design-Planning.**

From the start, we must clearly understand that a war on terror will have no end date in the future—terror is a tactic and not an entity unto itself. We are better served by identifying the right enemy or threat and designing a strategy and campaign to destroy, defeat, or contain that threat. Deterrence strategies may work against supporters of terror cells, but have proven ineffective against hard-line radical extremists. The primary terrorist threats the United States must focus on and direct our resources against are al-Qa’ida, the larger AQAM of *salafi-jihadi* terrorist organizations, and Islamist terrorists. Four critical assumptions are needed with respect to the threat:

- Al-Qa’ida will not quietly abandon the *jihad* nor will its leadership negotiate for peace.
- Al-Qa’ida will continue to approve or conduct terror attacks and 4th-generation warfare methods, as opposed to manning, training, and equipping a conventional force.
- Al-Qa’ida will continue to adapt and evolve. It will exploit all of its capability to conduct destruction and will not self-impose limits. Its leaders have openly and covertly stated they intend to acquire WMD and weapons of mass effect (WME).<sup>163</sup>
- Al-Qa’ida’s ultimate goal of the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate will not be achieved through negotiated settlements with Middle Eastern national leaders.

Any effective strategy against al-Qa’ida will require an extensive range of tools and should address the supply and demand side of the organizational structure, as well as the fundamental underpinnings and ideologies. Our best approach, as far as entering into a long-war mindset against the threat, is to look at the problem from the same perspective that we did for five decades over the span of the Cold War. The image of the Soviet Union and our individual fears over the unchecked spread of communism galvanized our country, our government, our citizens, and free democratic peoples worldwide. In short, the Cold War was a 50-year long-term multidimensional struggle against an insidious and violent ideology (Communism).<sup>164</sup> We should wage the current

war much the same as we did the Cold War and over time, decades if needed, not just in terms of years or dollars spent. We must absolutely understand and internalize the near-, mid-, and long-term threat that al-Qa'ida, Islamist terrorists, and Islamist extremist ideologies pose to our vital national interests and way of life. We must stand firm, galvanize ourselves, and emulate our forefathers with the same resolve as previous generations. The attacks of 9/11 shattered our illusion of a post-Cold War indolent tranquility. The stakes today could not be higher, as al-Qa'ida will not stop unless it is stopped. It is fighting a war of exhaustion and attrition of our willpower. A long-war mindset must permeate everyone involved with strategy development and campaign design if we are to have any chance of success.

Grand national strategy development must start with the digestion of the current key national strategies for national security, homeland security, and combating terror; then the integration of an updated National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism; and then a comprehensive in-depth top-to-bottom study of the Islamist terrorism threats, ideology, capability, and strategic objectives. Only after this comprehensive and detailed analysis is done can we begin to identify and build our grand national strategy. This synergistic and holistic strategy must provide direction and will ensure symmetry between achievable and compatible ends, concepts, means, resources, and the policies required to achieve the ends. It must also identify an integrated strategic assessment framework that outlines key measures of effectiveness (MOEs) and measures of performance (MOPs) to afford opportunities for in-stride analysis and assessments. The team charged with developing the strategy must be comprehensive and include military planners, experts from all parts of the government, academicians and scholars, social movement theory experts, think tank regional-cultural experts, and senior leadership throughout the process, since this will need to be an iterative process of development with refinements.

Can we win or achieve victory once we develop a grand strategy? We must first define what victory should look like and the conditions for achieving it. Ultimate victory in a war against Islamist terrorism will come only when the violent extremist ideology has been countered and neutralized and when those who have pledged fealty to al-Qa'ida to destroy the United States and our way of life have been killed, captured, or coerced to abandon their cause. Victory will not mean the end of terrorism or acts of terror, but Osama bin Laden must be convinced that he will never achieve his vision of a greater Islamic caliphate from Morocco to Central Asia; that he will not live to see the United States abandon the Middle East, or see Israel destroyed in his lifetime; and that evil will not triumph over good.

Campaign design at the national or strategic level while currently fighting wars on two major fronts, and balancing the demands of domestic policies can and will be achieved. We have the benefit of knowing our adversary first hand as well as seven hard-fought years of experience with both operational and tactical lessons learned. One bureaucratic change that is needed immediately is the creation of a position within our government that can oversee the development, implementation, and execution of the grand strategy. The person selected or appointed to this position should be empowered to cross all branches of government and provide purpose, assign tasks, and give direction and yet be accountable to both the executive and legislative branches. A Vice President of War might fulfill the requirement—one who answers to the President and Congress, who has regulatory authority written into law, whose overarching responsibility is to oversee the long war against Islamist terrorism and to ensure that all agencies of government are executing their requirements and that their efforts are synchronized. Or perhaps a congressionally appointed National Security Director, who holds both the authority and responsibility to direct the cabinet, drive the agenda for the national Security Council, and then hold all Department and Agencies accountable for their actions or inaction. A Director who must pass Congressional muster and be approved by both houses and thereby be held accountable to both the executive and legislative branches of government.

## Strategic Objectives.

Strategic objectives must be identified early in the process and throughout the duration of the war and they must be reassessed and adjusted over time as new enemies and threats emerge. We must also plan far enough out through a lens that identifies objectives in the immediate, near-term, mid-term, and far-term horizons. A simple example of objectives nested over time follows:

### Strategic Objectives

#### Line of Operation (Enemy Leadership and Forces)

- Immediate (1-2 Years)
  - Disrupt al-Qa'ida (Core) Command, Control and Communications
    - Destroy ISI (al-Qa'ida in Iraq)
    - Destroy any Islamist Terror Cell who acquires/uses WMD
    - Disrupt any AQAM attacks in the Homeland
    - Contain *Sunni* Islamist Terrorist groups
  - Discredit AQAM ideologies
- Near-Term (2-7 Years)
  - Destroy al-Qa'ida Core Command and Control (and leaders)
  - Destroy *Sunni salafi-jihadi* Terror Group C2-leaders
  - Attrit AQAM Operational leadership/C2
  - Disrupt AQAM network linkages
  - Discredit (Neutralize) al-Qa'ida Brand
  - Improve (Legitimize) Brand America
- Mid-Term (7-15 Years)
  - Destroy AQAM leadership/C2 (Strategic-Operational-Tactical levels)
  - Deny/prevent growth of new *salafi-jihadi* terror cells
  - Defeat-Neutralize Islamist Terror Cells
- Far-Term (15-40 Years)
  - Destroy Islamist Terror Cells.

## Where to Fight.

The grand national strategy and supporting campaign plan should identify several operational fronts on which to focus and where to apply resources. Each front will fall under a geographical combatant commander's or a newly designed civilian counterpart for responsibility in order to enhance unity of command. To maximize the full interagency approach to war against terrorist groups, senior interagency positions within the combatant commands (COCOMs) will be manned with quality and experienced personnel. An ambassador-at-large or senior State Department service member position under the COCOM commander should also be considered, as the war will be fought using the full complement of national power to include soft and hard power. The immediate priority operational fronts to conduct counterterrorism operations against Islamist terrorists should orient on where our intelligence indicates there are existing terror cells or areas that could emerge as hosts or recruiting grounds of Islamist terrorist organizations, specifically the AQAM. The following should be considered:

*Iraq.* A new and updated strategy for Iraq is required, one that reduces the forces on the ground but does not undercut the growth and improvements of the Iraqi security forces. The strategy should integrate other Muslim and Arabic countries' security forces with a smaller U.S. conventional military force footprint (maintain adequate special operations forces working with

Iraqi SOF forces). The targeting and eventual destruction of the Islamic State of Iraq and any or all *Sunni* Islamist terrorist organizations is of the utmost priority. COIN and nation-building, as well as an overwhelming perception of Iraqi governmental legitimacy are imperative for long-term stability. The “Surge” of 2007 – 2008 did prove successful and was a bold step, but this was primarily focused on the emerging problem of sectarian conflict and in the Baghdad area of operation and not against al-Qa’ida terrorists. The United States, along with other UN partners to include the Republic of China and Russia, must ante up and help with both material resources but human resources as well.

Currently, Coalition COIN efforts continue to struggle because of the limited availability of civil reconstruction and governance expertise, primarily a State Department role or mission. The standup and manning of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) effort was significant, but this effort must be doubled or tripled in order to build true capacity amongst the Iraqis and to ultimately speed up a full transition over to Iraqi control. A rapid withdrawal while on the verge of irreversible victory could cause a collapse in Iraq surmounting to secular conflict or civil war and would be a monumental setback to U.S. foreign policy. Not to mention this setback would have a serious impact on the price of oil, negatively affecting world economies. A stable Iraq with a capable and legitimate government, able to self-rule and defend its borders and interior, is of mutual interest to many Middle Eastern countries as well as the world’s major powers. This mutual interest can be leveraged to assure commitments by other nations to support continued stability in Iraq until the country can emerge as a stabilizer in the Middle East, capable of offsetting a rogue state such as Iran or capable of dealing with newly emerging non-state threats.

*Afghanistan-Pakistan.* A significant strategy revision is required, one that addresses Pakistan and Afghanistan as interconnected and part of a larger problem set. When developing objectives and approaches, it is crucial to look at nation-building, economic prosperity, and feasible options to reduce the reliance on drug trade profits, thereby undercutting the funding of the current Taliban insurgency. Our revised strategy will combine both soft and hard power along nation-state lines, as well as historical tribal lines when appropriate. The strategy will require a significant increase in resources, either from North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) countries, the United States or both to include military forces, and those resources that provide long-term stability and are imperative to successful COIN operations.

*Horn of Africa.* Currently a supporting effort, and as mentioned earlier, attempts by al-Qa’ida to grow franchises in the Horn in the 1990s, as well as to set up training camps, proved to be extremely difficult. Still, the Horn of Africa remains an extremely unstable area and the Muslim population continues to expand through conversions and increased birth rates. A strategy for the Horn would likely rely on resources committed through a theater security cooperation plan under a Combatant Command’s (COCOM’s) control, as well as multinational IGO and NGO humanitarian efforts, and through regional security organizations. If actionable intelligence is available on existing terror cells, then discrete operations or low-visibility strikes by either special operations forces or unmanned aircraft should be used to defeat those elements. Somalia and Kenya must be closely monitored, for both are fertile grounds for terrorists and chaos currently reigns in both countries. Significant resources towards growth of human intelligence capabilities in the Horn are required as well as the time necessary to slowly and safely build, and then safeguard and exploit, reliable HUMINT networks.

*Europe.* Current projections are that by the year 2010, twenty to twenty-five percent of all workers in Europe will be Muslims. By 2050, the current Muslim population (estimated 16-30 million) will double in size.<sup>165</sup> European birth rates have reached all-time lows as countries find they are at a critical turning point and can see their indigenous populations drop by as much as half by the end of the 21st century.<sup>166</sup> Eastern Europeans are migrating to Western Europe, while Muslims are both immigrating and reproducing second and third generations, thereby altering

the religious makeup in Western Europe. Britain, which has an estimated 1.6 million Muslims, is approaching a crossroads with respect to its foreign and domestic policies. The London public transport suicide bombings on July 7, 2005 (7/7), which killed 52 civilians and wounded another 700, was archetypal of an al-Qa'ida-planned simultaneous attack intended to terrorize a larger audience and achieve a mass psychological effect on Londonites and Britons.<sup>167</sup> Al-Qa'ida ultimately claimed responsibility for the attack at a later date. The revelation that the suicide bombers were all British citizens clearly indicates the gravity of the situation with regard to terror cells growing from within. London was eerily similar to the 2004 bombings in Madrid, Spain, which killed 191 and injured over 1,700 civilians.<sup>168</sup> The salient point is that the number of terror attacks by Islamist-motivated groups is rising in Europe. That fact, combined with a significant growth in the number of Muslims who are not truly integrated into European societies, is a recipe for disaster. Undoubtedly, there still remain holdover *jihadis* from the Bosnian War who could serve as catalysts for increasing the intensity of al-Qa'ida or Islamist terrorist attacks. Europe is a vital front where the United States must work closely with our European friends and utilize our soft power resources to maximum advantage and mutual benefit.

*Middle East – Arabian Peninsula.* A broad front that would require an even broader strategy, heavily reliant on soft, rather than hard power. The United States must seek to reduce our overt military presence in the region, yet stay very connected in order to remain in a position to influence, working to renew the “Brand American” by not only our words but also our deeds. We must drop the democracy dialogue and then gain better footing to communicate strategically with multiple target audiences. It is within the Middle Eastern countries that the Islamist scholars live and the *salafists* and *jihadis* draw their ideology. The Middle East holds the heart of Islam; therefore, we must target this region methodically and in such a manner as not to inadvertently rejuvenate the *jihadis* or give them more reason to inspire recruits and resources. Moderates do exist, and we must seek them out and allow their voices to resonate in order to counter the messages of extremism and hate. Yemeni based militants are a growing significant threat not only the the West but to Saudi Arabia, a crucial ally in our war on terror efforts. Saudi-born fighters of Yemeni descent (to include bin Laden) have played pivotal roles in al-Qa'ida since the mid 1990s.<sup>169</sup> Recent articles in *Sada al-Malahim*, a widely circulated Yemeni *jihadist* publication, articulate messages from cell leader's of the al-Qa'ida linked *Jun al-Yaman* Brigades. These edicts call for all to expel the “polytheists” out of the Arabian Peninsula and for fighters to fight there (in Arabia), and not in Iraq or Afghanistan by claiming the liberation of the land of two rivers must be initiated from Yemen.<sup>170</sup>

*Southeast Asia.* Another complex front that consists of two separate and distinct geographic regions. On the mainland are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, where Buddhism is the primary religion. Here a strategy of building relationships and long-term partnerships to prevent future Islamist terrorist intervention is necessary. However, in the maritime countries of Brunei, East Timor, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia, Islam continues to rapidly spread and take hold. The seeds of al-Qa'ida are already growing in Indonesia, one of the largest areas of concentrated Muslims, as the Bali bombings would indicate. To date, this front has been an economy of force effort and must be given a higher priority and resourced before al-Qa'ida establishes strong roots and grows franchises that have global reach capabilities. Expanded HUMINT capabilities will have to grow over time and be safeguarded.

*The Homeland and North America.* The security of our homeland and of our people will always be a vital national interest of our government. Significant improvements within the establishment, organizations, and the standup of the Homeland Security Department have occurred since 9/11. Yet, we cannot protect and defend everything, and not everything is a legitimate target of strategic value to our enemy. Our financial and transportation sectors are most vulnerable, and damage to them would have the greatest economic impact on both the U.S. and the world economies. A

detailed review of our policies and objectives for homeland security must be undertaken; then, over the duration of the long war campaign, we can adjust the proper amount of resources for the actual defense of the homeland. We can create certain efficiencies by eliminating some of the multiple bureaucracies that currently exist, once decisions are made after the Grand National strategy and supporting campaign plan are developed, approved and then implemented.

## **REORGANIZING TO FIGHT A CAMPAIGN AGAINST AL-QA'IDA, THE AL-QA'IDA ASSOCIATED MOVEMENT, AND ISLAMIST TERRORISM**

Although we have counterterrorism experts in several departments and agencies of our government as well on the National Security Council team, we still lack and need a single individual and organization to both orchestrate and oversee our counterterrorism Grand National strategy and ILWCP. As previously mentioned, a Vice President of War or Director of the National Security Council is recommended for further consideration. Interagency reform, like Goldwater-Nichols, is needed in this area and the end result must be that whoever is empowered by law, must be able to hold all entities accountable for their actions, achieving stated objectives and also for their failures.

Equally important, we need to enter into the discourse on how to study and research terrorism, or more specifically Islamist terrorism. At a minimum, a more holistic approach that incorporates systems thinking to include epistemology, politics, social movement theory, and theology is required. Terrorism researchers and analysts are often handicapped by methodical or problem-solving approaches; much like the American military's dogmatic approach to centers of gravity and critical thinking. It is nearly impossible to predict al-Qa'ida's next strategic moves, but it is still important to try. One rule that is helpful to understand when conducting strategic and operational analysis with respect to al-Qa'ida is this: In *al-Qa'ida Math*, it is not important that two plus two will always equal four, (it does not). What is important is that two plus two in *Al Qa'ida Math* equates to something between three and five and that we understand the implications of how they think. We require strategies that reflect both strategic and operational art, as opposed to purely scientific and methodical approaches. Balancing subject matter expertise out of our think tanks, academia, the Islamic world as well as those current experts inside our government would allow for a more diverse group to better understand the problems, issues and make recommendations. As we move forward in this century the United States will require a coherent, resourced, and synchronized terrorism grand national strategy that is focused on the correct adversaries and against all possible outcomes in order to counter their strategies and defeat them.

### **Mobilize the Government.**

At the time of this paper, the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is currently the lead for the Department of Defense (DoD) in the global war on terrorism. Although a significant positive step forward in the aftermath of 9/11, USSOCOM lacks the written or legal authority to direct other components of our interagency to take action or conduct SOCOM-directed tasks. Instead, they rely on efforts to compel, co-opt, or convince other elements of the interagency through fostering a sense of unity of effort. Arguably, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), DoD, Department of State (DoS), and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) organizations and personnel have carried the heaviest loads since the attacks of 9/11. A common condemnation from both the Iraq and Afghanistan front lines is that unit commanders desperately needed financial, agricultural, electrical energy, and judicial and State Department subject matter experts to provide them the much needed know-how in stabilization and reconstruction operations. A generally acknowledged maxim from the British classical COIN experience is that to defeat an

insurgency, it takes about one-quarter military and three-quarters something else (implying soft power, money, nation-building, and reconstruction). Mobilization of all facets of our government is long overdue. Funding and resources are needed in order to grow and build capacity where it is urgently required and where it is currently continues to be under-resourced.

Al-Qa'ida presents a very real and present danger, yet curiously enough, our federal government has enacted only minor changes and improvements to overcome its own inherent bureaucracy (a weakness noted in the 9/11 Commission report). The underlying principal problem is that we have not yet fully realized that military force alone is insufficient for destroying al-Qa'ida, nor is it sufficient to defeat the associated movement of terror and impending global insurgency. Numerous senior military leaders on the ground and on the frontlines have expressed this time and time again, but their concerns have met with little acknowledgement by anyone outside of the DoD, or if they have been heard, little movement forward has been seen. USSOCOM is a vital component to the effort, but a higher authority is needed to ensure synchronization and prioritization across the interagency. The traditionally domestically-focused federal agencies must be transformed and integrated into the larger effort to include policy development that is directly related to counterterrorism efforts. To wage war now and in the future against al-Qa'ida and other Islamist terrorist organizations, we must develop a balanced and integrated approach that uses both soft and hard power methods to achieve results through a campaign plan approach.

What follows are two examples of untapped capabilities that could be beneficial in the fight against terror. The first is the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which now falls under the Department of Homeland Security. Recognized as experts in border management, fraudulent document detection, and maritime security, CBP could provide much-needed training for our multinational partners to assist in border security and to make significant improvements in recognition and detainment of *jihadis* attempting to infiltrate certain countries. Numerous captured *jihadis* under interrogation have provided detailed accounts of their movement to hotspots. Once these trends and patterns are identified, we should leverage the CBP's expertise with those countries most needing their assistance. A second example is the Department of Energy (DOE), which has long been overlooked as a useful agency in the ongoing COIN in Iraq. DOE maintains numerous partner and capability-building capacities, as well as expertise in areas such as energy efficiency, refinery planning and repair, and electrical planning.<sup>171</sup> My experiences in both al-Fallujah in 2003-04, Afghanistan in 2004 and Baghdad in 2005-06 clearly brought home to me and my unit the importance of expertise in this sector at the national, provincial, and local levels of essential services. In Iraq, Al-Qa'ida appealed to those *Sunnis* who were disenfranchised and lacked essential services such as electrical power, or had to pay high black market gas prices, and were experienced rising costs of food as a direct result of the inability of the Iraqi government to manage essential services and our inadequate resourcing of experts and expertise to help Iraqis solve their problems. U.S. Army Civil Affairs units, although highly capable and experienced, could not effectively tackle and fix this monumental problem and even today with the addition of PRTs, we struggle mightily at capacity building at every level and will continue to do so unless we mobilize our own capability and deploy it forward to work alongside our military forces.

### **Long-War Mindset.**

A long war campaign against Islamist terrorism is not a sprint, nor is it a marathon, but is quite possibly several back-to-back and overlapping marathons with short sprints interwoven. We cannot overextend ourselves too early in what needs to be a protracted war for fear of real fatigue. Our ground force formations due to OPTEMPO and deployment lengths were at one point dangerously close to breaking and the prospect of back-to-back deployments with minimal

time to reset and retrain (dwell time) has been challenging to overcome, but our service men and women have proven remarkably resilient and mission-focused. Our transformed brigade combat teams (BCTs) in many cases will return for a third or possibly a fourth deployment in the 2008 through 2010 time frame while our smaller SOF units may in fact be on a fifth or sixth deployment. Maintaining our current pace with our current force strength authorizations will border dangerously on the cusp of a potential collapse of the all-volunteer Army. There exists no better time than the present to expand our military landpower end-strength, to transform select formations to focus on the irregular warfare and the long war ahead that faces us, and to accept risk in other areas, such as the near-term procurement of extremely expensive equipment like the Future Combat System. FCS will undoubtedly prove to be an extremely capable system of systems for future threats, but we are ideally better served to fight the war we are currently in and man and equip our formations to the best of ability. We will always need to maintain a highly trained deployable finishing force as was the case in Operations DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM I, but we can move to a more balanced force and fight the war that needs fighting and the type of war the enemy will fight against us, while simultaneously maintaining a smaller highly lethal capability in the event a true peer competitor comes along with the motivation to directly fight the United States in a high-intensity conflict. It is much more likely that we will fight a 5th-generational warfare (5GW) force in a form of hybrid warfare, where our enemy will rely upon and employ a mix of conventional and irregular methods and wage an effective IO campaign against us to achieve their desired objectives and end state.

#### **United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).**

The USSOCOM has developed a classified version of a long war campaign plan in support of the global war on terror. However, as I addressed earlier, USSOCOM is not in a position to directly task the other elements of the interagency as well as task government agencies outside the span of control of DoD to execute certain functions with respect to implementing all elements of national power. I propose that the USSOCOM campaign plan be the groundwork for a much needed interagency effort. An Integrated Long War Campaign Plan or ILWCP, that supports a well-developed and applicable grand national strategy. The result would be a wide-ranging comprehensive ILWCP aimed directly at al-Qa'ida, the AQAM, *salafi-jihadist* organizations and Islamist terrorists (*jihadis*). The ILWCP would be executed through the combined and coordinated application of diplomatic, informational, economic and military instruments of national power supported through a unified interagency effort in partnership with multinational friends and allies, a variety of IGOs and NGOs, and existing or future regional security & stability organizations. Unity of effort and unity of vision with mutual goals and objectives would be essential in order for all involved to work in unison.

#### **Bipartisan Support for the ILWCP and Enduring Foreign Policy.**

Bipartisan commitment and overwhelming and enduring support is essential and should be demanded with respect to developing a cohesive strategy and multi-faceted campaign. The nature of a comprehensive and integrated campaign plan is that it endures over time, with minor adjustments or mid-course corrections as events occur and assessments are made, while the objectives and end state remain relatively constant. Our next and future administrations must accept and embrace this process and product since consistency is an underlying theme we need to stress both within the United States and across the world. A common criticism of the United States today is the perception by non-Americans that our political parties and their diverging agendas tend to drive the national agenda. That, in addition to the fact that historically when

every new administration arrives in the White House, the first real crisis that occurs causes major changes to a previously recognized foreign policy. The execution of the ILWCP against al-Qa'ida, AQAM, *salafi-jihadists*, and Islamist terrorist organizations will undoubtedly be long, have dark moments or setbacks as well as breakthroughs, and require immense willpower and resources throughout as we endeavor to exhaust our enemy and counter his efforts to exhaust us.

American military forces and the leaders and resources of the Department of Defense will continue to play an important role and remain a significant partner in the greater interagency effort to prosecute the ILWCP. Nevertheless, we must also be cognizant that overuse of military force and/or presence in the Middle East can risk further stirring anti-American sentiments and worsening our *brand* appeal, and can be used against us through al-Qa'ida's strategic communications expertise and global information networks.

## **JOIN IN AND FIGHT IN "THE WAR OF IDEAS"**

If we were to conduct an opinion poll worldwide about the war of ideologies (democracy versus Islamist terrorism), we would find our efforts have fallen far short of our desired results and, more important, we are losing while simultaneously falling back and giving up ground. The Internet has largely served its part as multiplier of radical ideologies and has changed the nature of Islamist movement participation, since one no longer needs to physically relocate to support a specific activist cause, but can do so from anywhere at any time through a computer.<sup>172</sup> More resources and thought must be put toward better understanding the ideologies that Islamist terrorists espouse and the vulnerabilities of the al-Qa'ida ideology.

A centripetal force that holds the greater al-Qa'ida system together is a shared hatred of apostasy and the West amongst its core members. This hatred metastasizes into unrefined power, new recruits, funding, and the overt and covert support of other states, while serving to motivate *jihadists* to wage their brand of asymmetric warfare. Apostate regimes (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, etc.) are openly blamed for causing poverty and corruption, allowing the spread of Western influences at the expense of Islam, and exercising social and political repression.

### **American Interests, Values, and the Democracy Agenda.**

American foreign policy is driven by a combination of national interests and our deeply-rooted values. Although our interests have changed over time since our Founding Fathers authored the Constitution, our values have remained relatively constant. Great nations arrive and survive over time not solely because of military strength or economic prosperity, but because of their ideals and values and their commitment to those ideals and values. Freedoms and basic inalienable rights are the overriding values that define America and most Americans. Our most current National Security Strategy outlines that in order to lay the foundations of future peace we must promote freedom and democracy as an alternative to tyranny and despair.<sup>173</sup> Our current strategy is founded on two pillars:

1. Promote freedom, justice, and human dignity—working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies.
2. Confront the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies.<sup>174</sup>

The ideological gaffe we continue to reinforce is that our strategic leadership is developing strategy with the same mindset that we used when confronted with Communism, our greatest threat to our way of life in the past half-century. We fail to understand that democracy is no longer an effective deterrent or inspirational motivator for states and non-state actors in the post-Cold War world, especially in the Middle East. Islamic activists believe democracy threatens Islam,

while Islamist extremists emphasize that perception to galvanize support throughout the greater Muslim nation worldwide. Moreover, the track record of democratic growth during the current administration's tenure is abysmal when seen through the eyes of Muslims, especially those in the Middle East, which is the acknowledged heart of the Islamic religion and history. American interventions into Somalia, Afghanistan, and now Iraq have resulted only in chaos and anarchy, further reinforcing the belief that those who push democracy are in competition with deeply-rooted Muslim historical traditions. To overcome this perception and regain credibility among Muslims everywhere, I argue that we should omit "Democratization" and "Freedom Agenda" from our strategic communications and public diplomacy lexicon when orienting on Islamism and Islamist terrorist groups.

### **ReBranding America.**

Our **ReBranding** of America strategy must focus on our values (human dignity, justice, freedom of choice) and should be central to our strategic messages. We can continue to argue that we favor representative governments that exist for their peoples, but accept that governments do not have to be democratic to be good and protective of their constituents. Countering al-Qa'ida's fundamental argument that democracy is a threat to Islam would afford us greater advantage when working to counter their goal of an Islamic caliphate, or utopian society shrouded under the cloak of Islam.

The United States was not too long ago heralded and respected worldwide as a beacon of freedom; a country that epitomized freedom, hope, and dignity. Our leaders urged all nations to comply with international treaties and work hard to initiate social reforms to protect human rights and civil liberties. But, lately we have often abandoned our own message and have failed to sign treaties, or in some cases, follow international laws. In addition, the international repercussions from the scandals of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have further damaged our credibility worldwide, leaving us much more work to do to regain legitimacy in the eyes of others. We must reorient ourselves and our messages to truly engage in a war of ideals and competing ideologies. I am not a proponent of throwing out democracy, just the opposite. However, I believe we are better served by not overtly pushing democratization, but by promoting our long-standing values and working with governments and non-state actors of all types that embrace the same values as ours in order to improve civil liberties and create the environment where others once again aspire to be like America, or to come to this great nation. Good triumphs over evil.

Development of future U.S. foreign policy will continue to be a delicate balance of idealism and realism, but framing a long-war approach against Islamist terrorism that is built upon our American values and embraces the peaceful messages of Islam will become essential.

### **Defeat the Al-Qa'ida Ideology (Centripetal Force (CoG) of AQAM).**

Ideologies can be discredited by failure. The war against al-Qa'ida will continue to be fought on the physical battlefield, but we must take the offensive on the psychological battlefield as well. Central to this is attacking and discrediting the logic and ideology of al-Qa'ida first, and then influencing the ideologies of other Islamist terror groups and exploiting their vulnerabilities to separate them from the greater populace whose support they must have to survive and win. Five principal objectives are necessary to defeat the logic of Islamist terrorism:

1. Expose al-Qa'ida's ideological inconsistencies with the *Qu'ran* and the *Sunnah*. Discredit their extremist ideology and weaken its appeal to mainstream Muslims. *Salafism*, *Qutbism*, and *Wahhabism* are all different interpretations of *Qu'ran* and the *Sunnah*, and no one single ideology is infallible. Many of these extremists' interpretations of Islam can be directly attacked and countered

by *Qu'ranic* verse. *Salafi-jihadists* and their extremist views are often averse to traditional Muslim practices and have openly declared other sects within Islam to be heretics, most prominently the *Sufis*.<sup>175</sup> This is one of many themes or acts that can be discredited. Governments in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Algeria have conducted successful domestic information programs to attack and discredit *salafi* themes, but this effort must be expanded to beyond the domestic audiences to attack a transnational foe. No one body is empowered to speak for Islam, therefore, a strong body of voices must surface among the more moderate Islamic clerics and scholars with the religious credentials or “*street cred*” who could then collectively discredit the violent ideologies, while America lends support quietly, and far from sight.

2. Discredit the living guiding thinkers of the *salafi-jihadi* movement (Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi [Jordan], ‘Abd al-Qadir ibn ‘Abd al’Aziz [Egypt], Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Abu Qatada [England], and the most extremist of Saudi clerics).<sup>176</sup> The best way to discredit these men is through the efforts of moderate Islamic clerics and credible scholars with experience and the intellectual foundations within the study of Islam, the *Qu’ran*, and the *Sunnah*. We should exploit any al-Qa’ida or *salafi-jihadist* exiles who now oppose the path of violent extremism. This is a growing number that we have yet to capitalize upon. Denouncements of prominent *jihadis* by other prominent *jihadis* is extremely damaging as well as demoralizing to the greater group and movement.<sup>177</sup>

By labeling the entire al-Qa’ida *jihadi* movement ideology as *Qutbism* (Qutb is most often cited among al-Qa’ida writings), we can better orient on that ideology’s vulnerable points that can be attacked and then exploited. Muslims must understand that *jihadis* seek to implement a totalitarian system in which no individual is allowed to think for himself.<sup>178</sup> Reminding Muslims what happens when *jihadis* come to power is paramount. The previous conditions during the Taliban-led period in Afghanistan, with all of its problems and repression and loss of individual freedoms, is intractable truth of what lies ahead for supporters of *salafi*-inspired *jihad*.

3. A convincing alternative to al-Qa’ida and *salafi-jihadi* ideologies must be available for Islamic activists and mainstream Muslims. Moderate Muslim dialogue and religious interpretation must become louder and more widespread than the current rhetoric of Islamist extremism, which is filled with hatred and violence. The United States could assume a supporting effort as opposed to a leading role in partnership with Muslim scholars, ideologues, academics, clerics, and Arab-Islamic regime leaders to set conditions for more moderate views of reform to be heard. Isolating, discrediting, attacking, and countering al-Qa’ida’s ideological appeal while providing other nonviolent alternatives is one primary method to achieve this objective.

4. Discredit the al-Qa’ida-inspired *jihad* as inconsistent with the writings of Islam and not a true *Holy War*. According to the classical interpretation of the *Qu’ran*, the notion of *jihad* refers to a noble human struggle to realize God’s will for a just and merciful society on earth and for the individual to uphold what is good and resist what is evil. Jihad comes from the root word *jahada* (to strive for self-betterment from a moral-ethical perspective).<sup>179</sup> A thousand years of Islamic jurisprudence has provided us a better word to describe what the Islamist terrorists call *jihad*. As Layla Seain of the Association of Muslim Scientists explains:

. . . *hirabah* comes from the root word *hariba* (to fight, to go to war or become enraged or angry), an etymological and theological examination of these words provides a valid framework through which the religious legitimacy of suicide bombings in today’s global community can be analyzed . . . To delve into comparative study of these Islamic contexts is to expose how *hirabah* is being paraded by terror groups as *jihad*. By defining *hirabah* as *jihad*, al-Qa’ida and other terrorist groups promote their agendas by misleading young, religiously motivated and impressionable Muslims that killing unarmed and non-combatant civilians are activities of *jihad*, hence a ticket to paradise . . .<sup>180</sup>

Emphasizing that al-Qa'ida is conducting *hirabah* instead of *jihad* would discredit them among the Islamic people they are working to influence. Islamic religious authorities must be the body of individuals who collectively discredit al-Qa'ida's war if there is to be any chance that Muslims will accept that al-Qa'ida is not fighting a just and holy war, but is waging a campaign of murder against mankind and that their fighters are not *mujahidin*, but are murderers. Muslims believe that if fighters are not *mujahidin*, they will not die as martyrs (*shahiddin*) and they will only bring their family disgrace and not glory. They will bring hardship to Muslims everywhere. Any act to support al-Qa'ida's *jihad* would not glorify Allah, but defile him.

We must challenge the current al-Qa'ida inspired *jihad* both legally and through a religious lens. Al-Qa'ida's practice of ruthlessly targeting and killing non-combatants is inconsistent with the principles of *jus in bello*, as well as writings within Jewish, Christian, and Islamic holy text.<sup>181</sup> Garnering support from the international court, the United Nations, and throughout the Islamic world of notable clerics and scholars, we should be able to wage a multi-pronged information campaign against this practice and those (al-Qa'ida terrorists) who use this tactic.

5. Study the *Qu'ran* to counter the al-Qa'ida false messages. Islamic sacred canon was never intended to be an accurate account of world history, but was meant to deliver the compelling message of God's revelation to man.<sup>182</sup> Stories were written not to establish what actually happened, but to serve over time as lessons of meaning, identity, and a greater sense of belonging, therefore—sacred meanings.<sup>183</sup> Clerics or authentic schooled religious scholars, rather than government leaders, must lead in this effort in order to maintain legitimacy in the minds of Muslims. The simple truth that al-Qa'ida is responsible for more Muslim deaths by supporting sectarian violence in Iraq than all of the Western countries combined must be at the forefront of the agenda to further discredit the organization. The West cannot challenge *salafism* intellectually, as we lack the cultural background experience and credibility among the audience we are targeting: the greater Muslim people. We will need significant help from other influential and respected Muslims.

### **Positive Themes to Enforce.**

While simultaneously discrediting al-Qa'ida and its ideology, we must also increase our efforts to promote positive themes. Globalization has provided the conditions for a revival in Islam. The primary issue that *salafi-jihadis* have used to mobilize support is that modernity is a threat to Islam; therefore, we (Muslims) return to a more puritanical and repressive society, where *shari'a* is the only law. We must engender an approach that deflects the *salafi* argument and that builds upon a premise that modernity and Islam can coexist and benefit from one another. With modernity comes information and technological advances that provide information to greater audiences. Improvements in water purification, energy distribution, or agriculture that result in better food and more reliable basic services come as the result of advances in technology and modernity and subsequently benefit all Muslims. Al-Qa'ida offers only what the Taliban offered—fiefdom, strict autocratic rule, repression, poverty, and a significant loss of civil liberties and freedom of choice. Muslims have choices, and a moderate voice and interpretation to embrace modernity will have to evolve from the Middle East. Our role is to help influence and stimulate these voices. Muslims should be empowered with the knowledge to reject the radical interpretation that Islamic canon is closed to interpretation. Credible and respected mainstream clerics who issue *fatwas* are essential to counter al-Qa'ida's radical Islamist interpretations and themes.

## **Sustain the Offensive in the Ideological Fight with al-Qa'ida and Salafi Jihadis.**

To achieve the five objectives highlighted previously to counter the logic of Islamist terrorism, we must maintain an offensive mindset that endures over time. However, we must comprehend that we are better served in waging the war of ideas by selective direct confrontation and, indirectly, through other parties. American Muslims are our greatest ally and can be leveraged to overcome a perception that America is against Islam. At times, we may need to be ruthless by co-opting or coercing individuals to denounce al-Qa'ida and the *salafi-jihadi* ideology. Our Grand National strategy must identify both overt and covert components, ways, and means to achieve our immediate, near-, mid-, and long-term objectives. If left unchecked, or if we assume only a defensive posture against terrorist organizations, Islamic fundamentalism will continue to spread and Islamist extremist terror groups will spread their ideologies and further embed themselves into Muslim societies and quite possibly lead us toward an apocalyptic global clash between civilizations.

## **IDENTIFY AND EXPLOIT STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES**

Undoubtedly, opportunities of strategic significance will emerge and then disappear throughout the waging of the integrated long war campaign against al-Qa'ida. Unfortunately, we have missed several that have been available to exploit, while Islamist terrorists have proven worthy adversaries with the ability to exploit our mishaps, such as Abu Ghraib. The following are examples of opportunities that either have been overlooked by the West, or that we must endeavor to exploit in the future.

### **Dr. Fadl and the Recantation of Violence in the Name of Islam.**

In November 2007, leading Egyptian *jihadist* Sayyid Imam 'Abd al-'Aziz Imam Al-Sharif (better known as Abd al-Qadir ibn Abd Al-Aziz or by the moniker, Dr. Fadl), former *mufti* of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and mentor to Ayman al-Zawahiri, released a much anticipated work countering al-Qa'ida's methods.<sup>184</sup> Dr. Fadl is considered by Egyptians as one of the most influential *jihadi* thinkers alive, and his previous books are considered core *jihadi* readings in the education of *jihadists* worldwide. For one of the most respected present-day *jihadi* thinkers to openly counter *jihadi* ideology is a significant strategic opportunity that slipped by silently and unnoticed by Western leaders. A summary of his argument to counter his previous books and al-Qa'ida's methods is as follows:

- Dr. Fadl utilizes legal interpretations and clarifications to counter the *jihadist* use of violence to overthrow Islamic governments. He argues that it is religiously unlawful to do so and is counterproductive.
- Dr. Fadl states that the practice of calling others to Islam (*Da'wa*), is a safer, nonviolent and religiously tolerable way to channel grievances against a regime.
- He states that Muslims should pardon (*al-'afw*) the harmful actions of others, forgive (*al-safh*) one's enemies, shun (*ali'rad*) those who advocate un-Islamic behavior, and remain patient (*al-aabr*) throughout the challenges that lie ahead.
- He argues that one must consider the potential damage of a violent act and determine if it outweighs the potential benefits. Since that violence will ultimately lead to death, destruction, and further violence, he concludes terrorism can never be justified within *sharia* and, therefore, must never be used while claiming religious precedents.

- Lastly, he highlights, using historical example, that after decades of political violence by *jihadis* against the Egyptian government, no change in the entrenched regime occurred and the violence only resulted in fruitless casualties.<sup>185</sup>

Dr. Fadl's message is extremely powerful and could have been exploited by both moderate Islamic scholars as well as our own strategic communications apparatus. He is a legitimate former *jihadi* who is credible among the Islamist activists and his counterargument to al-Qa'ida's is significant. But Dr. Fadl is not alone, there are other former *jihadis* who have "come out" recently against terrorism and the violent methods of al-Qa'ida.

In the summer of 2004, two senior EIJ members crafted a document called *Visualization* that rejected violent attempts to overthrow Islamic governments. Nabil Na'im, who assumed a senior leader role in EIJ after al-Zawahiri departed, and a colleague, Ismail Nasr, urged the Al-Azhar University scholars to publicly address and support their argument, but they failed to generate the support that was needed.<sup>186</sup> This was another missed opportunity by both moderate Muslim scholars and the West to credibly counter *jihadi* ideologies. Only by employing significant resources to monitor web sites, Arab news, web blogs, articles, and books, can we have any chance to seize upon any future coming-outs or arguments that directly counter and attack the al-Qa'ida ideology and that of hard-line *salafists*.

### **Engage in a Dialogue with Islamic Theologians.**

Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed al-Tantawi is the current Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Cairo, Egypt. The Al-Azhar Mosque and University are named in honor of Fatima Az-Zahraa, the daughter of the Prophet. Built circa 971 AD, Al-Azhar is believed to be the oldest mosque in the world, and Muslim students attending the university study the *Qu'ran* and Islamic law in detail.<sup>187</sup> Recently, the Grand Imam addressed the ongoing issue in the post 9/11 world; the issue of a distorted image of Islam. He expressed the following:

To rectify the image of Islam, larger numbers of scholars who specialize in religious affairs should be designated to explain to others in Europe and America the tolerant rulings of Islam, its noble laws, and sublime ethics while showing that the religion of Islam gives each person his due, fights terrorism, preserves the human soul, and considers the killing of one human being tantamount to the killing of all of humanity. Our duty in Al-Azhar is to show the whole world that Islam is against terrorism, murder, bloodshed, destruction and anything that leads to chaos and disorder in any society. The *Qu'ran* says that killing one human being is tantamount to the killing the whole of humanity and that saving the life of one human being is like saving the whole of humanity. We have to explain this to people in the East and West. This is what we have advised, demanded, and suggested to other preachers in the East and West. We tell them to explain the tolerance and mercy of Islam to people.<sup>188</sup>

His eminence Grand Imam al-Tantawi's open denouncement of terrorism is indicative of what other Islamic experts also believe, but have yet to voice openly. Through our own Muslim communities and mosques, and those of nations with whom we partner in fighting al-Qa'ida, we should further develop a relationship with not only this Imam, his mosque, and university, but others worldwide. A comprehensive approach to how we (the West) and Islamic nations can benefit from this relationship should be forwarded, discussed, and then pursued over time. The students who attend daily classes and lectures should be a target audience we indirectly attempt to influence through developing common perceptions and understandings with their religious leaders and most respected scholars.

## **Divulge and Exploit al-Qa'ida Marriages of Convenience.**

Al-Qa'ida will likely attempt to enter into a marriage of convenience with other Islamic terrorist organizations whose ideologies may run counter to that of al-Qa'ida and *salafi-jihadis*. The Egyptian extremist group, The Muslim Brotherhood (MB), is widely regarded as the original breeding ground for modern *jihadi* terrorist groups. Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement of Palestine, and al-Qa'ida, both evolved from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and subsequently have similar ideological roots as well as modern day linkages with respect to *Sunni* Islamist extremism. Al-Qa'ida's growing relationship with Hamas is of special interest because credible evidence exists that Hamas has developed a strategic relationship or marriage of convenience with Iran. In 2006, Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' Political Bureau, declared in an Iranian news conference that "Iran's role with regards to Palestine should continue to increase," indicating Hamas was clearly prepared to open up Gaza to Iranian influence.<sup>189</sup> As the AQAM and its associated groups become more interconnected and grow, cross-pollination between *jihadis* will eventually occur. Bin Laden is a pragmatist who will look to establish relationships with other zealots or extremists and across invisible lines of groups with differing ideologies or theologies, as well as partner with criminal elements for logistical purposes to further their causes. Of interest is that al-Zawahiri has criticized Hamas' open participation in negotiations and elections, their embracement of democracy and nationalism, of which are all things that al-Qa'ida is fundamentally against.<sup>190</sup> Both Hamas and Al-Qa'ida support the Palestinian cause and are against Israel, but joining into a true marriage of convenience between the two could easily be exploited against al-Qa'ida because, openly supporting Hamas would be inconsistent with al-Qa'ida's core idioms.

Experts have also identified the growing relationship between al-Qa'ida and Hizbullah, the Iranian-backed *Shi'a* Islamic nationalist group fighting in Lebanon. Al-Zawahiri has previously made statements to bridge the sectarian divide in which he acknowledges Hizbullah's legitimate jihad against Israel and referred to them as brothers.<sup>191</sup> This "marriage" is tenuous at best and needs to be exploited by using al-Qa'ida's own ideology and words against it. Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hizbullah, has openly condemned bin Laden's and al-Qa'ida's tactics, and in *The Washington Post*, was quoted as labeling the Taliban as "The worst most dangerous thing that Islamic revival has encountered."<sup>192</sup> The potential friction and ideological differences can be exploited, and al-Qa'ida should be attacked on the grounds that they are not acting or growing relationships within their own ideology, and relationships with *Shi'a* terrorist groups are inconsistent with the root principles of *salafism*. An approach that would discredit bin Laden and al-Zawahiri and slowly erode future support from *Sunni* Muslims is to expose the marriage of convenience and inextricable linking both to *Shiite* movements and, indirectly, to Iran, the more hated Persian *Shi'as*.

## **Challenge the Jihadi and his Beliefs.**

While we may not be able to eliminate all hard-core *jihadis* prior to future attacks, we should attempt to shake the individual *jihadi's* confidence in his beliefs and the cause. We do not have to necessarily convince them that their cause is wrong, but only sow seeds of doubt in their minds about the "justness" of their cause, and what could possibly happen to them and their families in the event al-Qa'ida's promise of a martyr's journey after death is false. Those best qualified to voice this challenge, are again, respected moderate Islamic clerics and scholars. The message exists; what is needed is the messenger and mouthpiece. There are a number of ways to advance this effort either directly or indirectly through third parties and multiple mediums.

## The 2004 Amman Message – Missed Opportunity.

On the eve of the 27th Ramadan 1425 Anno Hejirae (AH) (November 9, 2004) in a religious sermon before King Abdullah Al-Hussein of Jordan, the Amman message was issued. The message and sermon was a call to reemphasize Islam's core values of compassion, respect, unity across the Muslim world, acceptance, and freedom of religion.<sup>193</sup> In July 2005, King Abdullah and Jordan hosted an international conference of 200 of the world's most prominent Islamic scholars (*'Ulama*) from over 50 countries. The Islamic religious experts would issue a unanimous ruling and subsequent *fatwa* on three fundamental points:

1. Specific recognition and validation of all eight Islamic legal schools (*Mathabs*) of *Sunni*, *Shi'a*, and *Ibadhi* Islam; of traditional theology (*Ash'arism*); of Islamic mysticism (*Sufism*), and of true *salafi* thought.
2. *Takfir* was forbidden between Muslims.
3. Subjective and objective preconditions were established for the issuing of *fatwas*, hereafter condemning illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam or Allah.<sup>194</sup>

One constant theme throughout the Amman ruling was that extremists were at fault for blackening the image of Islam and discrediting the Prophet, and that the extremists were to blame for the everyday Muslim people's fear of Western societies.<sup>195</sup>

The immediate significance of the Amman message is that it was intended to "put doubt in the minds" of *jihadis* who trust the discourse of extremist clerics and scholars. During an interview, Jordan's King Abdullah reiterated that the reason for the Amman message was to remind the *jihadis* that their spiritual leaders guidance and ideologies were against Islamic law.<sup>196</sup> The most significant outcome of the Amman message is the realization that under the recommendation of a respected Muslim regime leader, Islamic scholars collectively worked together to issue a unified message. Having established an Islamic precedent, there exist future opportunities to influence and leverage this same body of respected Islamic authorities to issue additional *fatwas* that more clearly and explicitly denounce al-Qa'ida and the use of terrorism in the name of Islam: *fatwas* that must separate radical Islamists and label them political extremists who seek to destroy established order and legitimacy through subversion, intimidation, and terrorism.

We can anticipate additional future potential strategic opportunities that must be leveraged to further discredit al-Qa'ida and *salafi jihadists* and to weaken their brand. We must be patient and deliberate in our long-term approach, and quietly build relations with the Islamic scholars and leaders who are in the best position to issue *fatwas* and religious rulings. We might also be served well by identifying our own Muslim voices inside America and the West and seek to co-opt them in a unified effort to credibly attack the *jihadis* in the war of ideologies. We must wean ourselves from trying to justify unpopular U.S. foreign policies in the Middle East and go back on the offensive to persuade Muslims of al-Qa'ida's illegitimate ideology and negative actions that have served to hurt Islam and defile God.

## STEAL, READ, UNDERSTAND, AND COUNTER THE AL-QA'IDA PLAYBOOK

In February 2006, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point published *Stealing al-Qa'ida's Playbook*. Jarret Brachman and William McCants argue that the key to defeating the *jihadi* movement is to identify and counter their strengths and exploit their vulnerabilities. To do so, we must know where to look, which is inside the *jihadi* dialogue.<sup>197</sup> As both observed and articulated, *jihadi* leaders tend to be extremely transparent, open, and blunt about their strengths and weaknesses. In order to recruit followers, their beliefs and strategic vision are available through many mediums, to include videos, audio recordings, and more extensively online through websites. As a by-product of the GWOT's focus on denying terrorists safe-haven and the destroying of several training and

indoctrination camps in Afghanistan and Iraq, almost all of the *jihad* ideology, training manuals, tactics, and strategic observations are available online. In essence, al-Qa'ida's playbooks are available for exploitation.<sup>198</sup>

One example for possible exploitation is the writings of Abu Bakr Naji, an influential *jihadist* who has continued to rise in stature since the 9/11 attacks. Naji's expertise is evident in that he urges *jihadis* to study Western diplomacy, military, management styles, economic trends, political theory, and sociology so as to identify vulnerabilities. He himself has studied the United States and offers a coherent and plausible grand strategy to defeat us and to exploit our vulnerabilities. Aside from offering his strategic vision, Naji also discloses the movement's vulnerabilities and weak points. Maintaining operational security, replacement of leaders and resolving chains of command, identifying spies, maintaining credibility for future recruits, and avoiding splintering along ideological lines are all very real issues, and all very exploitable.<sup>199</sup>

By dedicating the resources and training the proper individuals, we will continue to make greater headway in identifying core strengths and vulnerabilities of our terrorist adversaries. By all accounts the information is available both through unclassified online sites and also through intercepted messages and captured and exploited documents. Although al-Qa'ida central operates hidden under a shroud of secrecy, they must make their strategic vision and operational strategies known, as well as their ideological underpinnings, in order to draw recruits and gain support from charities, individuals, or states.

Examination of the vast array of published al-Qa'ida literature and manuals and numerous available online media statements points to an 8-phase plan to wage a historic long-term war against the United States and our allies in the Middle East. A brief summary of the eight distinct phases follows.

1. **Awaken the Masses.** Expose Muslims to the threat of corrupt apostate regimes and American and Western hostility and moral bankruptcy. Enhance the image of *Salifism* as the only entity in the Arab world that is willing and capable of fighting.

2. **"Harb Istinzaf" – Long War of Attrition.** Bleed our enemies until they crumble. Bleed implies economically, militarily, and politically until America no longer holds the will to fight.

3. **Sever Western/Muslim Alliances.** Cause the American withdrawal from the Middle East and subsequently sever alliances with secular and moderate regimes (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, etc.). Without U.S. economic aid, these countries will weaken and ultimately lose the support of their people.

4. **"Tasfiyat Hisabat" – Settling Old Scores.** Al-Qa'ida intends to overthrow the weakened regimes and "settle scores" by eliminating their leaders and security forces.

5. **"Idarat al-Tawahush" – Management of Barbarism.** (Naji's influence). This is the most dangerous phase, where al-Qa'ida and its sympathizers will manage Arab and Muslim lands for a short period following the collapse of apostates. Chaos is expected due to the lack of security forces and the lawlessness that will follow.

6. **Establishment of Shari'a (Islamic Law).** Pious religious governments will rise and rule Arab and Muslim states by *shari'a* for a temporary period, until the long-awaited return of the caliphate.

7. **Remove all Western influence from the Middle East.** Full liberation of Muslim lands from the West includes the liberation of Palestine and subsequent destruction of the state of Israel. Retrieval of lands that were once Muslim owned, including Spain and the Kashmir.

8. **Reestablishment of the Caliphate.** Once all previous phases are achieved and following full liberation of all Muslim lands, the intent is to reestablish the caliphate and single entity rule for the entire Muslim community.<sup>200</sup>

If we are to believe the strategic path to the caliphate highlighted above as fairly reliable,

then we can organize and orchestrate our own strategy and campaign plan to counter and deny al-Qa'ida its ultimate goal. Regardless, the primary takeaway from the open availability of this eight-phased plan is that al-Qa'ida will continue to publish its strategic vision and its operational objectives; all of which we can utilize and exploit against them and to our advantage.

## ATTACK AL-QA'IDA WEAKNESSES AND VULNERABILITIES

As addressed previously, al-Qa'ida is not without identifiable vulnerabilities. Our best approach to tackling both strategic and operational vulnerabilities is to do so from multiple angles, using all instruments of national power and multinational resources that combine soft, hard, indirect and, at times, direct attacks. Listed below are some key vulnerabilities that should be considered for exploitation immediately and through the duration of the ILWCP.

1. The al-Zarqawi Factor. Through his writings and statements, al-Zarqawi was hugely successful at labeling and identifying U.S. forces in Iraq with the Byzantines and positioned himself and AQIZ as the vanguard of who was fighting on behalf of the entire Muslim world in an apocalyptic battle.<sup>201</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, it is also apparent that al-Zarqawi became a rogue element with a singular agenda and that his allegiance to al-Qa'ida and bin Laden was one of mutual convenience only. He overtly chastised scholars such as al-Zawahiri and al-Maqdisi, who he implied were not true *jihadis* since they were away from the real fighting, unlike the operational and field commanders and *jihadis* on the front lines in Iraq. However, al-Zarqawi's most significant operational blunder was following an exclusionary path (*takfir*) as evidenced by his rejection of tribal affiliations, the *Shi'ites*, and all Arab governments and his ideological disagreements with the *salafi* ideologues.<sup>202</sup> Although al-Qa'ida in Iraq proved exceptionally adept at evolving and adapting, its brutal and arcane methods, such as torture and beheadings, alienated more Muslims than were motivated to join his ranks. AQIZ was a true "franchise" of al-Qa'ida and bin Laden, therefore we must make the logical argument among Islamists that bin Laden and the *shura* council condoned all methods and tactics and hold them accountable. The ideological differences between al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan and Iraq must be elevated to create internal dissension among the greater movement. Generating competition among the groups will lead to additional friction and impact the movement's ability to coordinate larger scale operations.

The lessons from Al-Zarqawi's time as leader of AQIZ are many and worthy of detailed study and integration of those lessons into our ILWCP. A future operational objective of pitting "franchises" against mother Al-Qaida in Afghanistan would have to be well-developed and implemented through indirect and direct information operations. Labeling any influential jihadi leader as *takfir* can also be exploited along the lines that *takfirians* are incapable of accepting anything less than pure Islamic values. Although Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a ruthless *jihadi*, his untimely end is telling and important. The message to others who want to be like him is that we will pursue you and use all necessary means to either kill or capture you, and you will never be safe.

2. Recruits, Volunteers, and Defectors. Three key components of both our future grand national strategy and supporting campaign plan will focus on discouraging future recruits, demoralizing volunteers, and attracting potential defectors. The most telling message that can be aimed directly at future recruits is that al-Qa'ida sponsor's murder, and that they have killed more Muslims than all Western nations combined. Images of dead Islamic women and children are irrevocable evidence contrary to what Islam stands for and scholars claim it to be. Islamists must have choices, and a moderate nonviolent alternative is the path that can be shown as most likely to achieve the individual's goals. A large portion of al-Qa'ida's *jihadis* are recruited from mosques. Therefore, we must seek to influence the most militant of clerics and either coerce or

co-opt them or have them removed-neutralized, while offering more moderate clerics resources to provide for the education of their constituencies.

A similar strategy is required for the current bevy of volunteers and supporters of terrorist groups. These individuals are furthest from their leaders, but are still important to the greater movement. Injecting distrust from within, and infiltrating these ranks with operatives to gather intelligence and spread rumors would increase the friction and slowly erode support from this faction. Terrorism must lose its appeal for this faction and become a very unattractive method of conflict. Targeting family members to use that leverage to work against volunteers is a reliable tactic, when feasible. They must see their radical leaders killed or captured, or watch them defect, so they can comprehend that their only outcome is a bad one if they continue with their support for *jihad*. The case has been made that the *jihad* these groups are waging is, in fact, un-Islamic, and they must know if they seek martyrdom that they will only disgrace their families and their God. Financiers must understand that their livelihood and the well-being of their families are at stake, and we must coerce them away from providing unlimited funding and resources to al-Qa'ida and *salafi-jihadists*.

The *Chieu Hoi* (Open Arms) Program during the Vietnam War persuaded more than 100,000 enemy soldiers to defect to the South Vietnamese authorities. Individuals were offered amnesty, given job, and/or cash, and, in many cases, integrated into allied units as Kit Carson Scouts, operating in areas where they had previously operated.<sup>203</sup> As we fight using the ILWCP over an extended time period a generation (or possibly generations) of *jihadis* will tire and possibly become disaffected since they are unable to make significant gains in the path toward the caliphate. Offering potential defectors a golden bridge, to include amnesty, should be a critical component of our strategy. Defections can be easily exploited, and would further affect morale of those who choose to remain in their organizations, while being discredited by those that are free from the grip of al-Qa'ida.

3. Deny al-Qa'ida a relationship with the Islamic Nation (*Ummah*). Al-Qa'ida is not the defender of Islam, and Islam is not under siege by the United States. Al-Qa'ida ideology and the followers of violent *salafism* have twisted and rewritten sacred Islamic canon for their own totalitarian desires. Al-Qa'ida recruits individuals for suicide attacks and brands them martyrs, yet no senior al-Qa'ida leader or ideologue has ever been a martyr himself. Al-Qa'ida propagates an ideology of hatred and labels Christians, Jews, *Shi'ites*, *Sufis*, and Hindus as unbelievers, yet the *Qu'ran* acknowledges all religions, and scholarly interpretation promotes freedom to choose your religion. Al-Qa'ida blames others for the plight of the everyday Muslim, yet they have made no contributions toward the building of civil services or quality of life improvements. These are just a few messages that are factual in nature and that could be used to amputate the linkage between al-Qa'ida and the *ummah*.

There are numerous other vulnerabilities and schisms within al-Qa'ida and the greater movement, and more will present themselves over time. It is imperative that we identify them and develop a fully integrated approach to widening any cracks in their foundation by countering their strengths and exploiting their weaknesses.

## TARGETING PRIORITIES

Effective targeting requires credible and timely intelligence that is actionable. Unlike the Cold War days when the CIA enjoyed some success in the recruitment of KGB moles and in the persuasion of high ranking Soviet officials to defect, the same approach has met with limited success in the current GWOT. Al-Qa'ida's core organization in Afghanistan and Pakistan has so far proven impervious to damaging leaks or defections.<sup>204</sup> This is largely due to our Cold War approach of recruiting highly placed informants and our lack of culturally savvy and Arabic

language-speaking field agents. Not to mention that true hardcore Islamic extremists willing to fly airplanes into buildings are rarely, if ever, motivated by money in the form of payoffs or bribes. It will take more time to grow human intelligence sourcing that can complement our technological superiority in signals and imagery intelligence. Regardless, our grand national strategy must illustrate the appropriate target sets we intend to destroy, neutralize, or permanently influence. Considerations for current and future effects-based planning and targeting include:

1. Counter-Leader Targeting and Discrete Operations. Without a doubt, select radical extremist leaders and clerics must be eliminated. These individuals stand no chance of being converted, and the benefits of their deaths must far outweigh the disadvantages. Al-Qa'ida is adept enough to replace any key leader, to include the *emir* bin Laden, but his capture or death would have significant negative impact on the greater organization's morale. Bin Laden has reached near mythical status among the *ummah*, and his violent death, like al-Zarqawi's, would serve to remind all *jihadis* that no one, not even the *emir*, is able to hide forever. Jihadis must understand they only have three options: 1) die, 2) give up the cause, or 3) defect. Achieving martyrdom status by their actions must be firmly countered through *Qu'ranic* interpretation by Islamic scholars. Al-Qa'ida and AQAM key leaders must be identified, tracked, and targeted through a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means then killed/captured or co-opted.

Discrete operations would be one important method to achieve a desired effect, while denying excessive U.S. involvement. Small level discrete operations proved effective during the Philippine Counterinsurgency (1899-1902) as well as in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, U.S. Special Forces trained indigenous tribesmen to conduct targeted killing operations against both Vietcong and North Vietnamese leaders.<sup>205</sup> Having a local face on the operatives would distance the United States to maintain legitimacy and overtly deny involvement. For obvious reasons, much of this would have to be covert in nature and would take time, trainers, linguists, and resources to establish an initial operational capability as well as have some method of target approval and validation. Still, we have some historical precedent and a small success rate when applied, and this could be an effective component in our growing arsenal of kinetic and non-kinetic methods against terrorists.

2. *Phoenix Partie Deux*. The Phoenix Program was a significant component of the American counterinsurgency strategy in Vietnam from 1967 through 1972. Phoenix was a CIA-run intelligence and security program designed in coordination with South Vietnam's legitimate security forces. Phoenix was designed to attack the covert Vietcong infrastructure (VCI) (estimated 100,000 operatives) living and working among South Vietnamese society. The VCI conducted financing, performed recruiting for Vietcong and North Vietnamese units, political indoctrinations, human intelligence gathering, and some logistical support.<sup>206</sup> Over the 5-year period of the program's "official" existence, Phoenix was effective in neutralizing (through infiltration, killing, and capture) the infrastructure that was directly supporting insurgency in South Vietnam.

U.S. Army Special Forces Officer Colonel Ken Tovo in his U.S. Army War College Strategic Research Project, *From the Ashes of the Phoenix: Lessons for Contemporary Counterinsurgency Operations*, adeptly highlights that the United States is currently facing an insurgency conducted by militant Islamic fundamentalist groups whose objectives are to overthrow legitimate regimes, reestablish an Islamic caliphate under *shar'ia*, and ultimately destroy Israel and overthrow the United States. Colonel Tovo argues that by implementing a Phoenix-like program now, we can effectively neutralize the militant Islamic infrastructure (MI2) that supports today's Islamic terrorist groups.<sup>207</sup>

Colonel Tovo composes a very convincing argument, and the strategic lessons of the Vietnam War should not be overlooked in fighting al-Qa'ida and *salafi-jihadists*. *Phoenix Partie Deux* could be implemented to compliment our current ongoing counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines and could be expanded to the Horn of Africa as well as the

Arabian Peninsula. Resourcing could come from congressional funding, while manpower could be provided by the military and across the interagency (CIA, Justice, Homeland Security, etc.). However, unlike in Vietnam, one recommendation is not to utilize the CIA to run the program, but to create a combined interagency task force that would work directly for the Coalition force commander or COCOM Commander(s). Our current force structure to include our joint special operations forces, could serve as the jumping off point for the development and implementation of this future program.

3. High Value Targeting. Combinations of both lethal and nonlethal means are required to directly attack the following high value target groups (listed in priority).

- Leadership. Leaders are hard to replace, even more so for iconic leaders like bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and al-Zarqawi. Kill, capture, co-opt, and discredit are all suitable tasks in relation to terrorist leader targeting. Deter is acceptable but less likely to occur with high level leaders.
- Command, Control and Communications Cells. Discredit, destroy, disrupt, or neutralize are satisfactory tasks.
- Networks. Disrupt, discredit, sever, disinform-misinform, and destroy the networked linkages between al-Qa'ida and the movement of aligned –networked terror cells and groups.
- Facilitators (Financiers, Middlemen, Recruiters, Propaganda and Computer Experts). Dissuade, co-opt, seek defection, disinform, neutralize – counter, capture, and convert – turn members of this group. Converting facilitators to turn against their masters and neutralizing and countering effective al-Qa'ida propaganda are critical desired effects.
- Islamist activists. Convincing this larger group to agree that al-Qa'ida is a common enemy for both the West and the Islamic nation, thereby driving a wedge between al-Qa'ida, *salafi-jihadis* and their most reliable supporters, Islamist activists.
- Moderate Ideologues and Clerics. Convince, co-opt, coerce, or partner with this critical group of Islamic scholars to provide a moderate alternative to radicalism and to counter the extremists' rhetoric.
- *Ummah* (Muslim people). Influencing Muslims is the overriding task, with the desired effects of: (1) deterring future recruits for Islamist terror groups, and (2) separating Islamist terrorist organizations from the *Ummah*, thereby reducing their popular support.
- Criminal links. Evidence is growing that al-Qa'ida and other *salafi-jihadi* organizations are partnering with transnational criminal organizations to move funding, resources, acquire WMD, or to move recruits into current conflict zones. Criminal organizations are normally not wedded to the radical ideologies of Islamist terrorist organizations and operate on the motive of profit. Targeting these groups can severely hinder AQAM's ability to conduct future attacks and sustain current operations globally.
- Arab and Islamic Media. A critical effect to achieve is to have more fair and balanced reporting of both good and bad from the operational front lines as well as through our strategic communications efforts. Influencing these groups is essential in order to *ReBrand* America.
- Arab State and Muslim Senior Leaders (Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq, etc.). Through public and private diplomacy we will need to influence the recognized leaders of several Islamic states in order to develop partnerships, share information – intelligence, and increase counterterrorism capabilities and also to convince those regimes considered apostate by *salafi-jihadists* to engage in true social reforms for their people.
- Hizbullah, Hamas, and other non-*salafi* Islamist Organizations. Special attention must be paid to preventing alliances from developing between AQAM groups and non-*salafi* motivated Islamist organizations like Hamas and Hizbullah. The effect to achieve is to

isolate al-Qa'ida and deny it a greater larger network of partners. We should also work to create noticeable friction between these organizations (divide and conquer). To do so, we will have to enter into the dialogue with the groups and assume a *Realpolitik* approach (we are friends because my enemy is your enemy). Furthermore, any new alliances with al-Qa'ida that could occur will cause us to work diligently to expose and then destroy them to prevent a greater global insurgency or global *jihad* from occurring.

- Terror Financing Organizations. I will address this in further detail later in this paper.

Several other target groups exist, but I believe these are currently the most significant for our development of an integrated approach to achieve desired effects using a mix of kinetic and nonkinetic means.

## THOUGHTS ON FUNDING, SCHOOLS, AND PRISONS

Terrorist organizations require funding, much like oxygen to an air breather, in order to survive. Funding available to al-Qa'ida can and will come from a variety of sources:

- Oil Revenues
- State sponsors (both directly, indirectly through third parties, and indirectly through the funding for radical mosques, *madrassas* etc.)
- Transnational Crime Organizations—(a mini global economy estimated at two trillion dollars)<sup>208</sup>
- Crime, Piracy, Drugs, and other illegal or black market activities
- Through Islamic NGOs and charities
- Individual personal wealth (e.g., Osama bin Laden)
- Money laundering
- Diversion of funds from legitimate international efforts (UN programs, WFO, humanitarian efforts etc.)
- Kidnapping and hostage ransoms
- Saudi Arabian *sharia* investment banks.

The challenge of tracking the intricate networks of terrorist financing is that they are extremely sophisticated, well-developed, entrenched, and often hidden among legitimate organizations. Bin Laden expertly leveraged the Islamic principle of *zakat* (one of the five pillars of Islam) to raise finances for the *jihad* against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Utilizing fundraisers in Afghanistan, Riyadh, and Washington, it is estimated he collected over \$3.5 billion U.S. dollars to fund the *mujahidin*-Afghani fighters during the war.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, another lesson learned by al-Qa'ida from the Bosnian War was to funnel finances through Islamic charitable and humanitarian organizations to hide the movement of significant amounts of funds.

Since the 9/11 attacks, more than 100 countries implemented terrorism legislation or regulations, including laws to block money-laundering, the misuse of Islamic charities, and funding for terrorist organizations.<sup>210</sup> Over the past seven years, the United States has led a multinational effort to identify, track, and seize terrorist related funds. The United States has had some success by using our own Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, which allows for the freezing of suspected terrorist group assets within the United States, thereby making it a criminal offense for Americans to provide funding and other forms of material support.<sup>211</sup> But more targeted laws, international cooperation, and enhanced powers are required to make a larger, more significant impact on the current methods of terror financing.

An emerging issue that cannot be overlooked and that we must develop a course of action to pursue against is the Saudi financial practices. In her book, *Funding Evil: How Terrorism is*

*Financed and How to Stop It*, Dr. Rachel Ehrenfeld argues that certain Saudi Arabian individuals are subversively funding terrorism with the goal of defeating the United States through economic warfare. She outlines the concept of *shari'a* financing (meaning abide by Islamic Laws), which is a by-product of the 20th century and invented by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Dr. Ehrenfeld provides a detailed account of how Saudi Arabian *shari'a* banks are investing massive amounts of funds (estimated \$800 billion to \$1 trillion U.S. dollars) for investment worldwide so as to cripple the West economically.<sup>212</sup> Saudis are using money to corrupt the West, fund terrorism, and eventually take over the West through *shari'a*-compliant investments.<sup>213</sup> She claims that Saudi banks currently own over 20 percent of the New York Stock Exchange and 46 percent of the London Stock Exchange, while continuing to buy more.<sup>214</sup> Without a well-thought-out approach and hard evidence, we will have limited ability to deter this current practice by the Saudis which is clearly undermining our national security and possibly threatens our future.

Moreover, it is estimated today that Saudi Arabia has funneled at a minimum \$70 billion U.S. dollars worldwide to spread *Wahhabism* and fundamentalist ideology by financing hundreds of radical mosques and extremist clerics, *madrassas*, and Islamic centers.<sup>215</sup> This funding is clearly directed at increasing anti-Western sentiment as well as possibly setting the conditions for future terrorist recruitment while supporting ongoing terrorist operations.

As the dollar continues to weaken and the petro-dollar strengthens, we must develop counterstrategies to deal with the emerging economic problems. Formalizing international partnerships to introduce necessary international conventions and treaties and capacity building to identify, track, and then target illicit terrorist funding are essential. As importantly, a strategy to deal with Saudi Arabia's indirect financial actions must be vetted and implemented with strong conviction.

Equally troubling are the findings in a 2006 report entitled *Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance* by the Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom and Cooperation. After careful review of numerous Saudi Ministry of Education textbooks, experts from the Center for Religious Freedom and Cooperation summarily agreed that a theme of religious intolerance toward other religions as well as a central focus on *Wahhabism* as the only true form of Islam, was noted throughout the Saudi published textbooks. More specifically, the major prolific themes are:

- Condemned and denigrated all other Muslims who do not follow the *Wahhabi* sect of *Sunni* Islam, calling them deviants. (Included are *Shi'a* and *Sufi* Muslims).
- Commands Muslims to "hate" Christians, Jews, non-*Wahhabi Sunnis*, other "unbelievers" and to treat them unjustly.
- Professes that Jews and Christians are true enemies of Islam, and that there exists a perpetual clash between civilizations.
- Forwards conspiracy theories by accusing Freemasons, Lions Clubs, and Rotary Clubs of plotting to undermine Muslims.
- Asserts that the spread of Islam through *jihad* is a religious duty. Fighting between Muslims and Jews must continue until judgment day, until Muslims receive their promised victory.<sup>216</sup>

Saudi Ministry of Education officials continue to claim they are reforming their textbooks and have made positive steps toward a more tolerant approach. But until hard evidence is provided, we can continue to expect that the next generation of Saudi educated children will grow up to be adults with a significant bias against all other religions as well as non-*Wahhabi* sects. The significance of this is that Saudi Arabs will continue to be fertile grounds for terrorist recruitment in the future.

Other breeding grounds for Islamist activists and terror groups are prisons, both inside the United States and worldwide. Extremists have been known to infiltrate prison religious programs

and pollute their audience with fundamentalist literature, as well as *Wahhabi* doctrine.<sup>217</sup> We must also consider the possibility of foreign-sponsored infiltration of U.S. prisons, with the goal of developing homeland terror cells. The United States has a history of militants breeding out of college campuses during the civil rights movement with the Weathermen, Weather Underground, Black Panthers, and Black Liberation Army emerging on the scene in the late 1960s early 1970s.<sup>218</sup> Today, Islamist movements are more likely to grow and emerge out of our own state or federal prisons. Additional information in this specific area must be collected and can be achieved through the use of well-placed infiltrators or the coercion of personnel that are incarcerated in our prisons.

Several opportunities are available to work with moderate Islamic clerics and scholars as well as to indirectly provide resources to moderate Islamic activist movements that do not promote terror and violent *jihad*. Prompting mainstream clerics to issue *fatwas* quickly after iconic terror attacks can only be done if we have developed those relationships over time. Influencing the Islamic clerics and scholars through soft approaches and on a theological basis would best serve our future leaders during engagements with these same influential Islamic figureheads. Engagements will be necessary in our overhaul of our strategic communications and public diplomacy.

## **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND FIGHTING IN THE 21ST CENTURY INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

In support of our Grand National strategy, we will need a well-thought-out, tailorable, comprehensive, and nested strategy to diminish the appeal of radical Islamist group themes and to counter their messages. We have to develop a sophisticated communications strategy that can target local, state, regional, global, and other specific audiences, at times all in the same message. Words mean something and the words of our leaders from strategic through tactical levels, must be credible, truthful, and intended to influence specific audiences.

### **Strategic Themes.**

Specific themes must be developed in concert with our grand strategy and ILWCP effort and evolve over time as events occur, opportunities arise, and conditions change. A select few general themes to stimulate further development are:

- The West and democracy are not in conflict nor do they threaten Islam. We recognize Islam as a religion of peace and hope.
- America stands for the values of freedom, hope, justice, opportunity, and respect for human dignity for every individual.
- America and Islam have many common interests and core values. Neither America nor the West is at war with Islam.
- Radical extremists and extremist ideologies are the common enemy of all Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, and all others who subscribe to peace and good will.

### **Strategic Messages.**

There are many strategic messages, and more will be needed as events occur and we engage our multiple audiences over time. Important points that should be highlighted:

1. The message after the next massive terror attack. Having the benefit of hindsight, we should war-game and develop a package of communiqués, themes, and messages in the event we experience another 9/11-type synchronized attack or if WMD are used against the U.S. homeland,

overseas interests, or deployed military forces. The initial 12 to 48 hours after a strategic iconic attack on our homeland are extremely crucial, and the United States must be perceived by multiple worldwide audiences as firmly in control of the situation, united, and fearless. We may have to co-opt our own major media outlets to achieve our desired effects in the name of national security.

2. The wrong message at this critical juncture in the GWOT and in combating terrorist organizations is to continue to forcibly promote and push the “Democracy and Freedom Agendas.” To not delete this from our strategic communications with our Islamic audiences will further prevent us from being able to effectively wage the war of ideas. When Muslims finally accept that al-Qa’ida is **NOT** conducting a Holy War and is, instead, waging a campaign of murder against humanity, then we will begin to see credible gains in the war of ideas through our strategic communications efforts.

3. Audiences. Several audiences will continue to be targeted through the use of strategic communications as well as by identifying key influencers or opinion leaders (those whose views will have a ripple effect through and to a larger audience) and select individuals empowered by their position, who normally speak with authority.<sup>219</sup>

4. Consistency and Patience. Our messages must “stick,” therefore, they must be heard through multiple means, multiple times and remain relatively consistent over time. A gradual long-term approach to public diplomacy that is patient and demonstrably maintains or increases our credibility is the goal. The message must “stick” and resonate.

5. Waging Political Warfare. A key component of combating transnational and state sponsored terrorist organizations is political warfare. Political warfare is best defined as an art or the art of waging and winning a conflict by nonmilitary means.<sup>220</sup> Something that we must be better at in the future in a globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Our agenda must focus on attacking our enemy, beating him ideologically, and keeping him in the wrong while continuing to influence and convince both Islamists and non-Islamists that Islamist terrorists threaten all religions and all humanity. We must appreciate that we are attempting to win over a very hostile and untrusting audience (Middle Eastern Muslims) from the hard core radicals. If we are to have any chance of success, our deeds will have to far exceed our words, or, in other words, “*Our video must exceed our audio!*”<sup>221</sup> We will have significant opportunities over the duration of the campaign plan to slowly break through the anti-Americanism sentiment that is currently on the rise in the Middle East as well as globally.

6. Immediate or Short-Term Communications Objectives.

- Engage in dialogue, as opposed to monologue, with the Islamic community.
- Identify and then resolve misunderstandings.
- Build and maintain relationships. Work toward a common purpose.
- Identify and discuss the common enemy (al-Qa’ida, AQAM, *salafi-jihadists*, Islamist Terrorists).
- *Brand* the enemy leadership (desired response is negative).
- Attack that enemy’s image, discredit and take control of the dialogue. Counter their messages and discredit their acts, themes, and ideology.<sup>222</sup>
- *ReBrand* America (desired response is positive). Dispel caustic myths about our society while emphasizing we are a tolerant pluralistic society that embraces people of all religions. Highlight how American Muslims are not repressed and are fully integrated into our society of equals.

7. Means to Communicate and Wage Political War. Ayman al-Zawahiri was one of the first to grasp the significance of the media and the importance of information domains. In July 2005, he stated: “We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. . . . we are in a media battle for the hearts and minds of the *umma*.”<sup>223</sup>

We must balance our methods by developing themes and messages that can be communicated by direct, indirect, or third party means, through key influencers, or, as required, by covert means. A few options for further development and refinement are:

- Buy and sponsor air time on satellite TV stations that can reach the Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Europe, and other places with large quantities of Islamic peoples. Partner with a Muslim state(s) or a Middle Eastern – Arabian regional security entity to develop an alternative to *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabia*.
- Fight terror on the Web. Create moderate Islamist sites, conduct discrediting operations on known jihadi web sites, challenge AQAM statements using ideology and facts. Significant resources and technological and cultural as well as Islamic religious expertise will be required. Tomorrow's *jihadi* ideologues are blogging today on al-Qa'ida web sites.
- Cyber-terrorism. Develop offensive as well as defensive capabilities.
- Defame, discredit and openly criticize or challenge senior *jihadi* leaders by attacking from multiple fronts (cartoons, news, blogs, Web posts, television, radio broadcasts, etc.). They live in a cave, or if lucky enough to hide in an urban dwelling, have limited freedom to maneuver so our ability to stay inside their propaganda and information decision cycle remains critical.
- Partner in the development of television shows that can reach the *ummah*. Shows can vary from Islamic Soaps, Security Force Reality TV, home improvement, world culture, and religious educational shows. If they are available through satellite technology, then transnational actors and corrupt regimes will have limited capability to censor these shows.
- Over time, build a relationship with the current major and minor Islamic media outlets and emerging outlets. Consistency and credibility are vital as we can reach multiple audiences who already tune in to the existing stations-outlets, but also those pre-disposed to new media venues.
- Degrade al-Qa'ida information operations capabilities. In Afghanistan, printing presses are critical components, while worldwide strategic communication is passed via the Internet.

The 2007 U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications is a significant positive step forward in gathering the entire interagency onto the same playing field. An update should be developed in conjunction with the development of a Grand National strategy to Combat Islamist Terrorism that considers the recommendations that have been put forth in this strategic research project.

## **UNITED STATES – MULTIFACETED LEADER IN THE WORLD**

The threat of terrorism is unlikely to lessen in the near-term. If we continue to focus solely on fighting tactical aspects of al-Qa'ida, then victory and achievement of our strategic objectives will never be reached. We must assume an outlook that can see beyond our current counterterrorism efforts and radical *salafi Islamism* threat to our way of life and global security. Five significant areas will now be addressed:

1. **Champion Other Causes.** The United States must continue to not only champion counterterrorism efforts globally, but should also endeavor to take the lead in other causes such as: (1) the prevention of human suffering, (2) natural disaster response—a global capability, (3) become champions of international law, and (4) demonstrate genuine concern over global warming and world health issues to include HIV-Aids pandemic flu, and water shortage issues.

Significant progress in a variety of these areas would go a long way toward diminishing the negative hegemonic hyper-power stereotype that we currently have. All of these efforts are costly, but arguably the second and third order benefits far outweigh the current short-term financial burdens.

2. Arab History and the West. The first confrontation between the Arab world and the West was in 1798, when Napoleon and the French invaded Egypt and swiftly and effortlessly conquered the country. Arabs awoke to a new reality, one where Europe was a immensely powerful behemoth that not only threatened to steal their precious resources, but threatened the existence of civilization as they had come to know it.<sup>224</sup> Over the next two centuries, Arabs would continue to perceive that Western colonization was responsible for diseases, stagnation, and all other grievances. Anti-Western sentiment was prominent in several Arab societies well before al-Qa'ida arrived on the scene. Nevertheless, the bin Laden-led al-Qa'ida propaganda franchise has proven to be expert at furthering this perception among Muslims and for holding the United States accountable for the multitude of modern day problems that the everyday disaffected Muslim experiences.

3. Western Perceptions. The Western perspective of Arab governments is that leaders are more interested in regime control than they are about the lack of civil liberties, escalating unemployment, lawlessness, persistently stagnant economies, corruption, and poor governance.<sup>225</sup> Extremism may be a by-product of weak, uncaring, or failing Islamic secular governments. We must put forward a strong agenda to push for societal, economic, and civil reforms in those countries that terrorists are breeding from (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, etc.). A delicate balance of coercion and economic enticement with the allure of mutual beneficial gains both financially and diplomatically must underwrite these initiatives. Allowing for greater political participation by select *jihadi* groups, groups that currently or have previously threatened secular governments (Muslim Brotherhood—Egypt, the *Shi'a* Again—Saudi Arabia), would be a significant step towards serious political reforms.<sup>226</sup> Allowing Islamist activists an active voice and the ability to influence policy would significantly undercut the al-Qa'ida strategy.

4. The Saudi Arabian Issue. The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia must change in light of the facts that indicate our enemies may be indirectly waging a war of attrition against the economies of the West while simultaneously setting the conditions for the next generation of *jihadis*. A much more detailed in-depth analysis must occur by a team of experts, to include at a minimum, sociologists, economists, religious scholars, political scientists, and academicians. At this time, it is not prudent to recommend a specific strategy or policy changes for our relationship with Saudi Arabia until the findings of such a study are made available. As we develop a strategy towards Saudi Arabia, we must also seek to renew the agenda with respect to Israel and Palestine.

5. Israel and Palestine. Since the end of hostilities of World War II, the issue of Palestine has continued to fester and serve as the greatest source of conflict in the Middle East. A new road map for peace is one of the more compelling global issues today, and one that terrorists have continually exploited to their benefit. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri have over-magnified U.S. diplomatic and financial support to Israel to increase anti-American sentiment and to further their cause. The perceived indifference of the U.S. Government to the plight of the Palestinians is and will continue to be a catalyst and motivator for recruitment and violent *jihad*. The United States should assume the lead role in partnership with the international community, Arab states, and Israel to broker a long-term settlement or trusteeship. The 2007 Annapolis Conference hosted by President Bush was one small, but very positive, step forward toward a peaceful settlement and resolution of the Palestinian issue. In the event an agreeable settlement is achieved within the next decade, removing the Palestine-Israel issue from the table will not solve the larger problems prevalent in the region. The only option that al-Qa'ida will accept is total destruction of the Jewish state. Still, a negotiated settlement agreeable and enforceable by all parties involved would do much to undercut the al-Qa'ida agenda and their legitimacy among the Arabs.

6. Multinational Counterterrorism. The United States will continue to lead and pursue a multinational approach to counterterrorism. Expanding our existing global counterterrorism network and sustaining our current allies in fighting terror is instrumental. Intelligence and information sharing has clearly improved as evidenced by numerous successful operations that have thwarted attacks on the homeland. We must seek to implement additional bilateral, multilateral, regional, and international agreements (security cooperation, interagency cooperation, military combined/joint activities, intelligence and information sharing, financial tracking, and confidence and security-building measures), building upon our current capabilities. Aligning incentives for Arab and Muslim states to combat Islamist terrorist organizations is a necessity. Perhaps through economic initiatives, we can develop mutually benefiting partnerships that provide additional income and jobs to the *ummah*, as opposed to the elites.

Violent extremist *Islamism* grew out of ignorance and dominance in the greater Middle East. The world community must recognize that al-Qa'ida and its network of *Islamist* terrorist organizations represent a new age of terror as they strive to become apocalyptic change agents. Agents of fortune that desire to acquire and then use chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear explosive (CBRNE) WMD-effects against the West.

7. Global Commitment to Nonproliferation and use of WMD/WME. Prevention of the proliferation and use of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear explosives by al-Qa'ida must be universally agreed upon and enforced. Transnational, regional, and local terrorist groups must clearly understand that any proliferation or usage of WMD/WME will meet with a harsh response from a full array of instruments of national power. We need to bring the Arab states into this coalition and leverage them, or coerce them if needed.

8. Afghanistan-Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan is continually exposed to a multitude of internal and external security challenges. The United States is partially to blame for the situation because of our unspecified policy objectives after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan at the hands of the *mujahidin* and the resulting chaos and vacuum that was created. Without any specified strategy or a desire to see a stable post-Soviet occupied Afghanistan, the conditions were inadvertently set for the growth of radical extremists. Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban were forged out of the Soviet-Afghan War and filled the power vacuum, which takes us to the present day and sets the stage for the current situation in the region.

Today, Pakistan is undeniably one of our essential partners in the war on terrorists. In March, 2008, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte made these telling remarks before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

Pakistan has been indispensable to our world-wide struggle against violent extremists, and successful American engagement with a stable and democratic Pakistan is vital to our national security interests. As Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan plays a pivotal role in the Coalition's war effort there. Without security and stability on the Pakistani side of the border, success in Afghanistan will prove elusive. Pakistan's future will also be decisive in the search for stability in South Asia—a region of vastly increased importance to the United States. The United States and Pakistan have a common interest in the success of a robust and multi-faceted fight against violent extremism, focused on democracy and economic development as well as on security cooperation. We intend to pursue that common interest vigorously with Pakistan's next government.<sup>227</sup>

Building Pakistan's counterterrorism expertise and developing additional economic opportunities that will ultimately benefit their growing middle class are two achievable goals. As a Muslim country taking the lead in the fight against al-Qa'ida, it can be leveraged towards greater commitments of other Muslim states.

9. Building Relations with the Islamic Change Agents. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine's Hamas, and Lebanon's Hizbullah, all which began as Islamist activist organizations that ultimately

reverted to the use of terror tactics as a means to achieve their stated political objectives, must be reached out to by the United States. In 2006, Hamas was elected as the Parliament of the Palestinian Authority (responsible for governing Gaza and the West Bank). In June 2007, the Battle for Gaza erupted between Hamas and its rival political party, Fatah, which refused to hand over the government.<sup>228</sup> Eventually, hostilities ceased and Fatah remained in power.

An opportunity may be presenting itself with the recent lawful election win by Hamas. Had they been able to actually assume control of the Palestinian Authority Parliament, this could have been the time to open a dialogue with Hamas in an attempt to convince them to take steps away from guerrilla warfare or attacks on Israeli soldiers and for them to condemn Islamist terror organizations such as al-Qa'ida. Hizbullah has continued to move more to the middle in its actions, and we should reassess our position on whether to open communications with this organization. One possible avenue is to work with these former terrorist organizations to persuade them to pursue a nonviolent agenda and ultimately evolve away from their Islamist terrorism beginnings.

We should constantly assess the global environment to determine if there are points in time to enter into the dialogue either directly or indirectly through third parties, Islamist terrorist organizations that can be influenced to denounce and discredit al-Qa'ida. Of course, this will have to be carefully executed, well thought out, and not perceived by our allies as the United States abandoning them. The point to press home is that organizations like Fatah, Hamas, and Hizbullah should strive through nonviolent actions to push their political agendas instead of reverting to terrorism. There will be future opportunities for the United States to shape and set conditions for this to occur in Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine. If we are to enter into relationships with these organizations, we must clearly set the conditions prior in order not to further upset the balance of power within the region or to undermine our own strategic objectives and fundamental underpinnings.

## **USE OF MILITARY FORCE**

The military will continue to play a pivotal role in our grand national strategy for counterterrorism and throughout the duration of the ILWCP. However, we should immediately reduce the signature and our forward deployed conventional military presence in the Middle East - Arabian Peninsula and continue to reduce presence as the situation in Iraq becomes increasingly more stable. We have embraced and internalized an expeditionary mindset and can swiftly deploy, seize the initiative, and conduct decisive operations against any foe. Nevertheless, the types of battles we will likely fight during the campaign will be irregular, against asymmetric threats, and against forces who are knowledgeable and adept at fighting 4GW or possibly even 5GW. Developing new joint concepts and supporting joint-service doctrines is required if we are to improve and expand our irregular warfare (IW) capabilities, which is essential for success in the 21st century.

Knowing we currently have no near peer competitor, nor will we in the next two decades, we would be better served if we slightly retailored a portion of our landpower towards COIN and IW. We can assume that we will deploy forces in the future to conduct either necessary proxy wars or to assist legitimate government security forces with COIN expertise and IW capabilities. As mentioned previously, standing up a revised and updated Phoenix Program would provide an integral capability when conducting COIN. Enhancing our special operations forces with foreign internal defense – irregular warfare-trained conventional landpower would provide the United States greater capability and flexibility to engage and conduct military-to-military partnerships, during Phase Zero conditions and through theater security engagement plans.

At all costs, we must work diligently to avoid another major combat action in the Middle East, at a minimum, for the remainder of the 21st century. Iran with its hegemonic intentions and the aspirations of a nuclear weapons program is the current wild card that poses a significant threat and could eventually ignite another major combat operation in the region. One possible scenario is that the United States would be compelled to execute a preemptive decisive combat action in the event they acquire or intend to use WMD/WME, or can be proven to have supplied a transnational terrorist group with that capability. A combination of highly mobile and lethal brigade combat teams (BCTs), with sufficient airpower, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and command, control, communications, and computer (C<sup>4</sup>) systems could swiftly destroy the Iranian ground and air forces or pound them into submission, while the U.S. Navy could easily destroy Iranian naval forces while keeping the sea lines of communication open for safe passage of commercial and military shipping. Phase IV after major combat operations in Iran, would take a significantly larger force to ensure security is maintained and stability and reconstruction operations could begin in earnest. The instability that would follow major combat operations is the fertile breeding ground that al-Qa'ida or like minded terror organizations of the future would seek in order to grow roots and infect others with their cancer.

A possible key to staving off a major war with Iran is to facilitate and set the conditions for a balance of power within the region among those states that reside in the Middle East. Our theater security cooperation plans (TSCP) and our intelligence and information sharing agreements must be robust and adaptable. Counterterrorism training would be a key component of our TSCP, as would border security, policing, criminal investigation, and legal training; all executed by a fully rounded-out interagency task force or team.

When fighting al-Qa'ida's cells and fighters who are a part of an ongoing insurgency, utilizing the full complement of human intelligence, ISR, and strategic special operations as well as highly trained conventional forces is required. At the tactical level, we fight to kill or capture and destroy cells, but units are also working diligently to improve security and overall general public services, therefore, it takes a combined effort between the military and interagency to win.

The use of military force for major combat operations should always remain an option, but not the first option when considering solutions to emerging problems that pose a direct or indirect threat to our national security. But in order to have any chance of winning against the al-Qa'ida movement, we need a full commitment by our leaders, our government and its many entities, our international partners, our citizens, and the military to see the task through to completion.

## **WAR IN THE 22ND CENTURY AND AL-QA'IDA AFTER NEXT**

It can be guaranteed that war in the 21st century will continue to be brutal and violent and good men and women in uniform as well as non-combatants will continue to die. Technological advancements in weaponry and network-centric war-fighting capabilities will play a more significant role in our future major combat operations. But history will repeat itself once again through the lesson that warfare will always entail chaos, uncertainty, and opportunity. Terrorism will still remain a viable tactic in the future, specifically for those ideologically motivated groups who cannot resource a standing or guerrilla army, nor choose to enter into major combat operations against a highly capable and resourced force.

Al-Qa'ida is like a mythical serpent in the garden; symbolic of deceit and identified as a guardian of religion or sacred things. Al-Qa'ida will continue to envision itself as the guardian and vanguard for Islam, and all who listen will experience more of its "fork-tongued" dialogue in the years ahead. The serpent will continue to hide from prying eyes inside the garden, using its natural surroundings to camouflage its movements, as well as shedding its skin to signify its evolution, until a moment of its choosing, when it can strike violently, causing death. The attacks

on our embassies in Africa, upon the USS *Cole*, and on American soil on 9/11, are eerie reminders of how evil, vengeful, and unforgiving this hatred-inspired group of extremists truly is.

Since the Treaty of Westphalia, nations and nations-states and more recently America and the West, have lived in a world that legally recognizes war. We subscribe to certain rules in war. Rules that protect noncombatants and innocents and that limit collateral damage and senseless loss of life, whenever operationally feasible and practical. We recruit, train, and then deploy warrior-statesmen who operate under a code of conduct that is built upon ethical behaviors, and then when absolutely necessary, they kill. Al-Qa'ida inspired terrorists terrorize, kill, and murder because their leaders have twisted their ideology and have reshaped the true meanings of the sacred canon of Islam and the *Holy Qu'ran*. The paradox of their dilemma is that terrorism may, over time, achieve local tactical victories, but, historically no terrorist organization has won and achieved its long-term goals.<sup>229</sup>

Upon the violent death, or capture, or death by natural causes of Osama bin Laden, al-Qa'ida will continue to reinvent itself with either a new generation of malevolent leadership or possibly fracture as members splinter off to form new offshoots of mother al-Qa'ida. A resounding message that the hardcore al-Qa'ida terrorists must always remember is that they will either die violently, get captured, but rarely (never) will they be allowed to retire and enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Offering them a golden bridge and a chance to quit and renounce their evil ways is a plausible option that we should pursue as this generation of al-Qa'ida survivors grows weary of the struggle that they cannot and will not win.

## CONCLUSION

The Islamic world has for hundreds of years been one of turmoil and conflict, with its constituents psychologically battered and often disillusioned. Many governments and elitist rulers in the Middle East fail terribly at providing the basic needs—food, clean water, energy, employment, and medical support—to their populace. True changes at all levels, ruler to ruled, must occur in the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula if there is to be any chance of harmony or peace. A “Winning Hearts and Minds Campaign” in the Middle East is an endeavor of several generations that requires nearly unlimited resources to earn the trust of Muslims or to overcome the suspicions they have of the West. This is a daunting prospect, when those same critical resources are needed at home for domestic programs or in other critical hotspots around the world. For al-Qa'ida and the *salafi-jihadis* to have been immutably defeated, their ideology will have to have been proven false, illicit, and in direct contradiction to the *Qu'ran* and *Sunnah*, and, more importantly, Muslims will have had to abandon their support to the *salafi-jihadi* terrorist organizations. If we and our international partners and Middle Eastern allies are to have any chance of winning, we will have had to orient the war through development of a grand national strategy and execute this war through an ILWCP.

The purpose of this research project was to argue the case that al-Qa'ida, its associated movement (AQAM), and *salafi-jihadi* Islamist terrorists are our correct enemies and that the United States will need to overhaul and rethink its long-term strategy, objectives, and capabilities to defeat these terrorist organizations. I argued that our current national and military strategies to combat terrorism have served us well, but are inadequate to wage a protracted war upon an ideological emboldened transnational foe with apocalyptic designs, and that we would be better served by preparing ourselves to fight a war of several generations (long war) against these enemies. I then made several recommendations to include the development of a cogent and relevant Grand National strategy for terrorism and a supporting integrated long-war campaign plan (ILWCP) to execute the strategy. Al-Qa'ida, the AQAM, and *salafi-jihadi* Islamist

terrorists pose a very real and direct threat to our national security and to the homeland, and only through the execution of a terrorism-focused Grand National strategy and ILWCP and by the synchronization of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power through a unified interagency effort in partnership with our multinational partners, IGOs, NGOs, and regional security organizations can we achieve victory on our terms.

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