THE LEGACY OF 9/11

How the War on Terror Changed America and the World

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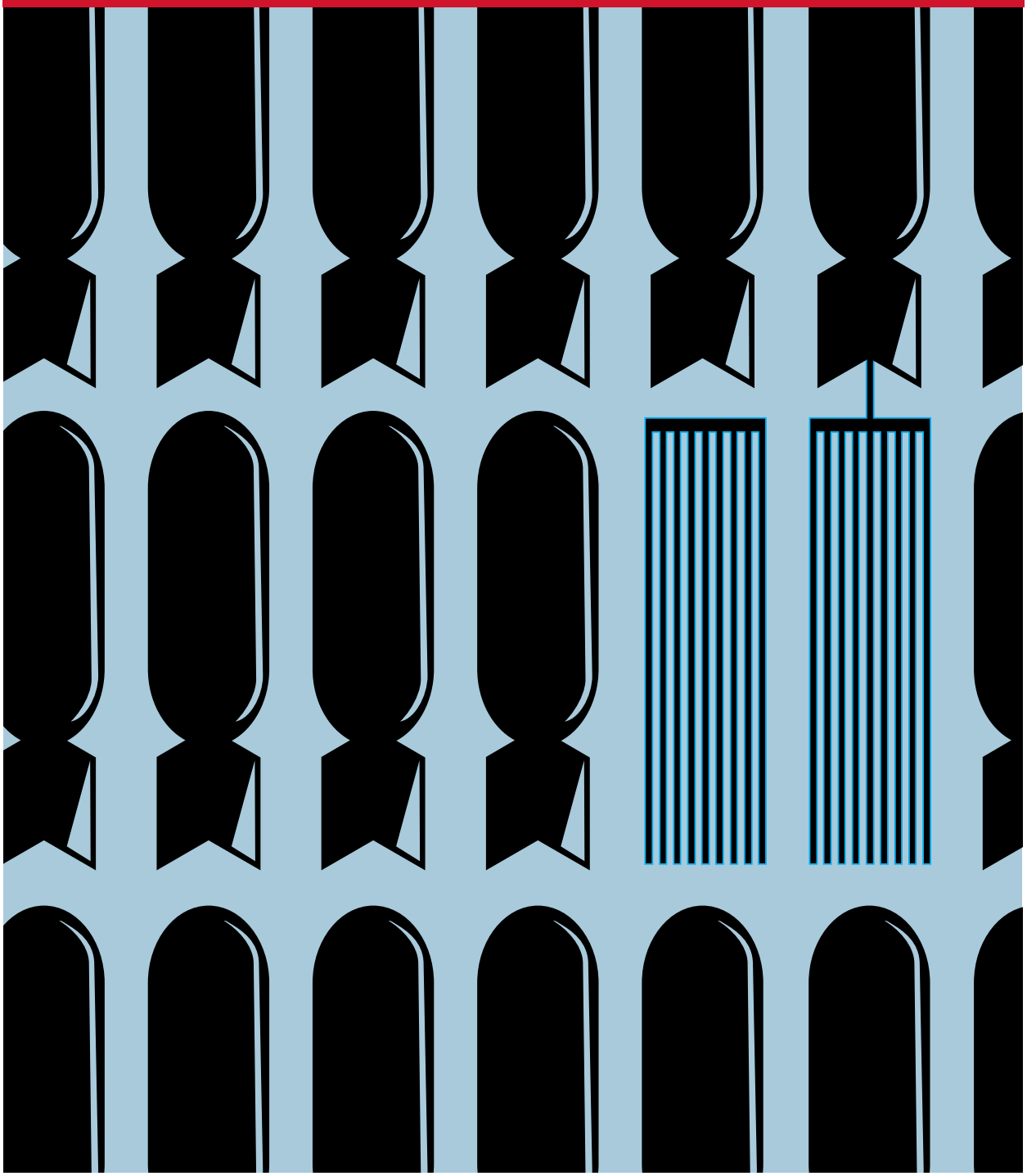

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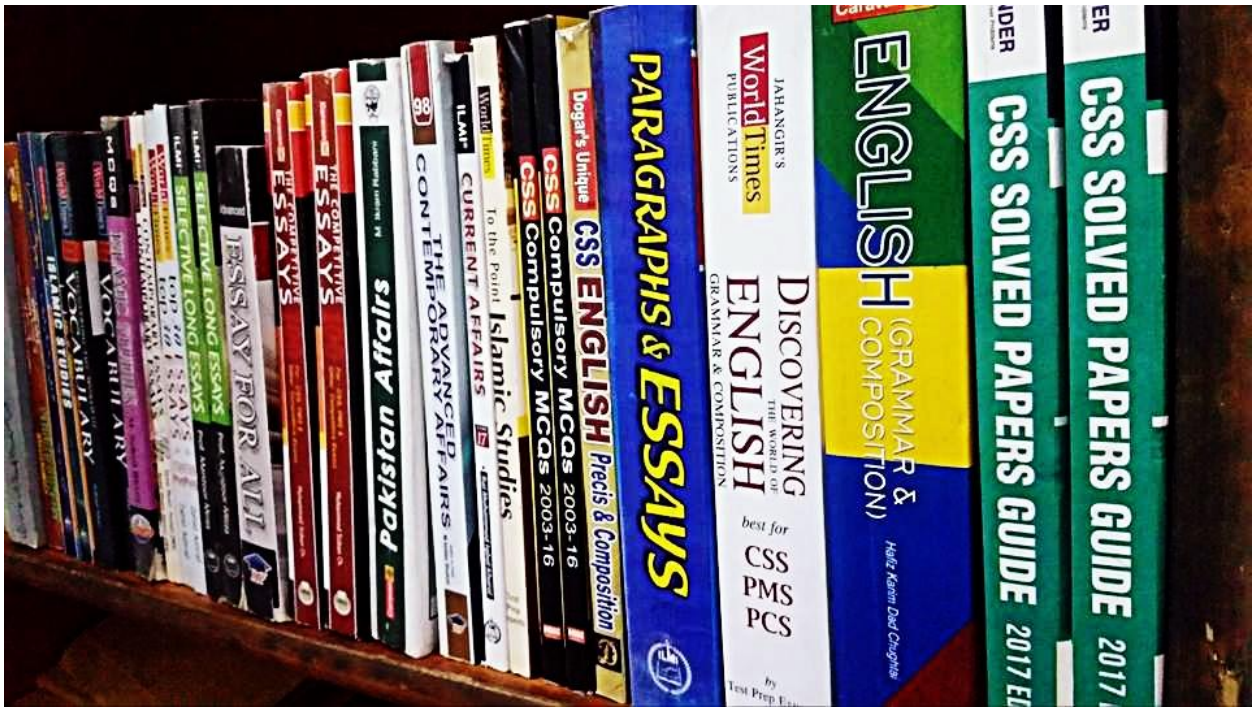

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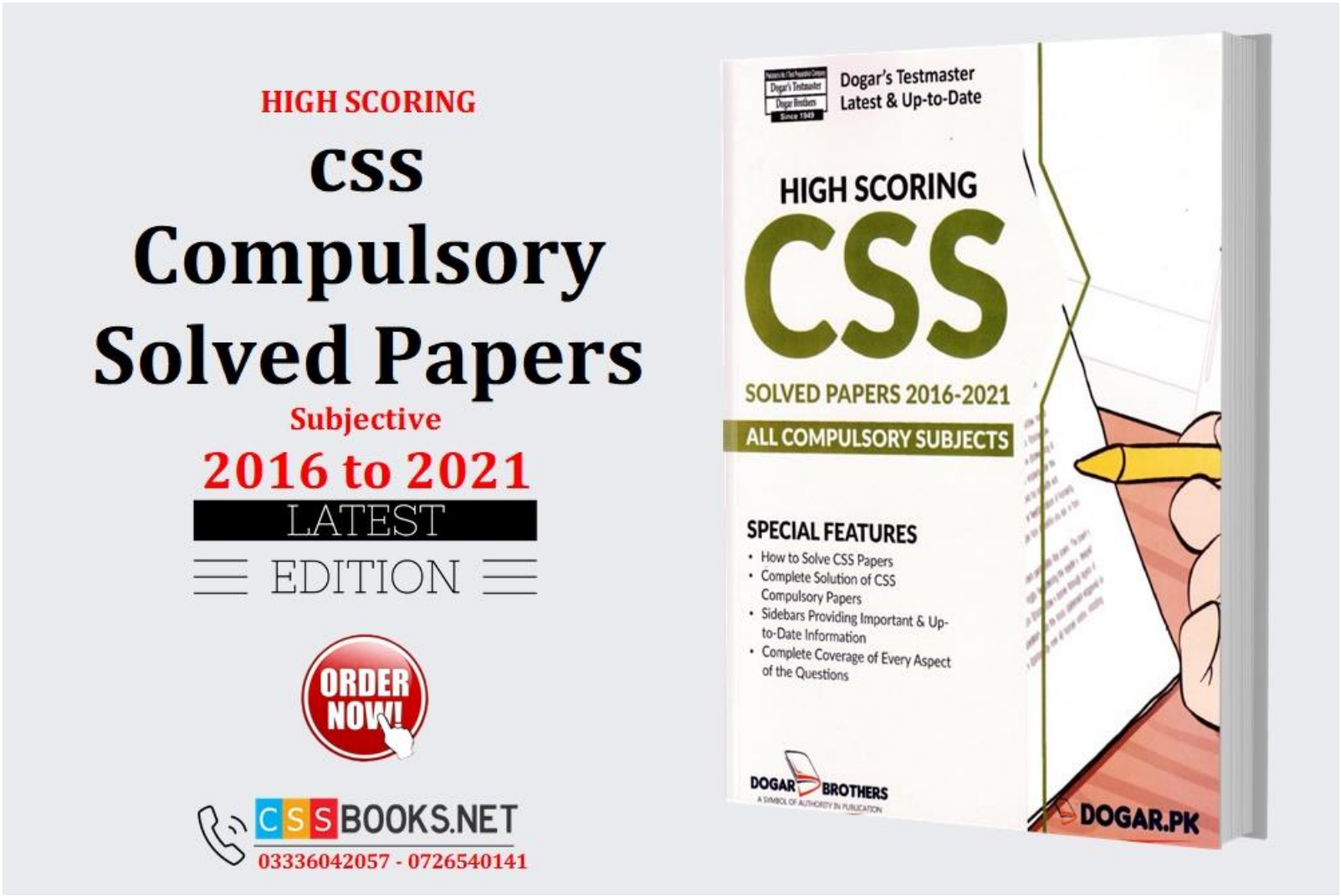

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Legacy of 9/11

How the War on Terror Changed America and the World

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Introduction

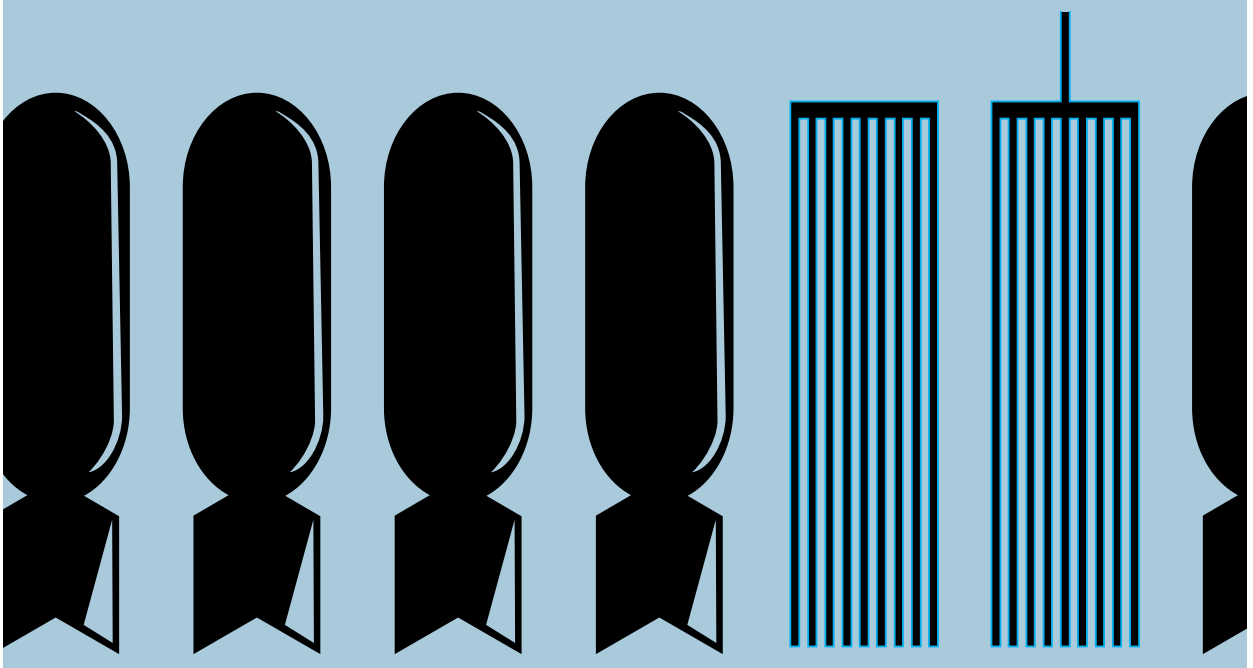
SEPTEMBER 2021

On September 11, 2001, the United States experienced the deadliest foreign terrorist attack in its history. As Americans grappled with the tragedy, the administration of President George W. Bush set out to comfort the nation and prepare for war. The immediate target was al Qaeda, the jihadi group responsible for the 9/11 attacks. But the enemy, according to Bush, was terrorism itself. The fight would test the United States "in ways it has not been tested before," Fouad Ajami wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that fall. "Washington had no choice but to take up the gauntlet," Michael Scott Doran argued a few months later. "But it is not altogether clear that Americans understand fully this war's true dimensions."

The massive mobilization that followed would involve ground invasions and drone strikes abroad, an overhaul of surveillance and security systems at home, and the recruitment of allies and partners across the globe. Almost overnight, U.S. foreign policy transformed. In this collection, *Foreign Affairs* surveys the policy debates surrounding the "war on terror" as the scope of the conflict expanded, the terrorist threat evolved, and Americans' appetite for indefinite combat waned.

Twenty years on, the campaign to root out terrorism "has changed both how the United States sees itself and how it is perceived by the rest of the world," Elliot Ackerman writes. Even now, "Washington cannot quite claim victory against al Qaeda and its ilk," Nelly Lahoud adds. The war that has consumed the United States—and much of the world—for the better part of two decades may simply be entering a new phase.

THE WAR AT 20



Bin Laden's Catastrophic Success

Al Qaeda Changed the World—but Not in the Way It Expected

Nelly Lahoud

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

On September 11, 2001, al Qaeda carried out the deadliest foreign terrorist attack the United States had ever experienced. To Osama bin Laden and the other men who planned it, however, the assault was no mere act of terrorism. To them, it represented something far grander: the opening salvo of a campaign of revolutionary violence that would usher in a new historical era. Although bin Laden was inspired by religion, his aims were geopolitical. Al Qaeda's mission was to undermine the contemporary world order of nation-states and re-create the historical umma, the worldwide community of Muslims that was once held together by a common political authority. Bin Laden believed that he could achieve that goal by delivering what he described as a "decisive blow" that would force the United States to withdraw its military forces from Muslim-majority states, thus allowing jihadis to fight autocratic regimes in those places on a level playing field.

Bin Laden's worldview and the thinking behind the 9/11 attack are laid bare in a trove of internal communications that were recovered in May 2011, when U.S. special operations forces killed bin Laden during a raid on the compound in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad where

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he had spent his final years hiding. In the years that followed, the U.S. government declassified some of the documents, but the bulk of them remained under the exclusive purview of the intelligence community. In November 2017, the CIA declassified an additional 470,000 digital files, including audio, images, videos, and text. With the help of two research assistants, I pored over 96,000 of those files, including nearly 6,000 pages of Arabic text that form a record of al Qaeda's internal communications between 2000 and 2011, which I have spent the past three years analyzing. These documents consist of bin Laden's notes, his correspondence with associates, letters written by members of his family, and a particularly revealing 220-page handwritten notebook containing transcripts of discussions between members of bin Laden's immediate family that took place in the compound during the last two months of his life. The documents provide an unparalleled glimpse into bin Laden's mind and offer a portrait of the U.S. "war on terror" as it was seen through the eyes of its chief target.

By the time of 9/11, bin Laden had been contemplating an attack inside the United States for decades. Many years later, in conversations with family members, he recalled that it was in 1986 that he first suggested that jihadis "ought to strike inside America" to address the plight of the Palestinians, since, in bin Laden's mind, it was U.S. support that allowed for the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian land. Bin Laden's concern for the Palestinians was genuine; their suffering, he often reminded his associates, was "the reason we started our jihad." But the Palestinians mostly served as a convenient stand-in for Muslims all over the world, whom bin Laden portrayed as the collective victims of foreign occupation and oppression. In his "Declaration of Jihad," a 1996 public communiqué that came to be known among jihadis as the "Ladenese Epistle," bin Laden grieved for Muslims whose "blood has been spilled" in places as far-flung as Chechnya, Iraq, Kashmir, and Somalia. "My Muslim brothers of the world," he declared, "your brothers in the land of the two holiest sites and Palestine are calling on you for help and asking you to take part in fighting against the enemy, your enemy: the Israelis and the Americans." This collective battle, bin Laden hoped, would be the first step in reviving the umma.

It soon became clear that bin Laden was ready to back his words with deeds. In 1998, al Qaeda carried out simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 224 people and

wounding more than 4,000. Emboldened by the international attention those strikes received, bin Laden became more ambitious. On October 12, 2000, al Qaeda rammed a small boat filled with explosives into the USS *Cole* as it was refueling in the port of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 U.S. Navy personnel. Soon after that, bin Laden told a large gathering of supporters that the attacks represented "a critical turning point in the history of the umma's ascent toward greater eminence."

The Abbottabad papers include handwritten notes that bin Laden composed in 2002, disclosing "the birth of the idea of 11 September." They reveal that it was in late October 2000, within weeks of the USS *Cole* attack, that bin Laden decided to attack the American homeland. They also reveal his reasoning at the time: bin Laden believed that "the entire Muslim world is subjected to the reign of blasphemous regimes and to American hegemony." The 9/11 attack was intended to "break the fear of this false god and destroy the myth of American invincibility."

About two weeks after the attack, bin Laden released a short statement in the form of an ultimatum addressed to the United States. "I have only a few words for America and its people," he declared. "I swear by God almighty, who raised the heavens without effort, that neither America nor anyone who lives there will enjoy safety until safety becomes a reality for us living in Palestine and before all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad." The attack had an electrifying effect, and in the years that immediately followed, thousands of young Muslims around the world committed themselves in various ways to bin Laden's cause. But a close reading of bin Laden's correspondence reveals that the world's most notorious terrorist was ignorant of the limits of his own métier.

Bin Laden was born in 1957 in Saudi Arabia. His father was a wealthy construction magnate whose company was renowned not just for the opulent palaces it built for the Saudi royal family but also for its restoration of the Islamic holy sites in Mecca and Medina. Bin Laden was raised in comfort, wanting for nothing. He grew into a poised young man who yearned to take part in political causes around the Muslim world. In his early jihadi exploits, which involved fighting in Afghanistan in the 1980s and helping finance and coordinate the mujahideen battling the Soviet occupation of that country, he demonstrated that he had learned something about entrepreneurship and management from the family business. And yet, although bin Laden's correspondence indicates that he was well versed in Islamic

history, particularly the seventh-century military campaigns of the Prophet Muhammad, he had only a perfunctory understanding of modern international relations.

That was reflected in the 9/11 attack itself, which represented a severe miscalculation: bin Laden never anticipated that the United States would go to war in response to the assault. Indeed, he predicted that in the wake of the attack, the American people would take to the streets, replicating the protests against the Vietnam War and calling on their government to withdraw from Muslim-majority countries. Instead, Americans rallied behind U.S. President George W. Bush and his "war on terror." In October 2001, when a U.S.-led coalition invaded Afghanistan to hunt down al Qaeda and dislodge the Taliban regime, which had hosted the terrorist group since 1996, bin Laden had no plan to secure his organization's survival.

The 9/11 attack turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory for al Qaeda. The group shattered in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban regime's collapse, and most of its top leaders were either killed or captured. The rest sought refuge in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, an autonomous area bordering Afghanistan. Hiding became a way of life for them. Their communications reveal that for the rest of bin Laden's life, the al Qaeda organization never recovered the ability to launch attacks abroad. (The group did carry out attacks in November 2002 in Kenya but was able to do so only because the operatives tasked with planning them had been dispatched to East Africa in late 2000 and early 2001, before everything fell apart for al Qaeda in Afghanistan.) By 2014, bin Laden's successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, found himself more preoccupied with delegitimizing the Islamic State (or ISIS), the jihadi group that eventually overtook al Qaeda, than with rallying Muslims against American hegemony. Still, it is impossible to look back at the past two decades and not be struck by the degree to which a small band of extremists led by a charismatic outlaw managed to influence global politics. Bin Laden did change the world—just not in the ways that he wanted.

LETTERS TO A MIDDLE-AGED TERRORIST

After fleeing to Pakistan following the Taliban's defeat, many al Qaeda fighters and operatives were arrested by authorities there. Fearing the same fate, the remaining al Qaeda leaders and many members of bin Laden's family covertly crossed the border into Iran in early 2002.

Once there, they were assisted by Sunni militants who helped them rent houses using forged documents. But by the end of 2002, the Iranian authorities had tracked down most of them and had placed them in a secret prison underground. They were later moved into a heavily guarded compound, along with their female relatives and children.

In 2008, bin Laden's son Saad escaped from Iran and wrote a letter to his father detailing how Iranian authorities had repeatedly ignored the al Qaeda detainees' medical conditions and how "the calamities piled up and the psychological problems increased." When Saad's pregnant wife needed to be induced, she was not taken to a hospital until after "the fetus stopped moving"; she was forced "to deliver him after he died." Saad was convinced that the Iranians "were masters at making us lose our nerve and took pleasure in torturing us psychologically." So desperate were their conditions that when a Libyan jihadi leader, Abu Uns al-Subayi, was eventually released in 2010, he wrote to bin Laden that Iran is where the "greatest Satan reigns." Detention there felt like being "exiled from religion," he wrote, admitting that he had even begged his Iranian captors to deport him to "any other country, even to Israel."

Bin Laden was completely unaware of these travails while they were happening. The Abbottabad papers show that in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, bin Laden disappeared from the scene and was not in command of al Qaeda for three years, even though he continued to release public statements cheering jihadi attacks in Indonesia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Russia, Tunisia, and Yemen. It was not until 2004 that bin Laden was finally able to resume contact with second-tier leaders of al Qaeda. He was eager to launch a new campaign of international terrorism. In one of the first letters he sent after reestablishing contact, he methodically outlined plans to carry out "martyrdom operations akin to the 9/11 New York attack." If these proved too difficult, he had alternative plans to target rail lines.

His associates quickly set him straight: al Qaeda had been crippled, and such operations were out of the question. In September 2004, a second-tier leader known as Tawfiq wrote a letter to bin Laden describing just how difficult things had been in the immediate aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan. "Our afflictions and troubles were heart-rending, and the weakness, failure, and aimlessness that befell us were harrowing," he wrote. He lamented that bin Laden's "absence and inability to experience [their] painful reality" had itself

fed the turmoil. "We Muslims were defiled, desecrated, and our state was ripped asunder," he reported. "Our lands were occupied; our resources were plundered. . . . This is what happened to jihadis in general, and to us in al Qaeda in particular."

Another second-tier leader, Khalid al-Habib, explained in a letter to bin Laden that during his three-year absence, their "battlefield achievements were negligible." He counted a total of three "very modest operations, mostly with [rockets], and from a distance." Another correspondent told bin Laden that al Qaeda's "external work"—that is, attacks abroad—had been "halted" because of the unrelenting pressure that Pakistan was exerting on the jihadis. As if this weren't bad enough, bin Laden learned that al Qaeda had been sold out by most of their erstwhile Afghan sympathizers and the Taliban—"90 percent of whom," Habib complained, "had been lured by the shiny dollars."

A LIFELINE FOR AL QAEDA

But around the time that bin Laden was able to reestablish contact, things started looking up for al Qaeda. After the U.S.-led coalition had ousted the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, the next phase of Bush's war on terrorism was the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a country ruled by a secular tyrant, Saddam Hussein, who viewed jihadis with hostility. The U.S.-led invasion put a swift end to Saddam's brutal reign but also led to the disbanding of the Iraqi army and the hollowing out of other secular government institutions. Initially, Arab Sunnis, the minority group that had dominated Iraq under Saddam, bore the lion's share of the sectarian violence that followed the invasion. This proved to be a lifeline for al Qaeda and other jihadi groups, which were able to position themselves as the defenders of the Sunnis. As Habib put it in his 2004 letter to bin Laden: "When God knew of our afflictions and helplessness, he opened the door of jihad for us and for the entire umma in Iraq."

Habib was referring, specifically, to the rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian jihadi who had come to prominence in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion. By 2004, Zarqawi, and not bin Laden, was the leader of the world's most powerful jihadi group. Aside from their shared commitment to violent jihad, the two men had little in common. Bin Laden had enjoyed a privileged upbringing; Zarqawi had grown up poor, had done time in prison, and had emerged not just as a religious extremist but also as a hardened ex-convict and a brutal thug. Despite the vast gulf between the two men, Zarqawi was eager

for his group, Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, to merge with al Qaeda. In a series of missives to bin Laden, Zarqawi made clear that his followers were "the sons of the Father"—that is, bin Laden—and that his group was a mere "branch of the original." Zarqawi also assured al Qaeda's leaders that he was collaborating with and seeking to unite all the jihadi factions in Iraq.

Zarqawi's enthusiasm pleased bin Laden. "The merger of the group [Jamaat] al-Tawhid wal-Jihad [would be] tremendous," bin Laden wrote to his deputy Zawahiri and Tawfiq, urging them "to give this matter considerable attention, for it is a major step toward uniting the efforts of the jihadis." In December 2004, bin Laden formalized the merger by publicly appointing Zarqawi as the leader of a new group, al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (often referred to in Western media as al Qaeda in Iraq).

Zarqawi's initiative eventually spurred jihadi groups in Somalia, Yemen, and North Africa to formally align themselves with al Qaeda. These groups did not directly grow out of the original organization, but their leaders saw many benefits in acquiring the internationally feared al Qaeda brand, especially the chance to improve their standing in the eyes of their followers and to gain international media attention, which they hoped would help them raise money and recruit new adherents. It worked.

Fixated on al Qaeda, counterterrorist authorities all over the world often subsumed all jihadis under a single umbrella, unwittingly giving individuals who wanted to associate themselves with bin Laden a larger selection of groups to potentially join. Thus, although the al Qaeda organization was broken, its brand lived on through the deeds of groups that acted in its name. All of this flowed from Zarqawi's alliance with bin Laden. In early 2007, a Saudi jihadi cleric, Bishr al-Bishr, described the merger in a letter to a senior al Qaeda leader as an instance of God having "shown mercy on al Qaeda," which would have come to an end had it not been for "the amazing jihadi victories in Iraq, which raised the value of al Qaeda's stocks." It was a divine intervention, he assessed: "God's way of repaying the people of jihad for their sacrifices in his path."

THINGS FALL APART

Bin Laden had assumed that those who pledged their allegiance to him would pursue the kind of attacks against the United States that al Qaeda had pioneered. Their success, he hoped, would "raise the morale of Mus-

lims, who would, in turn, become more engaged and supportive of jihadis," as he put it in a letter to Zawahiri and Tawfiq in December 2004.

Once again, bin Laden had miscalculated. The decision to bestow the al Qaeda imprimatur on groups that he did not control soon backfired. Zarqawi failed to unite Iraq's jihadi groups under his banner, and the country's most established jihadi group, Ansar al-Sunna (also known as Ansar al-Islam) refused to merge with him. Before long, bin Laden and his followers found themselves at the receiving end of letters that chronicled the squabbles among their new associates. "Ansar al-Sunna have been spreading lies about me," Zarqawi complained in one. "They say that I have become like [Antar] al-Zawabiri," the leader of a notoriously extremist Algerian group who had been killed in 2002 and whom many jihadis had considered to be overzealous even by their standards. "Can you imagine?!" he fumed.

More disturbing for al Qaeda than Zarqawi's vain whining, however, were his group's indiscriminate attacks, which resulted in massive Iraqi casualties, particularly among Shiites. Bin Laden wanted al Qaeda to make headlines by killing and injuring Americans, not Iraqi civilians—even if they were Shiites, whom Sunni jihadis saw as heretics.

From their hideouts in Pakistan and the tribal areas, al Qaeda's leaders struggled to unify the militant groups in Iraq that were now at the center of global jihadism. But the divisions among them became even more entrenched. Zawahiri tried to mediate between Zarqawi and Ansar al-Sunna, but his efforts failed. Ansar al-Sunna made it clear to al Qaeda that unity with Zarqawi was conditional on "correcting the ways of al Qaeda in Mesopotamia." Atiyah Abd al-Rahman (generally referred to as Atiyah), who oversaw al Qaeda's external contacts and relations at the time, grew ever more dismayed with Zarqawi's leadership and wrote to bin Laden that "we cannot leave the brother to act on the basis of his judgment alone." In a December 2005 letter intercepted by U.S. intelligence, Atiyah urged Zarqawi "to lessen the number of attacks, even to cut the current daily attacks in half, even less," pointing out that "the most important thing is for jihad to continue, and a protracted war is to our advantage."

Things went from bad to worse for al Qaeda after Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. airstrike in 2006. His successors declared themselves the Islamic State of Iraq without consulting bin Laden, Zawahiri, or any other senior al Qaeda figures. In 2007, ISI leaders stopped responding to al Qaeda's letters altogether, a silence that reflected, in

part, the fact that the Iraqi jihadis had begun losing ground to what became known as the Sunni Awakening, which saw U.S. forces forge ties with Sunni tribal sheikhs in order to confront the terrorists.

ON THE SIDELINES

Al Qaeda's management struggles were hardly limited to Iraq. In 2009, a group of jihadis in Yemen dubbed themselves al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula without alerting the parent group or even publicly pledging allegiance to bin Laden. They were to prove a persistent source of headaches. In or around 2009, an AQAP leader named Qasim al-Raymi admitted in a letter to al Qaeda's leadership that he and the group's other top members suffered from inexperience and "deficiencies concerning leadership and administration." He conceded that he himself was not equipped "to judge when, how, and where to strike." But inexperience did not deter AQAP's top leader, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, from announcing in 2010 that he wanted to proclaim an Islamic state in Yemen. It took a great deal of finesse on the part of senior al Qaeda leaders to dissuade him.

For his part, bin Laden was dismayed that AQAP even considered itself a jihadi group at all, much less an affiliate of al Qaeda. "Did you actually plan and prepare for jihad?" he tartly asked in a draft letter to Wuhayshi. "Or is your presence a result of a few government attacks to which the brothers responded, and in the midst of this reactive battle, it occurred to you that you should persist?" Wuhayshi's letters to bin Laden show that he was vexed by the guidelines that the leadership had given him. Despite backing down from declaring an Islamic state, Wuhayshi defied senior al Qaeda leaders' instructions to refrain from sectarian attacks targeting Houthis in Yemen and to curb military confrontations with the Yemeni government.

For bin Laden, the least problematic of the new al Qaeda spinoffs was the North African group al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Unlike the other affiliates, it did not want to proclaim a state and instead focused on taking Westerners hostage for ransom or for the freeing of jihadi prisoners held by Western governments. Bin Laden saw this tactic's potential for influencing Western publics and seemed to appreciate the pragmatic approach of AQIM's leader, Abu Musab Abdul Wadud. Still, because bin Laden could not communicate with AQIM in a timely fashion (since his communications depended on the schedule of a courier), his interventions often arrived too late and sometimes

even proved counterproductive. On at least one occasion, negotiations over the release of Western hostages that could have benefited AQIM fell apart because of bin Laden's meddling.

By 2009, most of al Qaeda's senior leaders were fed up with their unruly affiliates. That year, bin Laden hardly rejoiced when Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr, the leader of the Somali jihadi group al Shabab, sought a public merger with al Qaeda. Zubayr, too, wanted to proclaim an Islamic state. In a letter to Zubayr, Atiyah delicately explained that it would be best to "keep your allegiance to Sheikh Osama secret." For his part, bin Laden declined the public merger and suggested that Zubayr downsize from a state to an emirate, and do so quietly. "Our inclination," he wrote, "is that your emirate should be a reality to which the people grow attached without having to proclaim it." Zubayr complied with their wishes, but his response shows that he was troubled, rightly pointing out that he and his group were "already considered by both our enemies and our friends to be part of al Qaeda." A few years later, Zawahiri, who succeeded bin Laden after his death, finally admitted al Shabab into al Qaeda.

During the last year of his life, bin Laden lamented that his "brothers" had become a "liability" for global jihad. Some of their attacks, he bemoaned, resulted in "unnecessary civilian casualties." Worse yet, "the Muslim public was repulsed" by such attacks. The new generation of jihadis, he concluded, had lost their way.

In the winter of 2010–11, the revolts that became known as the Arab Spring initially gave bin Laden some hope. He reveled in the success of what he called the "revolutionaries" (*thuwar*) who brought down autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. But soon, he grew troubled. In conversations with his family, he worried that "the revolutions were born prematurely" and lamented that al Qaeda and other jihadi groups were mostly on the sidelines. He was resigned that "we cannot do anything except intensify our prayers."

Yet bin Laden was determined to "protect these revolutions" and intent on advising the protesters through his public statements. His one and only response to the Arab Spring went through at least 16 drafts before he made an initial recording of it. And his daughters Sumayya and Maryam, who had effectively co-authored most of the public messages that bin Laden delivered over the years, did much of the heavy lifting in composing the text. In late April 2011, they were planning to give it one more round of edits before the final recording,

but they ran out of time: U.S. Navy SEALs raided the Abbottabad compound before they had a chance to polish it. It was the U.S. government that ended up releasing the statement, probably to help establish that the raid had actually occurred and undermine the claims of conspiracy theorists to the contrary.

The raid was masterfully planned and executed. "Justice has been done," U.S. President Barack Obama declared in announcing bin Laden's death. With the man behind the 9/11 attack eliminated and with mostly peaceful and secular protesters on the march against Middle Eastern tyrants, it seemed for a moment that the jihadi movement had run its course. But that moment proved fleeting.

A SHORT-LIVED CALIPHATE

Back in Washington, the Obama administration had dropped Bush's "war on terror" moniker. But Obama maintained his predecessor's excessive focus on al Qaeda, and his team failed to discern divisions within jihadism that proved consequential. In choosing to go to war in Iraq, the Bush administration had exaggerated al Qaeda's connections to the country and overestimated the counterterrorism benefits of toppling Saddam's regime. The Obama administration, for its part, overestimated the positive effects that bin Laden's death and the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would have on the fight against jihadism. "The drawdown in Iraq allowed us to refocus our fight against al Qaeda and achieve major victories against its leadership, including Osama bin Laden," Obama claimed in October 2011. At that very moment, however, the ISI, al Qaeda's erstwhile ally in Iraq, was being energized by a new generation of leaders. The Obama administration and other Western governments failed to see the growing danger.

In 2010, the ISI had come under the leadership of a formerly obscure Iraqi who called himself Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Iraqi government's sectarianism and corruption offered fertile ground for the ISI to rebuild and grow. In 2010–11, Baghdadi unleashed a wave of terrorist assaults on Iraqi Christians and Shiites. This campaign enraged al Qaeda's leaders. "I do not understand," Zawahiri chafed in a letter he wrote to bin Laden a few months before the Abbottabad raid. "Are the brothers not content with the number of their current enemies? Are they eager to add new ones to their list?" He urged bin Laden to write to the ISI's leaders and instruct them to stop "targeting the Shiites indiscriminately" and to "end their attacks against

Christians." But bin Laden no longer had any influence over the ISI. The Iraqi group had moved on.

Between 2011 and 2013, the ISI expanded into Syria, inserting itself into the bloody civil war that had begun there after the regime of Bashar al-Assad crushed an Arab Spring uprising. In June 2014, after the ISI had conquered vast swaths of territory in both Iraq and Syria, the group's spokesperson, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, proclaime Baghdadi to be the leader of a new caliphate, and the group renamed itself the Islamic State, dropping all geographic references from its name. Its territorial expansion led jihadi groups in more than ten countries to pledge allegiance to the new caliph. In turn, the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) designated these groups as either "provinces" or "soldiers of the caliphate."

After bin Laden's death, al Qaeda continued to operate under Zawahiri's command, but it had now been fully eclipsed by ISIS. Still, just as bin Laden had been ignorant of terrorism's limits, Baghdadi proved to be clueless when it came to running a state, let alone a "caliphate" that aimed to conquer other countries without possessing so much as a single fighter jet. In September 2014, the Obama administration formed a coalition of 83 countries "to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIS." By 2016, ISIS had begun to collapse. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump kept up the fight, and the coalition eventually wrested control of all of ISIS's territory. Baghdadi had spurned bin Laden's strategy of fighting from the shadows in favor of empire building and had managed to replace bin Laden as the face of global jihadism. But the two men had similar fates. In October 2019, U.S. forces raided Baghdadi's compound in Idlib Province, in northwestern Syria. U.S. military dogs chased Baghdadi into a dead-end tunnel. Cornered, the caliph detonated a suicide vest. "The world is now a safer place," Trump declared.

THE FUTILITY OF TERROR

In the two years since Baghdadi's demise, Trump's pronouncement has held up. The jihadi landscape is still divided. Jihadi organizations continue to proliferate, but no group dominates in the way that al Qaeda and ISIS once did. Their capabilities range from merely howling threats, to throwing Molotov cocktails, to carrying out suicide operations or blowing up cars, to seizing control of territory—at least for a time.

When it comes to the next phase of the struggle, all eyes are on Afghanistan. Al Qaeda, ISIS, and a number of other groups maintain op-

erations in the country, but they are overshadowed by the larger conflict playing out between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which are both struggling for control of the country in the wake of the United States' withdrawal. In 2020, the United States and the Taliban reached a peace agreement in which the Taliban promised "to prevent any group or individual, including al-Qa'ida, from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies."

Will the Taliban make good on their promise? Judging by the Abbottabad papers, not all Taliban members were equal in the eyes of al Qaeda, which had long suspected that some Taliban factions had been seeking rapprochement with the United States. As early as 2007, Atiyah wrote to bin Laden that "forces within the Taliban are distancing themselves from al Qaeda to elude the terrorism accusation." And in 2010, Zawahiri expressed alarm in a letter to bin Laden that the Taliban seemed "psychologically prepared" to accept a deal that would render al Qaeda impotent. Owing to the Taliban's factionalism since 9/11, it may be difficult for the group's leaders to enforce compliance with the terms of their agreement with the United States.

The Taliban's factionalism may prove to be an intractable problem for the United States. But al Qaeda's experiences after 9/11 suggest that the same factionalism will also complicate matters for terrorists seeking refuge in Afghanistan. Even a sympathetic host regime is no guarantee of safe haven. Bin Laden learned that lesson the hard way, and Baghdadi later found out that controlling territory was even harder. But Washington and its allies have come to realize (or at least they should have) that an open-ended war on terrorism is futile and that a successful counterterrorism policy must address the legitimate political grievances that al Qaeda claims to champion—for example, U.S. support for dictatorships in the Middle East.

Washington cannot quite claim victory against al Qaeda and its ilk, which retain the ability to inspire deadly, if small-scale, attacks. The past two decades, however, have made clear just how little jihadi groups can hope to accomplish. They stand a far better chance of achieving eternal life in paradise than of bringing the United States to its knees.

Them and Us

How America Lets Its Enemies Hijack Its Foreign Policy

Ben Rhodes

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

No twenty-first-century event has shaped the United States and its role in the world as much as 9/11. The attacks pierced the complacency of the post–Cold War decade and shattered the illusion that history was ending with the triumph of American-led globalization. The scale of the U.S. response remade American government, foreign policy, politics, and society in ways that continue to generate aftershocks. Only by interrogating the excesses of that response can Americans understand what their country has become and where it needs to go.

It is difficult to overstate—and in fact easy to understate—the impact of 9/11. By any measure, the "war on terror" was the biggest project of the period of American hegemony that began when the Cold War ended—a period that has now reached its dusk. For 20 years, counterterrorism has been the overarching priority of U.S. national security policy. The machinery of government has been redesigned to fight an endless war at home and abroad. Basic functions—from the management of immigration to the construction of government facilities to community policing—have become heavily securitized, as

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have aspects of everyday life: travel, banking, identification cards. The United States has used military force in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Yemen, and a number of other countries. Terrorism has become a prominent issue in nearly all of Washington's bilateral and multilateral relationships.

The war on terror also reshaped American national identity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was a country bereft of the unifying sense of purpose that the Cold War had fostered. Gone was the clarity of the ideological struggle between capitalist democracy and communist autocracy, the free world and closed societies. After 9/11, President George W. Bush marshaled the aspiration for a unifying American identity and directed it toward a new generational struggle. The war on terror, he declared, would be on par with the epochal struggles against fascism and communism.

Bush's framing of counterterrorism as a defining, multigenerational, and global war represented an effective form of leadership after an unprecedented national tragedy, but it led inexorably to overreach and unintended consequences. The U.S. government soon abused its powers of surveillance, detention, and interrogation. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq became about far more than taking out al Qaeda. American democracy was linked to militarized regime change in ways that undermined its health at home and legitimacy abroad. The victories Bush and his administration promised—and that conservative media relentlessly predicted—never materialized, sapping Americans' confidence in government and provoking a search for internal scapegoats. The jingoistic nationalism of the immediate post-9/11 era morphed into a cocktail of fear and xenophobia that eventually produced a president, Donald Trump, who paid lip service to ending wars abroad and repurposed the rhetoric of the war on terror to attack a shifting cast of enemies at home.

The United States now has a president more genuinely committed to ending the country's "forever wars." President Joe Biden's determination to do so is demonstrated by his decision to remove U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and even more clearly by his administration's global agenda. In Biden's first address to the U.S. Congress, in April, and in a speech he made at the G-7 summit in June, terrorism was supplanted by the challenges of stamping out a pandemic, fighting climate change, revitalizing democracy, and preparing the United States and its allies for an enduring competition with an assertive

China. After 20 years, Biden is taking steps to move the country into a new period of history: the post-post-9/11 era.

Yet the vast infrastructure of the war on terror remains in place, and its prerogatives continue to influence the organization of the U.S. government, the deployment of the U.S. military, the operations of the U.S. intelligence community, and Washington's support for autocratic regimes in the Middle East. As was the case in the Obama administration, those realities constrain the United States' ability to move decisively past the post-9/11 era, lead a global revitalization of democracy, and buttress a rules-based international order. A true pivot will require more dramatic steps: reconfiguring or dismantling aspects of the U.S. post-9/11 enterprise and changing a securitized mindset that has encouraged authoritarianism at home and abroad. The U.S. government cannot end forever wars if it is designed to fight them; it cannot revitalize democracy if democracy consistently winds up on the losing end of national security tradeoffs.

Meanwhile, what the United States represents and what it means to be an American are far more contested today than when the nation reflexively rallied after 9/11. The debate about American identity has become so acute that the country has been rendered more vulnerable to the kinds of violent extremism that its post-9/11 posture was built to prevent. There was a time when a deadly assault on the U.S. Capitol would have been a sobering wake-up call to action; today, it has been interpreted largely through the prism of tribal politics characterized by right-wing denialism and deflection. The same Republican Party that led the establishment of a multitrillion-dollar security state after September 11 doesn't even want to investigate what happened on January 6.

In this context, one way to redefine the United States' purpose in the world—and reshape American identity at home—would be to focus on competition with the Chinese Communist Party. That contest is the one major concern in U.S. politics that evokes broad bipartisan agreement. And there are good reasons to be concerned about the CCP. Unlike al Qaeda, it has both an alternative view of governance and society and the power to remake much of the world to suit its own purposes. Ironically, China's ascent in global influence accelerated rapidly after 9/11, as the United States was too often consumed by its focus on terrorism and the Middle East. In terms of geopolitical influence, the CCP has been the biggest beneficiary of the war on terror. There are also good reasons, however, to be wary of how a U.S.-Chinese confron-

tation might play out. Defining the United States' purpose in the world and American identity through a new "us versus them" construct risks repeating some of the worst mistakes of the war on terror.

THE OCEAN LINER

President Barack Obama used to call the U.S. government "an ocean liner": a massive, lumbering structure that is hard to turn around once pointed in a certain direction. After 9/11, the Bush administration pointed the ship in a new direction and generated an enormous amount of momentum. The national security apparatus was refocused on fighting terrorism: vast new bureaucracies were established, organizational charts redrawn, new authorities granted, budgets rewritten, priorities upended. After U.S. forces routed the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, a delirious triumphalism took hold in Washington. U.S. global influence never seemed stronger, and the politics of being tough on terrorism was resoundingly validated at the ballot box in the 2002 midterm elections, when the GOP swept control of Congress. Ever since, the United States has been cleaning up the wreckage left behind in the ocean liner's wake.

Today, the countries that experienced the most intense fighting of the war on terror are mired in various degrees of conflict. Afghanistan is returning to the state of civil war and Taliban ascendancy that preceded 9/11. Iraq has weathered a lengthy insurgency that generated al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which later morphed into the Islamic State (also known as ISIS); the country remains riven by intercommunal rivalry and Iranian influence. Libya, Somalia, and Yemen all lack governing authorities and host brutal proxy wars. There was certainly a basis for U.S. military action after 9/11, and certain threats necessitate a military response. Yet the conditions in these countries demonstrate the limits of military intervention and raise uncomfortable questions about whether, on balance, the people of these countries would have been better off without it.

The costs of the post-9/11 wars have been staggering. Over 7,000 U.S. service members have died in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50,000 were wounded in action, and more than 30,000 U.S. veterans of post-9/11 conflicts have taken their own lives. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis lost their lives, and 37 million people, as estimated by Brown University's Costs of War Project, have been displaced by the post-9/11 conflicts that have involved U.S. forces.

Meanwhile, the price tag of those wars—and for caring for those who fought them—is approaching $7 trillion.

Counterterrorism has also consumed an incalculable amount of the limited bandwidth of the U.S. government—everything from the time and attention of the president and senior officials to staffing and prioritization within agencies. Consider what else the United States could have done with those resources and that bandwidth over the last two decades, as the country struggled to keep pace with climate change, epidemics, widening inequality, technological disruption, and diminished U.S. influence—especially in places enticed by the CCP's growing economic clout and promises of infrastructure improvements.

Of course, the party that instigated the war on terror was al Qaeda. After 9/11, the United States and other countries faced the risk of further catastrophic terrorist attacks and had to respond. To their credit, the U.S. military and the U.S. intelligence community decimated al Qaeda and took out its leader, Osama bin Laden. ISIS has been similarly rolled back through a campaign that involved a limited U.S. presence on the ground. My personal experience with the Americans who carry out U.S. counterterrorism policies has led me to overwhelmingly admire them. They have served their country bravely through administrations with shifting priorities, helping prevent attacks and save lives. Aspects of the country's counterterrorism apparatus have certainly been necessary.

That reality, however, does not erase the enormous excesses and warped risk calculations that defined Washington's response to 9/11. The kinds of attacks that the country spent trillions of dollars to prevent would have caused only a fraction of the deaths that could have been prevented by a more competent response to COVID-19, by the minimal gun safety measures that have been blocked by Congress, or by better preparation for deadly weather events intensified by climate change—all of which were neglected or stymied in part because of Washington's fixation on terrorism. The scale of the costs—and opportunity costs—of the post-9/11 wars suggests that the country needs a structural correction, not simply a change of course.

EASY TO START, HARD TO END

From the president on down, nearly all of the Biden administration's top officials played a role in the Obama administration's efforts to extricate the United States from its post-9/11 wars, a complex and

politically fraught task that ultimately reduced the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq from nearly 180,000 in 2009 to roughly 15,000 by 2017. And during Obama's second term, Washington's global agenda looked something like the one that Biden described in his address to the G-7: organizing the world to combat climate change, strengthening global health systems, and pivoting to Asia while trying to contain a revanchist Russia.

With the benefit of hindsight, however, it is clear that the Obama administration—whose critics usually fault it for excessive restraint—actually erred in the opposite direction by sustaining aspects of the post-9/11 project. A 2009 troop surge in Afghanistan prolonged the war despite diminishing returns. The expanded use of lethal drones achieved tactical successes but institutionalized a capability to kill people in many countries. Acquiescence to authoritarian allies, including a Saudi regime that launched a catastrophic war in Yemen, undermined U.S. rhetoric about democracy. After Trump took office, his administration deployed tens of thousands of U.S. troops to the Middle East to confront Iran, relaxed restrictions meant to limit civilian casualties, cast aside concerns about human rights, fully embraced autocratic allies and partners, and deprioritized climate change and global health.

The clear lesson is that it won't be enough to merely redirect the ocean liner; Biden and Congress should redesign it. Take climate change. Under Obama, the effort to achieve the Paris agreement to limit global warming drew on scarce climate expertise scattered across agencies and a fraction of the resources allotted by Congress for counterterrorism. The Obama White House went to great lengths to connect that climate expertise with the machinery of U.S. foreign policy: the bilateral and multilateral relationship management required to achieve anything substantial in international politics. Once the Trump administration took office, this nascent prioritization of the climate was halted. The same thing happened to a White House office dedicated to pandemic preparedness that Obama had established after the Ebola outbreak in 2014. Trump shuttered that office, folding its portfolio into a directorate focused on weapons of destruction: pandemic preparedness was quite literally absorbed into the infrastructure of the war on terror.

Today, the Biden team has the advantage of two decades' worth of evidence that the focus on terrorism has warped national priorities, with rising public concerns about pandemics, a warming climate, and chal-

lenges from China and Russia. To truly prioritize those issues, Biden and his Democratic allies in Congress should work to dismantle parts of the post-9/11 enterprise. The 2001 congressional Authorization for Use of Military Force, which has been used to give legal standing to a wide range of military interventions since 9/11, should be repealed and replaced by something far more narrowly tailored, with a built-in sunset before the end of Biden's term. Drone strikes should cease to be routine and should be used only in circumstances in which the U.S. government is prepared to publicly reveal and justify its actions. The U.S. military's global force posture should reflect the diminishing prioritization of the Middle East; the Pentagon should reduce the oversized presence of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf region, which escalated in the Trump years.

To make permanent the focus on issues such as climate change and global health, the Biden administration should increase federal investments in clean energy, pandemic preparedness, and global health security and should accompany that spending with major reforms. For instance, agencies such as the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development should ramp up their climate expertise, and the intelligence community and the military should devote more resources to understanding and responding to truly existential dangers that threaten the American people.

The Biden team will encounter resistance to those steps, just as the Obama administration often found itself swimming against the tide of American politics. The effort to close the costly and morally indefensible U.S. prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, was stymied by members of Congress from both parties. The cynical extremity of the Republican response to the 2012 attack on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya, blended a growing penchant for far-right conspiracy theories with Republican attempts to delegitimize any foreign policy initiative supported by the Democratic Party. The Iran nuclear deal—designed to prevent both an Iranian nuclear weapon and yet another war—proved to be more contentious (and drew less congressional support) than did the authorization of an open-ended war in Iraq.

Yet Biden is in a post-Trump, post-pandemic moment. The GOP's embrace of Trumpism clearly endangered the lives of Americans and destroyed the party's claim to a foreign policy that promotes American values. Biden and his team are uniquely suited to make the case to the public that they are more trustworthy, competent, and capable of securing the country and strengthening its democracy.

To do so, the United States must abandon the mindset that undermines democratic values. Consider the experience of Mohamed Soltan, an Egyptian American who took part in the 2011 protests in Tahrir Square. He celebrated the downfall of the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak and the democratic opening that followed. But after a 2013 military coup ousted Egypt's elected president, Mohamed Morsi, Soltan joined protesters in Cairo's Rabaa Square. Security forces opened fire, killing at least 800 people. Soltan was shot. He was then imprisoned, tortured, and encouraged by interrogators to commit suicide. He went on a hunger strike that lasted almost 500 days and resisted the appeals of ISIS recruiters who were allowed to enter his cell. He was released only after a personal appeal from Obama to Egypt's dictator, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

This dystopian scenario reveals the dysfunction of a post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy that provides billions of dollars in military and economic aid to a brutal regime that allows ISIS recruiters to roam its overpopulated prisons, fostering the very radicalization that justifies both the regime's brutality and U.S. assistance. The war on terror was always at war with itself. The United States subsidizes Egyptian repression while paying lip service to democratic values, just as Washington continues to sell weapons to a Saudi government that silences dissent and has waged a brutal war in Yemen. It is no coincidence that the governments of key U.S. partners in the war on terror—not just Egypt and Saudi Arabia but also Israel and Turkey, among others—have grown more repressive since 9/11, contributing to the rising tide of authoritarianism around the world that the United States wants to roll back.

Revitalizing global democracy is not compatible with a permanent global war on terror. The balance of tradeoffs has to shift. U.S. military assistance should be conditioned on respect for human rights. Washington should cast off the hypocrisy that has weighed down American foreign policy for too long.

THE WAR AT HOME

The war on terror not only accelerated authoritarian trends elsewhere; it did so at home, too. The jingoism of the post-9/11 era fused national security and identity politics, distorting ideas about what it means to be an American and blurring the distinction between critics and enemies.

After 9/11, an us-versus-them, right-wing political and media apparatus stirred up anger against Americans who were not sufficiently

committed to the war on terror and hyped the threat of an encroaching Islamic "other." But as the 9/11 attacks receded into memory and it became clear that no grand victories would take place in Afghanistan or Iraq, the nature of that "other" shifted. Fear-mongering about terrorism and conspiracy theories about "creeping sharia" morphed into fear-mongering about immigrants at the southern border, anger at athletes who took a knee during the national anthem to protest police violence, and conspiracy theories about everything from Benghazi to voter fraud. More often than not, this dynamic targeted minority populations.

Ironically, this redirection of the xenophobic currents of the country's post-9/11 politics ended up fueling terrorism rather than fighting it, with white nationalists running over a counterdemonstrator in Charlottesville and killing 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. It also contributed to once unthinkable authoritarian scenarios. When fellow citizens are relentlessly cast as enemies of the state, even a violent American insurrection can become real.

When a superpower embraces a belligerent strain of nationalism, it also ripples out around the world. The excesses of post-9/11 U.S. policies were repurposed by authoritarians elsewhere to target political opponents, shut down civil society, control the media, and expand the power of the state under the guise of counterterrorism. Of course, this is not Washington's doing. Yet just as Americans should recoil when Russian President Vladimir Putin indulges in whataboutism to excuse his abuses, they should not blithely ignore their own country's overreach and belligerent nationalism, which undermines Washington's effort to push back against Putin, defend democratic values, and reinforce a rules-based order.

Like Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping has embraced the American war on terror as a template for repression and a justification for abuses. In 2014, Uyghur terrorists took dozens of lives in the autonomous territory of Xinjiang, in western China. State media referred to the attacks as "China's 9/11." Xi urged CCP officials to follow the American post-9/11 script, setting in motion a crackdown that would eventually lead to a million Uyghurs being thrown into concentration camps. At a meeting in 2019, Trump reportedly told Xi that detaining the Uyghurs in camps was "exactly the right thing to do."

Although nothing in the United States' response to 9/11 approaches the scale of the CCP's repression, Trump's comment was far from the only validation that the CCP would find in the post-9/11 era. In the

years following 9/11, several Uyghurs were held in the U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay. None were found guilty of terrorism or deemed to pose a serious danger to the United States. When Obama tried to close the prison at the outset of his presidency, there was a plan to release a few Uyghur detainees in the United States to show that the American government was willing to do its part, since it was asking other countries to repatriate some of their citizens who had been detained at Guantánamo but cleared for release, and the Uyghurs could not be safely repatriated to China. Obama's proposal was met with hyperbolic opposition that resulted in restrictions that prevented the prison's closure. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Senator Joe Lieberman, an independent from Connecticut, led the charge, releasing a joint declaration that claimed that the Uyghurs "have radical religious views which make it difficult for them to assimilate into our population"—a statement that sounded precisely like CCP propaganda regarding its actions in Xinjiang.

Americans rightfully take pride in their country's tradition of global leadership and its aspiration to be "a city upon a hill" that sets an example for the world. But why would they think that others will follow their example only when it reflects positive values and qualities? When Americans invade another country for no good reason, support autocracy out of convenience, and stigmatize minorities in their own country, they should not be surprised when other countries emulate those misdeeds or use them to justify their own authoritarian excesses.

Americans must confront this uncomfortable reality not because Washington should retreat from the world but because it cannot cede the field to leaders like Putin and Xi. The United States must live up to the better story it tells itself as the leader of the free world. Ultimately, this is the most important lesson that Americans must learn from the post-9/11 period. Restoring American leadership requires rebuilding the example of American democracy as the foundation of the United States' foreign and national security policy.

MORE US, LESS THEM

All these lessons must be applied to an intensifying competition with China. Biden is justifying huge outlays on infrastructure by pointing to the need to prove that democracies can outcompete the CCP's state-controlled capitalism. Congress is investing substantial resources in science and technology to keep pace with Chinese innovation. The

Biden White House is proposing industrial policies that would favor certain U.S. industries and refining export-control regimes to disentangle critical supply chains that link the United States and China. U.S. defense spending is increasingly shaped by future contingencies involving the People's Liberation Army. The State Department has prioritized the fortification of U.S. alliances in Asia and enhanced contacts with Taiwan. Washington has become increasingly critical of Chinese human rights violations in places such as Hong Kong and Xinjiang. On trade, technology, and human rights, the United States is working with partners and through multilateral organizations, such as the G-7 and NATO, to forge the firmest possible united front against China. These efforts will create their own political incentives and pressures; they will also create momentum for the expansion of resources and bandwidth within the U.S. government. Already, one can sense the ocean liner adjusting course.

Yet although each of these initiatives has its own justification, it would be a mistake to simply focus on the new "them"—an impulse that could facilitate another wave of nationalist authoritarianism of the kind that has poisoned American politics for the past 20 years. Better to focus more on "us"—a democracy resilient enough to withstand a long-term competition with a rival political model, forge consensus among the world's democracies, and set a better example to the world.

In addition to delivering on big-ticket items, such as infrastructure, American democracy must be fortified and revitalized. Protecting the right to vote and strengthening democratic institutions at home must be the cornerstone of the United States' democratic example. Addressing inequality and racial injustice in the United States would demonstrate that democracies can deliver for everyone. Rooting out corruption that flows through the U.S. financial system would help clean up American politics and choke off resources that flow to autocrats in other countries. Stemming the flood of disinformation and hate speech on U.S. social media platforms would curb radicalization and undermine authoritarianism all over the world. For 30 years, the U.S. government has prioritized economic interests over human rights in dealings with the CCP, and so have many American companies, cultural institutions, and individuals. This must change—not because of Washington's geopolitical opposition to Beijing but because of the United States' support for democratic values at home and around the globe.

The world is a difficult and sometimes dangerous place. The United States must assert itself to defend its interests. But the post-post-9/11 era should be defined not by a confrontation with the next enemy in line but rather by the revitalization of democracy as a successful means of human organization. To replace the war on terror with a better generational project, Americans have to be driven by what they are for, not what they are against.

The Good Enough Doctrine

Learning to Live With Terrorism

Daniel Byman

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In the 20 years since the 9/11 attack, U.S. counterterrorism policy has achieved some striking successes and suffered some horrific failures. On the positive side, jihadi organizations such as al Qaeda and the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) are now shadows of their former selves, and the United States has avoided another catastrophic, 9/11-scale attack. The worst fears, or even the more modest ones, of U.S. counterterrorism officials have not been realized. With terrorism less of an immediate concern, U.S. President Joe Biden has turned Washington's focus toward China, climate change, and other issues—even withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan as part of an effort to end the so-called forever wars.

At the same time, however, many of the United States' more ambitious foreign policy efforts done in the name of counterterrorism since 9/11, such as effecting regime change in the Middle East and winning the goodwill of Muslims around the world, have failed and even backfired. Although al Qaeda and ISIS are far weaker than they were at their peak, they have persisted in the face of tremendous pressure, and their reach, albeit at times more ambitious than their grasp, has

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only grown since 2001. Today, other countries face potent terrorist threats, and al Qaeda, ISIS, and their various affiliates and allies remain active in civil wars around the world.

Instead of a decisive victory, the United States appears to have settled for something less ambitious: good enough. It recognizes that although jihadi terrorism may be impossible to fully and permanently eradicate—or the costs of trying to do so are simply too high—the threat can be reduced to the point where it kills relatively few Americans and no longer shapes daily life in the United States. As Washington has grown more skeptical of large-scale counterinsurgency operations designed to reshape whole societies, the most recent three administrations—Barack Obama's, Donald Trump's, and now Biden's—have focused on keeping jihadi organizations weak and off balance. Through a mix of intelligence gathering, military operations, and homeland security efforts, they have mostly succeeded in keeping the fight "over there." To a remarkable degree, the United States itself has been insulated from the threat. Jihadism remains alive and well abroad and is not going away anytime soon, but the current U.S. doctrine is a politically feasible and comparatively effective way of managing the issue. Good enough, it turns out, is good enough.

ON THE RUN

The severity of the threat posed by jihadi groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS depends on where you are. Data from the think tank New America indicate that 107 Americans have died in jihadi terrorist attacks on U.S. soil since 9/11, almost half of whom were killed at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016 by Omar Mateen, who declared allegiance to ISIS during his rampage. Europe, by contrast, has suffered far more such violence. In one gruesome 2015 evening in Paris alone, ISIS suicide bombers and shooters killed 130 people in a coordinated series of attacks. Europe has also seen far more stabbings and other low-casualty attacks, in part because it has stricter gun laws. As ISIS's strength has waned, however, attacks on both sides of the Atlantic have subsided. As of mid-July 2021, the United States had not endured a jihadi attack since December 2019, when a Saudi student linked to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula killed three sailors at a U.S. Navy base in Florida. Europe has suffered fewer casualties than during the peak years of 2015 and 2016.

These numbers pale in comparison to those of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, where jihadi groups are far more active than they

were before 9/11. Al Qaeda has a presence in, among other countries, Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iran, Libya, Mali, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen. ISIS is present in most of those countries, plus Cameroon, Chad, Iraq, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Russia. Many of these countries suffer from civil wars in which jihadi groups are among the active participants. Hundreds of thousands have died in these conflicts.

One crucial factor keeping the United States safe is the American Muslim community. After 9/11, U.S. officials feared that the country was home to an angry Muslim population riddled with al Qaeda sympathizers and sleeper agents. In 2003, Robert Mueller, the director of the FBI, warned that the country's "greatest threat is from al Qaeda cells in the United States that we have not yet been able to identify." This fear turned out to have no basis in fact. Compared with European Muslims, American Muslims are well integrated into society. Indeed, their average educational and income levels are equivalent to or higher than those of non-Muslims. Although some have attempted to travel abroad to join ISIS, they have done so at far lower rates than European Muslims. Most important, American Muslims have cooperated closely with law enforcement and the FBI, making it hard for cells and radicalized individuals to organize and plan operations.

The jihadi movement also suffers from numerous weaknesses that hamper its ability to carry out attacks. Even at the height of al Qaeda's power, for instance, the movement the group sought to lead had conflicting priorities: Should it fight foreign invaders, topple supposedly apostate regimes in the Middle East, or take the war to the United States? These divisions are more pronounced today. Different factions disagree on whether and when to declare an Islamic state, how to handle nonbelievers and the insufficiently pious, which enemy to target first, and, of course, who should be the overall leader of the movement. In Iraq, these disputes led some fellow jihadis to condemn al Qaeda, and in Syria, they led to a rift that gave rise to ISIS and a jihadi civil war.

NOT-SO-SAFE HAVENS

The movement also lacks a sanctuary akin to what it enjoyed on the eve of 9/11. More than 10,000 volunteers traveled to Afghanistan when it was under the Taliban's rule to train in camps run by al Qaeda and other militant organizations. This safe haven was a powerful unifying force that made al Qaeda more lethal. It allowed its leaders to bring

jihadi groups and individuals together from across the globe, train them to fight, indoctrinate them into a common agenda, and give those with special language skills or particular promise additional training.

Today, the movement tries to make do with multiple smaller safe havens, but none has proved as effective a launching pad as pre-9/11 Afghanistan did. Al Qaeda, ISIS, their affiliates, and other jihadi groups are present in war zones around the Muslim world. In those wars, members of these organizations learn to use weapons and forge intense bonds with one another. But they engage primarily in civil war, not international terrorism. As a result, they do not receive the same training as previous generations of jihadis did—and local leaders often assign the most promising local recruits and foreign volunteers to important roles in local conflicts rather than give them international terrorist assignments. The vast majority of the over 40,000 foreign fighters who joined ISIS during the Syrian civil war, for instance, fought to defend the caliphate in Iraq and Syria, not to project terror abroad.

The United States and its allies, moreover, exert constant pressure on most local affiliates—often to the point where they reject their mother organizations. Consider al-Nusra Front, once al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, the most important war zone for the jihadi movement in the last decade. In 2016, it publicly distanced itself from al Qaeda. Al-Nusra's leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, declared that he and his organization rejected attacks on the United States and Europe. For al Qaeda, this was a major military setback and an even larger reputational blow, threatening its status as the would-be leader of the broader jihadi movement.

Iran is another second-rate safe haven for al Qaeda. As the U.S. State Department noted in its 2020 annual report on terrorism, since 9/11, Tehran had "continued to permit an [al Qaeda] facilitation network to operate in Iran, sending money and fighters to conflict zones in Afghanistan and Syria, and it still allowed [al Qaeda] members to reside in the country." Because Iran has an effective air defense system and Washington wants to avoid a broader conflict with Tehran, the United States does not carry out drone strikes or other direct attacks against al Qaeda figures there, giving them a degree of protection. But the group still must worry about other counterterrorism operations in the country. In 2020, Israeli assets—operating at the behest of the United States, according to interviews of intelligence officials conducted by *The New York Times*—killed Abu Muhammad al-Masri, a top al Qaeda official living in Iran.

The Iranian government itself also places numerous restrictions on al Qaeda figures in the country. Al Qaeda documents captured by U.S. forces revealed that some members of the group moved to Iran after 9/11 only out of desperation, and the organization's relationship with the Iranian government has been marked by hostility and suspicion. For much of the post-9/11 period, al Qaeda members in Iran have often been considered captives or at least potential bargaining chips, not welcome guests. In addition, ties to Iran—a Shiite power that many religious Sunnis loathe—are unpopular among jihadis and discredit al Qaeda when publicized. ISIS, which is not based in Iran and supports attacks on the Islamic Republic, has criticized al Qaeda for its links to the country.

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could restore some of al Qaeda's freedom of action in the country. As it did before 9/11, the Taliban might once again support or tolerate a large al Qaeda leadership presence and give the group free rein to train, plot, and recruit there. Alternatively, the Taliban may simply work with al Qaeda fighters against their mutual enemies in Afghanistan but discourage broader international terrorist operations. For now, it remains unclear which Afghan Taliban leaders support direct attacks against the United States. Even before 9/11, several staunch Taliban supporters did not appear to approve of such operations, even if they did little to stop them.

Moreover, the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan will not end its ability to affect the situation on the ground. Washington will retain diplomatic options, such as sanctions and multilateral pressure, to influence the Taliban's behavior. The United States is also working on an array of basing and access arrangements that would allow the U.S. military to strike targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan after the withdrawal of all U.S. troops. Such arrangements will not fully replace a direct U.S. presence in Afghanistan, but they could make it difficult for al Qaeda to plot freely or run large-scale training camps in the country. In short, although the United States' departure is unquestionably a victory for al Qaeda, it is not yet clear how big a win it will prove.

Beyond geographic safe havens, jihadis often use virtual sanctuaries. Even these, however, are less secure than they once were. Al Qaeda exploited the Internet for many years after 9/11, using email, chatrooms, and websites to communicate with followers, publicize the movement, and direct operations. ISIS put that approach on steroids, using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to recruit

widely and spread propaganda. When ISIS reemerged during the Syrian civil war, electrifying jihadi extremists worldwide with its beheading videos, Twitter hashtag hijackings, and other social media successes, it seemed that technology was on the terrorists' side. Not so today: although jihadi groups remain active on mainstream platforms, the companies that control them now remove jihadi content and ban users who promote it. Many governments, for their part, now aggressively monitor terrorist-linked accounts to identify followers and disrupt potential plots. For the would-be terrorist, social media has become a risky place to reside.

WHAT'S WORKED?

After years of grand designs with ambitious goals, the United States has settled on a set of policies designed to weaken foreign jihadis while protecting the U.S. homeland. Perhaps the most important but least appreciated of these policies is the U.S.-led global intelligence campaign against terrorist groups. After 9/11, the United States developed or expanded security partnerships with more than 100 countries. Local intelligence agencies have the manpower, legal authority, language skills, and other vital resources to monitor, disrupt, and arrest suspected terrorists. Jihadis now find themselves hunted when they try to establish cells, recruit new members, raise money, or otherwise prepare for attacks. The discovery of a terrorist cell in one country, moreover, often leads to arrests in another if the jihadis try to communicate, share funds, or otherwise work together across borders. U.S. intelligence agencies, for their part, share relevant information, push partners to act on it, and, when these partners do, gain new information that continues the cycle.

Some governments, however, are too weak for such intelligence cooperation to function effectively. In such cases, the United States uses drone strikes and airstrikes, along with raids by special operations forces, to attack al Qaeda, ISIS, and associated groups. Washington usually conducts these operations with the approval of local governments, as it does in Pakistan, or by taking advantage of the lack of a functioning government, as it does in Somalia and Yemen. In addition to the al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the United States and its allies have killed the al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader Nasir alWuhayshi, the leading English-language jihadi propagandists Anwar al-Awlaki and Adam Gadahn, and the South Asian al Qaeda leader

Ilyas Kashmiri, as well as important operational figures, such as Rashid Rauf and Saleh al-Somali, both of whom orchestrated attacks in the West. Washington and its allies have also assassinated al Qaeda's new leader in Yemen, Qasim al-Raymi; the leader of the group's North African branch, Abdelmalek Droukdel; and the leader of its unofficial affiliate in Syria, who was known as Abu al-Qassam. The United States launched a similar campaign against ISIS, killing its selfproclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in 2019, among many other leaders.

Such efforts, of course, do not end terrorism, and they often kill innocent people caught in the crossfire. They are, however, effective at keeping jihadi groups weak. Decapitation strikes create constant churn within organizations, and many terrorist groups do not have a deep bench of would-be leaders, making it difficult for them to replace experienced commanders.

The constant fear of drone strikes and raids also undermines terrorist groups' effectiveness—perhaps more than the death of individual leaders. Members cannot gather in significant numbers for fear of detection, making it hard to sustain large training camps. If groups communicate, they risk being tracked. Isolated and dispersed, terrorist groups then risk splintering into disparate cells that are difficult to coordinate. Cells may go against the wishes of senior leadership and even compete with one another. Without the ability to communicate, leaders also lose their relevance. When the Arab Spring protests, the most important event in the Arab world in a generation, began in late 2010, al Qaeda waited weeks before commenting. In contrast, rival voices across the Arab world offered their views constantly, particularly on social media. At the height of the Syrian civil war, Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's successor as the leader of al Qaeda, went incommunicado for long stretches of time—prompting the al-Nusra Front leader Julani and other affiliated members to distance themselves from the core organization. For its part, ISIS has managed to remain more active, both on the battlefield and in its propaganda efforts. But it, too, is diminished. U.S. pressure has forced the group's leaders into hiding, making it difficult for them to coordinate and direct global operations.

A separate set of U.S. efforts to track terrorists' travel activities, share databases of suspects, and tighten borders has also made it harder for terrorists to penetrate the United States. After 9/11, the FBI undertook a far-reaching campaign to identify, disrupt, and arrest potential terrorists on U.S. soil—a campaign that continues unabated to this

day. Many terrorist plots would have come to nothing regardless, but some might have reached fruition if not for government intervention. Alert citizens and law enforcement officers have caught other potential terrorists. The police foiled a plot to bomb military installations at Fort Dix in 2007, for example, when the jihadis went to a Circuit City store to transfer from a VHS tape to a DVD videos of themselves shooting weapons and shouting "Allahu akbar." The employee making the transfer contacted law enforcement. Travel is also far harder for would-be jihadis than it was in decades past. Unlike in the 1990s, potential terrorists cannot travel to a sanctuary such as Afghanistan for training without a high risk of detection and arrest. As a result, many Western jihadis are untrained, making them far less dangerous.

REIMAGINING 9/11

To understand the cumulative effect of these counterterrorism measures, it is helpful to consider the problems al Qaeda or another jihadi group would face if it sought to carry out a spectacular terrorist attack similar to 9/11. Al Qaeda began planning that strike in late 1998 or early 1999 from bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the group had deep networks and the support of local governments. After receiving approval from bin Laden, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, an experienced senior jihadi and the overall architect of the attack, started recruiting members in 1999. Mohammed initially tried to draw heavily on veteran fighters, but their inexperience in the West made them poor candidates to lead the operation. Al Qaeda leaders instead identified Mohammed Atta, who had lived in Germany for several years, as an ideal cell leader. Commanders noticed Atta's English fluency, religious fervor, and comfort operating in the West when he traveled to Afghanistan in 1999.

The hijackers prepared for the operation in Afghanistan, where some learned to hijack planes and disarm air marshals. A group of the planners held a meeting in Malaysia in January 2000, where U.S. intelligence picked up fragments of their trail, but not enough to detect the plot. The hijackers themselves began entering the United States that same year, although some first traveled to Germany. In California, two members with weaker English-language skills probably received some support from the local Muslim community via area mosques. Others prepared by taking flight lessons and going on practice runs—traveling first class cross-country on the type of aircraft they would later hijack. In the summer of 2001, Atta traveled to Spain to meet

with Ramzi bin al-Shibh, one of the attack's coordinators. There, Atta received further instructions and finalized plans for the attack. Money for expenses flowed through accounts in the United Arab Emirates. Throughout this planning process, al Qaeda enjoyed a crucial advantage in Europe and the United States: official neglect. Intelligence and law enforcement services in both places were focused on other priorities, allowing the jihadis considerable freedom of movement.

On September 11, 2001, the operation proceeded like clockwork—aided by an airport security system unaware that such an attack was possible. The hijackers boarded four planes without arousing suspicion. Although authorities selected some of the hijackers for extra scrutiny, that simply meant that their bags received a slightly more thorough screening. They likely carried utility knives or pocketknives permissible under the guidelines of the time, and several reports indicate that the hijackers also had Mace and box cutters, which the screeners may not have detected. After takeoff, the attackers forced their way into the planes' cockpits and successfully turned three of the four airliners into massive suicide bombs, killing almost 3,000 people.

Every step of the way, a plot on the scale of 9/11 would be far harder to carry out today. With no sanctuary on a par with pre-2001 Afghanistan, volunteers have few training opportunities—and even fewer chances to plot direct attacks against the United States. Indeed, would-be terrorists risk arrest in their home countries and in transit. If they eventually made it to a war zone or other haven, they would also find it far harder to gather safely or communicate without being detected by local or foreign intelligence agencies. Authorities in the United States or elsewhere could capture senior figures who might give up important operational details. And leaders such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed might be killed by a drone strike. Governments might detect meetings in other countries or funding flows through foreign banks—revealing not just the plot but also the identities of many other group members. If terrorists tried to recruit, raise money, or conduct operations via social media, the platforms' moderators might ban them from the sites or report them to the FBI. Their social media followers might, in turn, come under suspicion. The visa applications of would-be flight students from the Middle East now receive far more scrutiny. If plotters managed to make it to the United States, a wary public and a cooperative Muslim community would be more likely to report suspicious activity. Al Qaeda could not tell its

operatives to seek support from locals without the risk of detection. Even if terrorists managed to overcome all these obstacles, carrying out an actual attack would still be far harder: civil aviation and other sensitive targets are much better guarded than they were before 9/11.

No single measure by itself can make a repeat of a 9/11-scale plot impossible. But the cumulative effect of these policies and changes has made a sophisticated and high-impact scheme much less likely to succeed. It is not an accident that most attacks in the United States and even Europe in the last decade have been so-called lone-wolf incidents—inspired, rather than directed, by groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS. These kinds of attacks are usually less deadly, but they are harder to stop.

WHAT'S FAILED?

With the risk of 9/11-scale violence significantly reduced, it is tempting to declare victory and return to the pre-2001 level of vigilance. This would be a mistake. The United States has failed in many of its more ambitious attempts to fight jihadi groups, suggesting that terrorism will remain a threat for years to come. Although the danger these groups pose will remain manageable, preventing attacks will still require ongoing counterterrorism efforts.

The need for continued vigilance stems in part from Washington's failure to win over the Muslim world. After 9/11, U.S. leaders sought to cultivate goodwill among Muslims through advertising campaigns; new broadcasting entities, such as the Arabic-language station Radio Sawa and the television channel Al Hurra; and, eventually, social media initiatives. But polling data suggest that these efforts have had little impact. Public opinion of the United States in the Arab world is still largely negative, although it has varied somewhat over the years. In 2015, over 80 percent of poll respondents in Jordan—a close U.S. ally—had an unfavorable opinion of the United States. This is damning, but it should not come as a surprise. Unpopular U.S. policies, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which many throughout the Muslim world opposed, and U.S. support for Israel, have overshadowed fine-tuned messages about how wonderful life in the United States is for Muslims. As a result, anti-American groups continue to find it easy to recruit followers, and the incentive for targeting the United States remains high.

Jihadi-linked insurgencies are also far more prevalent now than they were before 9/11. This is partly because of the collapse of governments throughout Africa and the Middle East and partly because of

the weakness of many surviving regimes. It takes only a small band of fighters to establish an insurgency in a weak state such as Mozambique and even fewer in a failed state such as Yemen. The jihadi cause, moreover, offers local fighters a compelling brand, enabling them to sell their movements to the community as providers of law and order and defenders of the faith. With jihadi bona fides, they can also tap into transnational networks, gain support from like-minded fighters in neighboring states, and, at times, acquire resources such as money, weapons, and access to propaganda.

In the past, the United States turned to counterinsurgency to combat these groups—deploying tens of thousands of its own forces to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan and various Sunni jihadi groups in Iraq. With public support for such efforts declining, however, and jihadi groups spreading to more countries, the U.S. military and intelligence agencies now often resort to training and equipping local forces that can act as the tip of the counterterrorism spear. Such U.S. proxies have battled al Shabab in Somalia, an ISIS offshoot in Libya, and al Qaeda–linked Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, among other groups.

In a few places, the United States has managed to make headway against jihadis by partnering with local government forces. In many others, however, the defeat of one jihadi group has simply made room for the emergence of another. After 9/11, U.S. forces helped the government of the Philippines rout Abu Sayyaf; today, the Philippines is fighting an ISIS-linked organization. Elsewhere, even that limited level of success is elusive. The enormous amount of money, time, and equipment the United States poured into helping anti-ISIS fighters in Syria and the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq appears to have achieved, at best, only modest results. Training successes are limited to some small elite units such as Iraq's Counterterrorism Service. Efforts to stand up large armies have largely failed.

U.S. attempts to improve the quality of governance in states with jihadi terrorist problems have an equally mixed legacy. Some countries, such as Yemen, have slipped into civil war, while corruption, poor economic growth, and undemocratic political systems plague many others, such as Egypt and Pakistan. Where progress toward democratization has occurred, such as in Indonesia and Tunisia, it was the work of indigenous movements and leaders, not U.S.-led efforts.

Counterterrorism policies within the United States suffer from a different set of problems. Politicians should level with the American

people about the real risk of terrorism—which is low compared with many other dangers—as a way of inoculating the public against the psychological effect of small attacks. Despite 20 years of limited terrorist violence in the United States, however, polls show that the number of Americans "very" or "somewhat" concerned about terrorism remains high and has even grown in recent years. Political leaders continue to use this fear as a cudgel, criticizing one another when attacks occur and using these rare incidents to advance particular agendas on issues such as immigration. When Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, an operative for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, almost blew up a plane over Detroit in 2009, Republicans blasted Obama for this near failure. As a candidate and in office, Trump used the asylum status of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombers to bolster his calls for a border wall, among other anti-immigrant measures.

As a result, the U.S. legal system and public discourse often single out American Muslims as a potential threat. Many Americans now associate Islam with violence, even though very few American Muslims have been involved in terrorist activities, and even though the larger American Muslim community has proved willing to work with U.S. law enforcement. In 2020, Muslims reported the highest level of discrimination of any religious group in the United States. Many American Muslims worry that the police do not treat them equally. This state of affairs is both unjust and counterproductive. If community members fear law enforcement, they may not seek out the authorities if a problem arises.

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH SUCCESS

Twenty years after 9/11, U.S. policy is stuck—but not necessarily in a bad way. The mix of intelligence cooperation, military pressure on groups in their havens, and better homeland security has largely insulated the United States from terrorist violence. Still, Washington has failed to permanently solve the problem. Today, the United States is still bombing and raiding the ideological descendants of the original 9/11 planners. There is no end in sight, and groups such as al Qaeda remain committed to attacking the United States. Even so, constant pressure keeps these organizations weak, and as a result, they will conduct fewer and less lethal attacks. Jihadi terrorism will not go away, but its biggest impact is felt mainly in parts of the world where U.S. interests are limited. Washington must therefore think hard

about where to deploy its counterterrorism resources. Although violence in Chad or Yemen is catastrophic for those countries, its impact on U.S. security is small. Efforts to promote democracy or improve governance may be valuable for other reasons, but they are unnecessary for heading off potential terrorist threats. In some cases, such efforts may actually make the situation worse.

The United States also needs to do more to manage the domestic politics of counterterrorism. Public fear keeps support for robust defense programs strong, but it also makes it easier for terrorists to gain attention and sow panic. Politicians must therefore tread cautiously in the aftermath of terrorist attacks and condemn extreme reactions of all kinds. When (not if) the next attack occurs, it will be vital for the president and other leaders to react responsibly. They must not only stress the need to help the victims and punish the killers but also explain that such events are rare and that the American Muslim community is part of the solution, not the problem. Local leaders, including police officials, should reach out to their Muslim communities to show support and guard against any retaliatory violence. Unfortunately, the last 20 years have shown that politicians will reliably exploit fear, even when the actual threat is limited. Such behavior only helps terrorist groups as they strive to stay relevant.

Israeli officials have a useful phrase to describe their own good-enough counterterrorism strategy: "mowing the grass." The idea is that by conducting regular raids against terrorists and continually gathering intelligence, the government can keep terrorist groups such as Hamas weak, even if those groups' attacks will always continue. The goal is to manage, rather than eliminate, the terrorist threat, and this frees the government to focus on other concerns. Having found a similarly imperfect but largely effective solution to the problem of jihadi violence, Washington should do just that, prioritizing China, Russia, climate change, and other pressing issues. With its post-9/11 counterterrorism toolkit, the United States can keep terrorist groups in remote countries weaker and off balance while accepting that at least some threat will always remain.

Winning Ugly

What the War on Terror Cost America

Elliot Ackerman

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My first mission as a paramilitary officer with the CIA was against a top-ten al Qaeda target. It was the autumn of 2009, and I had been deployed in my new job for a total of two days. But I was no stranger to Afghanistan, having already fought there (as well as in Iraq) as a Marine Corps officer over the previous six years. On this mission, I was joined by the Afghan counterterrorism unit I advised and a handful of members from SEAL Team Six. Our plan was to conduct a raid to capture or kill our target, who was coming across the border from Pakistan for a meeting in the Korengal Valley.

The night was moonless as we slipped into the valley. The 70-odd members of our raid force hiked under night-vision goggles for a couple of hours, taking on hundreds of feet of elevation in silence until we arrived at a village on a rocky outcropping where the meeting was being held. As surveillance and strike aircraft orbited the starry sky, a subset of our force sprinted toward the house where an informant had told us the target was staying. There was a brief and sharp gunfight; none of our men were hurt, and several of our adversaries were killed. But the target was taken alive. Then we slipped out of the valley as expeditiously as we had arrived. By early morning, we

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had made it safely to the U.S. Army outpost, where our prisoner would soon be transferred to Bagram Air Base.

The sun was breaking over the jagged ridgeline as we filled out the paperwork transferring custody. The mood among our raid force, which had been tense all night, suddenly eased. We lounged in a small dirt parking lot, helmets off, laughing and recounting the details of our mission. A convoy would soon arrive to usher us back to our base, where we would get some much-needed rest and a decent meal. We would then await our next target, continuing what was proving to be a successful U.S. campaign to decapitate al Qaeda's leadership. We were feeling, in short, victorious.

While we waited, a column of scraggly American soldiers, little older than teenagers, filed past. They lived at the outpost, and their plight was well known to us. For the past several years, they had been waging a quixotic and largely unsuccessful counterinsurgency in the valley. Many of their friends had been killed there, and their expressions were haggard, a mix of defeat and defiance. Our triumphant banter must have sounded to them like a foreign language. They gave us hard, resentful looks, treating us as interlopers. It occurred to me that although our counterterrorism unit was standing on the same battlefield as these soldiers, we were in fact fighting in two very different wars.

At a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush announced a new type of war, a "war on terror." He laid out its terms: "We will direct every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network." Then he described what that defeat might look like: "We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place until there is no refuge or no rest."

If Bush's words outlined the essential objectives of the global war on terror, 20 years later, the United States has largely achieved them. Osama bin Laden is dead. The surviving core members of al Qaeda are dispersed and weak. Bin Laden's successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, communicates only through rare propaganda releases, and al Qaeda's most powerful offshoot, the Islamic State (or ISIS), has seen its territorial holdings dwindle to insignificance in Iraq and Syria.

Most important, however, is the United States' success in securing its homeland. If someone had told Americans in the weeks after

9/11—as they navigated anthrax attacks on the Capitol, a plunging stock market, and predictions of the demise of mass travel—that the U.S. military and U.S. intelligence agencies would successfully shield the country from another major terrorist attack for the next 20 years, they would have had trouble believing it. Since 9/11, the United States has suffered, on average, six deaths per year due to jihadi terrorism. (To put this in perspective, in 2019, an average of 39 Americans died every day from over- doses involving prescription opioids.) If the goal of the global war on terror was to prevent significant acts of terrorism, particularly in the United States, then the war has succeeded.

But at what cost? Like that night in the Korengal, could success and failure coexist on the same battlefield? Can the United States claim to have won the war on terror while simultaneously having lost the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq? The answers require untangling the many battles the United States has fought since 9/11 and understanding the impact they have had on the American psyche.

US AND THEM

Every war the United States has fought, beginning with the American Revolution, has required an economic model to sustain it with sufficient bodies and cash. The Civil War, for instance, was sustained with the first-ever draft and the first-ever income tax. World War II saw a national mobilization, including another draft, further taxation, and the selling of war bonds. One of the chief characteristics of the Vietnam War was an extremely unpopular draft that spawned an antiwar movement and sped that conflict to its eventual end. Like its predecessors, the war on terror came with its own model: the war was fought by an all-volunteer military and paid for largely through deficit spending. It should be no surprise that this model, which by design anesthetized a majority of Americans to the costs of conflict, delivered them their longest war; in his September 20, 2001, speech, when describing how Americans might support the war effort, Bush said, "I ask you to live your lives and hug your children."

This model has also had a profound effect on American democracy, one that is only being fully understood 20 years later. Today, with a ballooning national deficit and warnings of inflation, it is worth noting that the war on terror became one of the earliest and most expensive charges Americans placed on their national credit card after the

balanced budgets of the 1990s; 2001 marked the last year that the federal budget passed by Congress resulted in a surplus. Funding the war through deficit spending allowed it to fester through successive administrations with hardly a single politician ever mentioning the idea of a war tax. Meanwhile, other forms of spending—from financial bailouts to health care and, most recently, a pandemic recovery stimulus package—generate breathless debate.

If deficit spending has anesthetized the American people to the fiscal cost of the war on terror, technological and social changes have numbed them to its human cost. The use of drone aircraft and other platforms has facilitated the growing automation of combat, which allows the U.S. military to kill remotely. This development has further distanced Americans from the grim costs of war, whether they be the deaths of U.S. troops or those of foreign civilians. Meanwhile, the absence of a draft has allowed the U.S. government to outsource its wars to a military caste, an increasingly self-segregated portion of society, opening up a yawning civil-military divide as profound as any that American society has ever known.

Last year, in response to nationwide civil unrest, Americans finally had the chance to meet their military firsthand as both active-duty and National Guard troops were deployed in large numbers throughout the country. Americans also got to hear from the military's retired leadership as a bevy of flag officers—both on the right and the left—weighed in on domestic political matters in unprecedented ways. They spoke on television, wrote editorials that denounced one party or the other, and signed their names to letters on everything from the provenance of a suspicious laptop connected to the Democratic nominee's son to the integrity of the presidential election itself.

For now, the military remains one of the most trusted institutions in the United States and one of the few that the public sees as having no overt political bias. How long will this trust last under existing political conditions? As partisanship taints every facet of American life, it would seem to be only a matter of time before that infection spreads to the U.S. military. What then? From Caesar's Rome to Napoleon's France, history shows that when a republic couples a large standing military with dysfunctional domestic politics, democracy doesn't last long. The United States today meets both conditions. Historically, this has invited the type of political crisis that leads to military involvement (or even intervention) in domestic

politics. The wide divide between the military and the citizens it serves is yet another inheritance from the war on terror.

DEFINING VICTORY

Although it may seem odd to separate the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq from the war on terror, it is worth remembering that immediately after 9/11, the wholesale invasion and occupation of either country was hardly a fait accompli. It is not difficult to imagine a more limited counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan that might have brought bin Laden to justice or a strategy to contain Saddam Hussein's Iraq that would not have involved a full-scale U.S. invasion. The long, costly counterinsurgency campaigns that followed in each country were wars of choice. Both proved to be major missteps when it came to achieving the twin goals of bringing the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice and securing the homeland. In fact, at several moments over the past two decades, the wars set back those objectives. This was never more the case than in the months after bin Laden's death in May 2011.

Few years proved to be more significant in the war on terror than 2011. Aside from being the year bin Laden was killed, it also was the year the Arab Spring took off and the year U.S. troops fully withdrew from Iraq. If the great strategic blunder of the Bush administration was to put troops into Iraq, then the great strategic blunder of the Obama administration was to pull all of them out. Both missteps created power vacuums. The first saw the flourishing of al Qaeda in Iraq; the second gave birth to that group's successor, ISIS.

If insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome, in Afghanistan, the Biden administration has adopted an insane policy, setting itself up for a repeat of President Barack Obama's experience in Iraq with the ongoing withdrawal. The recommitment of U.S. troops to Iraq in the wake of ISIS's 2014 blitzkrieg to within 16 miles of Baghdad was a response to the fear not only that the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki might collapse but also that a failed state in Iraq would create the type of sanctuary that enabled 9/11. The United States' vast counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq were predicated on a doctrine of preemption; as Bush put it in 2007, "We will fight them over there so we do not have to face them in the United States of America."

But what makes the war on terror different from other wars is that victory has never been based on achieving a positive outcome; the

goal has been to prevent a negative one. In this war, victory doesn't come when you destroy your adversary's army or seize its capital. It occurs when something does not happen. How, then, do you declare victory? How do you prove a negative? After 9/11, it was almost as though American strategists, unable to conceptualize a war that could be won only by not allowing a certain set of events to replicate themselves, felt forced to create a war that conformed to more conventional conceptions of conflict. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq represented a familiar type of war, with an invasion to topple a government and liberate a people, followed by a long occupation and counterinsurgency campaigns.

In addition to blood and treasure, there is another metric by which the war on terror can be judged: opportunity cost. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the depths of American political dysfunction and has hinted at the dangers of a civil-military divide. Perhaps even more important from a national security perspective, it has also brought the United States' complex relationship with China into stark relief. For the past two decades, while Washington was repurposing the U.S. military to engage in massive counter-insurgency campaigns and precision counterterrorism operations, Beijing was busy building a military to fight and defeat a peer-level competitor.

Today, the Chinese navy is the largest in the world. It boasts 350 commissioned warships to the U.S. Navy's roughly 290. Although U.S. ships generally outclass their Chinese counterparts, it now seems inevitable that the two countries' militaries will one day reach parity. China has spent 20 years building a chain of artificial islands throughout the South China Sea that can effectively serve as a defensive line of unsinkable aircraft carriers. Culturally, China has become more militaristic, producing hypernationalist content such as the *Wolf Warrior* action movies. In the first, a former U.S. Navy SEAL plays the archvillain. The sequel, released in 2017, became the highest-grossing film in Chinese box-office history. Clearly, Beijing has no qualms about framing Washington as an antagonist.

China isn't the only country that has taken advantage of a preoccupied United States. In the past two decades, Russia has expanded its territory into Crimea and backed separatists in Ukraine; Iran has backed proxies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; and North Korea has acquired nuclear weapons. After the century opened with 9/11, conventional wisdom had it that non-state actors would prove to be the great-

est threat to U.S. national security. This prediction came true, but not in the way most people anticipated. Nonstate actors have compromised national security not by attacking the United States but by diverting its attention away from state actors. It is these classic antagonists—China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia—that have expanded their capabilities and antipathies in the face of a distracted United States.

How imminent is the threat from these states? When it comes to legacy military platforms—aircraft carriers, tanks, fighter planes—the United States continues to enjoy a healthy technological dominance over its near-peer competitors. But its preferred platforms might not be the right ones. Long-range land-based cruise missiles could render large aircraft carriers obsolete. Advances in cyberoffense could make tech-reliant fighter aircraft too vulnerable to fly. The greatest minds in the U.S. military have now, finally, turned their attention to these concerns, with the U.S. Marine Corps, for example, shifting its entire strategic focus to a potential conflict with China. But it may be too late.

WORN OUT

After two decades, the United States also suffers from war fatigue. Even though an all-volunteer military and the lack of a war tax have exempted most Americans from shouldering the burdens of war, that fatigue has still manifested. Under four presidents, the American people at first celebrated and then endured the endless wars playing in the background of their lives. Gradually, the national mood soured, and adversaries have taken notice. Americans' fatigue—and rival countries' recognition of it—has limited the United States' strategic options. As a result, presidents have adopted policies of inaction, and American credibility has eroded.

This dynamic played out most starkly in Syria, in the aftermath of the August 2013 sarin gas attack in Ghouta. When Syrian President Bashar al-Assad crossed Obama's stated redline by using chemical weapons, Obama found that not only was the international community no longer as responsive to an American president's entreaties for the use of force but also that this reluctance appeared in Congress, as well. When Obama went to legislators to gain support for a military strike against the Assad regime, he encountered bipartisan war fatigue that mirrored the fatigue of voters, and he called off the attack. The United States' redline had been crossed, without incident or reprisal.

Fatigue may seem like a "soft" cost of the war on terror, but it is a glaring strategic liability. A nation exhausted by war has a difficult time presenting a credible deterrent threat to adversaries. This proved to be true during the Cold War when, at the height of the Vietnam War, in 1968, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia, and when, in the war's aftermath, in 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Because it was embroiled in a war in the first case and reeling from it in the second, the United States could not credibly deter Soviet military aggression. The United States is in a similar spot today, particularly with regard to China. When Americans were asked in a recent poll whether the United States should defend Taiwan if it were confronted with an invasion by China, 55 percent of respondents said that it should not.

Obviously, if the Chinese undertook such an action, particularly if Americans or the citizens of allied countries were killed in the process, public opinion might change swiftly; nevertheless, the poll suggested that the threshold for the use of force has risen among Americans. U.S. adversaries understand this. It is no coincidence that China, for instance, has felt empowered to infringe on Hong Kong's autonomy and commit brazen human rights abuses against its minority Uyghur population. When American power recedes, other states fill the vacuum.

U.S. adversaries have also learned to obfuscate their aggression. The cyber-war currently being waged from Russia is one example, with the Russian government claiming no knowledge of the spate of ransomware attacks emanating from within its borders. With Taiwan, likewise, Chinese aggression probably wouldn't manifest in conventional military ways. Beijing is more likely to take over the island through gradual annexation, akin to what it has done with Hong Kong, than stage an outright invasion. That makes a U.S. military response even more difficult—especially as two decades of war have undermined U.S. military deterrence.

A FOREIGN COUNTRY

The war on terror has changed both how the United States sees itself and how it is perceived by the rest of the world. From time to time, people have asked in what ways the war changed me. I have never known how to answer this question because ultimately the war didn't change me; the war made me. It is so deeply engrained in my psyche that I have a difficult time separating the parts of me that exist because of it from the parts of me that exist despite it. Answering that question

is like explaining how a parent or a sibling changed you. When you live with a person—or a war—for so long, you come to know it on intimate terms, and it comes to change you in similarly intimate ways.

Today, I have a hard time remembering what the United States used to be like. I forget what it was like to be able to arrive at the airport just 20 minutes before a flight. What it was like to walk through a train station without armed police meandering around the platforms. Or what it was like to believe—particularly in those heady years right after the Cold War—that the United States' version of democracy would remain ascendant for all time and that the world had reached "the end of history."

In much the same way that members of "the greatest generation" can recall where they were when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor or baby boomers can remember where they were when JFK was shot, my generation's touchstone is where you were on 9/11. Like most of us, I remember the day clearly. But when thinking of that time, the event I return to most often happened the night before.

I was a college student and had requisitioned the television in my apartment because HBO was showing a new series, *Band of Brothers*. As an ROTC midshipman, I believed my entire future would be spent as part of a band of brothers. As I settled onto the sofa, that iconic title sequence started: sepia-toned paratroopers falling across the sky en route to liberating Europe, the swelling strings of the nostalgic soundtrack. There wasn't a hint of irony or cynicism anywhere in the series. I can't imagine someone making it today.

As the United States' sensibilities about war—and warriors—have changed over two decades, I have often thought of *Band of Brothers*. It's a good barometer of where the country was before 9/11 and the emotional distance it has traveled since. Today, the United States is different; it is skeptical of its role in the world, more clear-eyed about the costs of war despite having experienced those costs only in predominantly tangential ways. Americans' appetite to export their ideals abroad is also diminished, particularly as they struggle to uphold those ideals at home, whether in violence around the 2020 presidential election, the summer of 2020's civil unrest, or even the way the war on terror compromised the country through scandals from Abu Ghraib prison to Edward Snowden's leaks. A United States in which *Band of Brothers* has near-universal appeal is a distant memory.

It is also a reminder that national narratives matter. The day before the United States departed on a 20-year odyssey in the Middle

East, the stories people wanted to hear—or at least the stories Hollywood executives believed they wanted to hear—were the ones in which the Americans were the good guys, liberating the world from tyranny and oppression.

WINNING AND LOSING

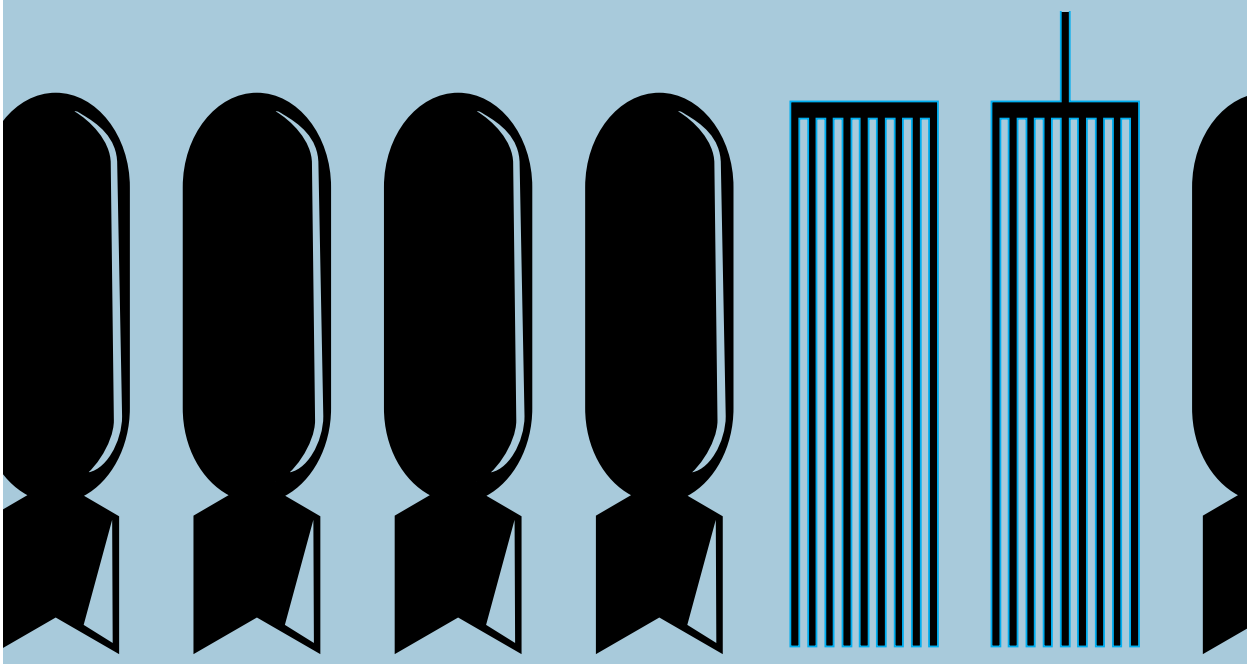
Not long after President Joe Biden announced the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, I was speaking with a former colleague at the CIA. He had also fought in Afghanistan and Iraq as a marine, and he, too, was on that mission in the Korengal Valley. But when I left the CIA, he remained and has spent his career prosecuting the war on terror around the world. Today, he runs paramilitary operations at the agency.

We talked about the differences between the withdrawal from Iraq and the withdrawal from Afghanistan. We agreed that the latter felt harder. Why? Unlike Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was predicated on an attack against the United States. This had happened only once before in American history and had led to a decisive U.S. triumph. But unlike the greatest generation, our generation of veterans would enjoy no such victory. Instead, we would be remembered as the ones who lost the United States' longest war.

When I told him that even though we might have lost the war in Afghanistan, our generation could still claim to have won the war on terror, he was skeptical. We debated the issue but soon let it drop. The next day, I received an email from him. A southerner and a lover of literature, he had sent me the following, from *The Sound and the Fury*:

> No battle is ever won. . . . They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools.

THE 9/11 ATTACKS



The Sentry's Solitude

Fouad Ajami

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2001

PAX AMERICANA IN THE ARAB WORLD

From one end of the Arab world to the other, the drumbeats of anti-Americanism had been steady. But the drummers could hardly have known what was to come. The magnitude of the horror that befell the United States on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, appeared for a moment to embarrass and silence the drummers. The American imperium in the Arab-Muslim world hatched a monster. In a cruel irony, a new administration known for its relative lack of interest in that region was to be pulled into a world that has both beckoned America and bloodied it.

History never repeats itself, but when Secretary of State Colin Powell came forth to assure the nation that an international coalition against terrorism was in the offing, Americans recalled when Powell had risen to fame. "First, we're going to cut it off, then we're going to kill it," he had said of the Iraqi army in 1991. There had been another coalition then, and Pax Americana had set off to the Arab world on a triumphant campaign. But those Islamic domains have since worked their way and their will on the American victory of a decade ago. The

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political earth has shifted in that world. The decade was about the "blowback" of the war. Primacy begot its nemesis.

America's Arab interlocutors have said that the region's political stability would have held had the United States imposed a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and that the rancid anti-Americanism now evident in the Arab world has been called up by the fury of the second intifada that erupted in September 2000. But these claims misread the political world. Long before the second intifada, when Yasir Arafat was still making his way from political exile to the embrace of Pax Americana, there was a deadly trail of anti-American terror. Its perpetrators paid no heed to the Palestinian question. What they thought of Arafat and the metamorphosis that made him a pillar of President Clinton's Middle East policy is easy to construe.

The terror was steady, and its geography and targets bespoke resourcefulness and audacity. The first attack, the 1993 truck bombing of the World Trade Center, was inspired by the Egyptian cleric Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. For the United States, this fiery preacher was a peculiar guest: he had come to *bilad al-Kufr* (the lands of unbelief) to continue his war against the secular regime of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The sheikh had already been implicated in the 1981 murder of Mubarak's predecessor, Anwar al-Sadat. The young assassins had sought religious guidance from him—a writ for tyrannicide. He had provided it but retained a measure of ambiguity, and Egypt let him leave the country. He had no knowledge of English and did not need it; there were disciples and interpreters aplenty around him. An American imperium had incorporated Egypt into its order of things, which gave the sheikh a connection to the distant power.

The preacher could not overturn the entrenched regime in his land. But there was steady traffic between the United States and Egypt, and the armed Islamist insurgency that bedeviled Cairo inspired him. He would be an Ayatollah Khomeini for his followers, destined to return from the West to establish an Islamic state. In the preacher's mind, the world was simple. The dictatorial regime at home would collapse once he snapped its lifeline to America. American culture was of little interest to him. Rather, the United States was a place from which he could hound his country's rulers. Over time, Abdel Rahman's quest was denied. Egypt rode out the Islamist insurgency after a terrible drawn-out fight that pushed the country to the brink. The sheikh ended up in an American prison. But he had lit the fuse. The 1993

attack on the World Trade Center that he launched was a mere dress rehearsal for the calamity of September 11, 2001. Abdel Rahman had shown the way—and the future.

There were new Muslim communities in America and Europe; there was also money and freedom to move about. The geography of political Islam had been redrawn. When Ayatollah Khomeini took on American power, there had been talk of a pan-Islamic brigade. But the Iranian revolutionaries were ultimately concerned with their own nation-state. And they were lambs compared with the holy warriors to come. Today's warriors have been cut loose from the traditional world. Some of the leaders—the Afghan Arabs—had become restless after the Afghan war. They were insurrectionists caught in no man's land, on the run from their homelands but never at home in the West. In Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria, tenacious Islamist movements were put down. In Saudi Arabia, a milder Islamist challenge was contained. The counterinsurgencies had been effective, so the extremists turned up in the West. There, liberal norms gave them shelter, and these men would rise to fight another day.

The extremists acquired modern means: frequent flyer miles, aviation and computer skills, and ease in Western cities. They hated the United States, Germany, and France but were nonetheless drawn to them. They exalted tradition and faith, but their traditions could no longer give them a world. Islam's explosive demography had spilled into the West. The militant Islamists were on the move. The security services in their home countries were unsentimental, showing no tolerance for heroics. Men like Abdel Rahman and Osama bin Ladin offered this breed of unsettled men a theology of holy terror and the means to live the plotter's life. Bin Ladin was possessed of wealth and high birth, the heir of a merchant dynasty. This gave him an aura: a Che Guevara of the Islamic world, bucking the mighty and getting away with it. A seam ran between America and the Islamic world. The new men found their niche, their targets, and their sympathizers across that seam. They were sure of America's culpability for the growing misery in their lands. They were sure that the regimes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt would fall if only they could force the United States to cast its allies adrift.

NOT IN MY BACKYARD

Terror shadowed the American presence in the Middle East throughout the 1990s: two bombings in Saudi Arabia, one in Riyadh in November of 1995, and the other on the Khobar Towers near Dhahran in

June of 1996; bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998; the daring attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in Yemen in October 2000. The U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf was under assault.

In this trail of terror, symbol and opportunity were rolled together—the physical damage alongside a political and cultural message. These attacks were meant for a watchful crowd in a media age. Dhahran had been a creature of the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia ever since American oil prospectors turned up in the 1930s and built that city in the American image. But the world had changed. It was in Dhahran, in the 1990s, that the crews monitoring the no-fly zone over Iraq were stationed. The attack against Dhahran was an obvious blow against the alliance between the United States and Saudi Arabia. The realm would not disintegrate; Beirut had not come to Arabia. But the assailants—suspected to be an Iranian operation that enlisted the participation of Saudi Shi`a—had delivered the blow and the message. The foreigner's presence in Arabia was contested. A radical Islamist opposition had emerged, putting forth a fierce, redemptive Islam at odds with the state's conservative religion.

The ulama (clergy) had done well under the Saud dynasty. They were the dynasty's partners in upholding an order where obedience to the rulers was given religious sanction. No ambitious modernist utopia had been unleashed on them as it had in Gamal Abdel al-Nasser's Egypt and Iran under the Pahlavis. Still, the state could not appease the new breed of activists who had stepped forth after the Gulf War to hound the rulers over internal governance and their ties to American power. In place of their rulers' conservative edifice, these new salvationists proposed a radical order free from foreign entanglements. These activists were careful to refrain from calling for the outright destruction of the House of Saud. But sedition was in the air in the mid-1990s, and the elements of the new utopia were easy to discern. The Shi`a minority in the eastern province would be decimated and the Saudi liberals molded on the campuses of California and Texas would be swept aside in a zealous, frenzied campaign. Traffic with the infidels would be brought to an end, and those dreaded satellite dishes bringing the West's cultural "pollution" would be taken down. But for this to pass, the roots of the American presence in Arabia would have to be extirpated—and the Americans driven from the country.

The new unrest, avowedly religious, stemmed from the austerity that came to Saudi Arabia after Desert Storm. If the rulers could not

subsidize as generously as they had in the past, the foreigner and his schemes and overcharges must be to blame. The dissidents were not cultists but men of their society, half-learned in Western sources and trends, picking foreign sources to illustrate the subjugation that America held in store for Arabia. Pamphleteering had come into the realm, and rebellion proved contagious. A dissident steps out of the shadows, then respectable critics, then others come forth. Xenophobic men were now agitating against the "crusaders" who had come to stay. "This has been a bigger calamity than I had expected, bigger than any threat the Arabian Peninsula had faced since God Almighty created it," wrote the religious scholar Safar al-Hawali, a master practitioner of the paranoid style in politics. The Americans, he warned, had come to dominate Arabia and unleash on it the West's dreaded morals.

Saudi Arabia had been free of the anticolonial complex seen in states such as Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. But the simplicity of that Arabian-American encounter now belonged to the past. A *fatwa* (Islamic decree) of the senior religious jurist in the realm, Sheikh Abdelaziz ibn Baz, gave away the hazards of the U.S. presence in Arabia. Ibn Baz declared the Khobar bombing a "transgression against the teachings of Islam." The damage to lives and property befell many people, "Muslims and others alike," he wrote. These "non-Muslims" had been granted a pledge of safety. The sheikh found enough scripture and tradition to see a cruel end for those who pulled off the "criminal act." There was a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad: "He who killed an ally will never know the smell of paradise." And there was God's word in the Koran: "Those that make war against Allah and his apostle and spread disorder in the land shall be put to death or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternate sides; or be banished from the country. They shall be held to shame in this world and sternly punished in the next." The sheikh permitted himself a drapery of decency. There was no need to specify the identity of the victims or acknowledge that the Americans were in the land. There had remained in the jurist some scruples and restraints of the faith.

In ibn Baz's world, faith was about order and a dread of anarchy. But in the shadows, a different version of the faith was being sharpened as a weapon of war. Two years later, bin Ladin issued an incendiary *fatwa* of his own—a call for murder and holy warfare that was interpreted in these pages by the historian Bernard Lewis. Never mind that by the faith's strictures and practice, bin Ladin had no

standing to issue religious decrees. He had grabbed the faith and called on Muslims to kill "Americans and their allies ... in any country in which it is possible to do so." A sacred realm apart, Arabia had been overrun by Americans, bin Ladin said. "For more than seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of its territories, Arabia, plundering its riches, overwhelming its rulers, humiliating its people, threatening its neighbors, and using its peninsula as a spearhead to fight the neighboring Islamic peoples." Xenophobia of a murderous kind had been dressed up in religious garb.

INTO THE SHADOWS

The attack on the *Cole* on October 12, 2000, was a case apart. Two men in a skiff crippled the *Cole* as it docked in Aden to refuel. Witnesses say that the assailants, who perished with their victims, were standing erect at the time of the blast, as if in some kind of salute. The United States controlled the sea lanes of that world, but the nemesis that stalked it on those shores lay beyond America's reach. "The attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* . . . demonstrated a seam in the fabric of efforts to protect our forces, namely transit forces," a military commission said. But the official language could not describe or name the furies at play.

The attack on the *Cole* illuminated the U.S. security dilemma in the Persian Gulf. For the U.S. Navy, Yemen had not been a particularly easy or friendly setting. It had taken a ride with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. In 1994, a brutal war had been fought in Yemen between north and south, along lines of ideology and tribalism. The troubles of Yemen were bottomless. The government was barely in control of its territory and coastline. Aden was a place of drifters and smugglers. Moreover, the suspected paymaster of anti-American terror, bin Ladin, had ancestral roots in Hadramawt, the southeastern part of Yemen, and he had many sympathizers there.

It would have been prudent to look at Yemen and Aden with a jaundiced eye. But by early 1999, American ships had begun calling there. U.S. officials had no brilliant options south of the Suez Canal, they would later concede. The ports of call in Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea were places where the "threat conditions" were high, perhaps worse than in Yemen. The United States had a privileged position in Saudi Arabia, but there had been trouble there as well for U.S. forces: the terrorist attacks in 1995 and 1996, which took 24 American lives. American commanders and planners knew the

hazards of Yemen, but the U.S. Navy had taken a chance on the country. Terrorists moved through Yemen at will, but American military planners could not find ideal refueling conditions in a region of great volatility. This was the imperial predicament put in stark, cruel terms.

John Burns of *The New York Times* sent a dispatch of unusual clarity from Aden about the *Cole* and the response on the ground to the terrible deed. In Yemen, the reporter saw "a halting, half-expressed sense of astonishment, sometimes of satisfaction and even pleasure, that a mighty power, the United States, should have its Navy humbled by two Arab men in a motorized skiff." Such was imperial presence, the Pax Americana in Arab and Muslim lands.

There were men in the shadows pulling off spectacular deeds. But they fed off a free-floating anti-Americanism that blows at will and knows no bounds, among Islamists and secularists alike. For the crowds in Karachi, Cairo, and Amman, the great power could never get it right. A world lacking the tools and the political space for free inquiry fell back on anti-Americanism. "I talk to my daughter-in-law so my neighbor can hear me," goes an Arabic maxim. In the fury with which the intellectual and political class railed against the United States and Israel, the agitated were speaking to and of their own rulers. Sly and cunning men, the rulers knew and understood the game. There would be no open embrace of America, and no public defense of it. They would stay a step ahead of the crowd and give the public the safety valve it needed. The more pro-American the regime, the more anti-American the political class and the political tumult. The United States could grant generous aid to the Egyptian state, but there would be no dampening of the anti-American fury of the Egyptian political class. Its leading state-backed dailies crackled with the wildest theories of U.S.-Israeli conspiracies against their country.

On September 11, 2001, there was an unmistakable sense of glee and little sorrow among upper-class Egyptians for the distant power—only satisfaction that America had gotten its comeuppance. After nearly three decades of American solicitude of Egypt, after the steady traffic between the two lands, there were no genuine friends for America to be found in a curiously hostile, disgruntled land.

Egyptians have long been dissatisfied with their country's economic and military performance, a pain born of the gap between Egypt's exalted idea of itself and the poverty and foreign dependence that have marked its modern history. The rage against Israel and the

United States stems from that history of lament and frustration. So much of Egypt's life lies beyond the scrutiny and the reach of its newspapers and pundits—the ruler's ways, the authoritarian state, the matter of succession to Mubarak, the joint military exercises with U.S. and Egyptian forces, and so on. The animus toward America and Israel gives away the frustration of a polity raging against the hard, disillusioning limits of its political life.

In the same vein, Jordan's enlightened, fragile monarchy was bound to the United States by the strategic ties that a skilled King Hussein had nurtured for decades. But a mood of anger and seething radicalism had settled on Jordan. The country was increasingly poorer, and the fault line between Palestinians and East Bankers was a steady source of mutual suspicion. If the rulers made peace with Israel, "civil society" and the professional syndicates would spurn it. Even though the late king had deep ties with the distant imperial power, the country would remain unreconciled to this pro-American stance. Jordan would be richer, it was loudly proclaimed, if only the sanctions on Iraq had been lifted, if only the place had been left to gravitate into Iraq's economic orbit. Jordan's new king, Abdullah II, could roll out the red carpet for Powell when the general turned up in Jordan recently on a visit that had the distinct sense of a victory lap by a soldier revisiting his early triumph. But the throngs were there with placards, and banners were aloft branding the visitor a "war criminal." This kind of fury a distant power can never overcome. Policy can never speak to wrath. Step into the thicket (as Bill Clinton did in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) and the foreign power is damned for its reach. Step back, as George W. Bush did in the first months of his presidency, and Pax Americana is charged with abdication and indifference.

THE SIEGE

The power secured during Desert Storm was destined not to last. The United States could not indefinitely quarantine Iraq. It was idle to think that the broad coalition cobbled together during an unusually perilous moment in 1990-91 would stand as a permanent arrangement. The demographic and economic weight of Iraq and Iran meant that those countries were bound to reassert themselves. The United States had done well in the Persian Gulf by Iraq's brazen revisionism and the Iranian Revolution's assault on its neighboring states. It had been able to negotiate the terms of the U.S. presence—the position-

ing of equipment in the oil states, the establishment of a tripwire in Kuwait, the acceptance of an American troop presence on the Arabian Peninsula—at a time when both Iran and Iraq were on a rampage. Hence the popular concerns that had hindered the American presence in the Persian Gulf were brushed aside in the 1990s. But this lucky run was bound to come to an end. Iraq steadily chipped away at the sanctions, which over time were seen as nothing but an Anglo-American siege of a brutalized Iraqi population.

The campaign against Saddam Hussein had been waged during a unique moment in Arab politics. Some Muslim jurists in Saudi Arabia and Egypt even ruled that Saddam had run afoul of Islam's strictures, and that an alliance with foreign powers to check his aggression and tyranny was permissible under Islamic law. A part of the Arabian Peninsula that had hitherto wanted America "over the horizon" was eager to have American protection against a "brother" who had shredded all the pieties of pan-Arab solidarity. But the Iraqi dictator hunkered down, outlasting the foreign power's terrible campaign. He was from the neighborhood and knew its rules. He worked his way into the local order of things.

The Iraqi ruler knew well the distress that settled on the region after Pax Americana's swift war. All around Iraq, the region was poorer: oil prices had slumped, and the war had been expensive for the oil states that financed it. Oil states suspected they were being overbilled for military services and for weapons that they could not afford. The war's murky outcome fed the belief that the thing had been rigged all along, that Saddam Hussein had been lured into Kuwait by an American green light—and then kept in power and let off the hook—so that Pax Americana would have the pretext for stationing its forces in the region. The Iraqi ruler then set out to show the hollowness of the hegemony of a disinterested American imperium.

A crisis in 1996 laid bare the realities for the new imperium. Saddam Hussein brazenly sent his squads of assassins into the "safe haven" that the United States had marked out for the Kurds in northern Iraq after Desert Storm. He sacked that region and executed hundreds who had cast their fate with American power. America was alone this time around. The two volleys of Tomahawk missiles fired against Iraqi air-defense installations had to be launched from U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf and B-52 bombers that flew in from Guam. No one was fooled by the American response; no one believed that

the foreign power would stay. U.S. officials wrote off that episode as an internal Kurdish fight, the doings of a fratricidal people. A subsequent air campaign—"fire and forget," skeptics dubbed it—gave the illusion of resolve and containment. But Clinton did not have his heart in that fight. He had put his finger to the wind and divined the mood in the land: there was no public tolerance for a major campaign against Saddam Hussein.

By the time the Bush administration stepped in, its leaders would find a checkered landscape. There was their old nemesis in Baghdad, wounded but not killed. There was a decade of Clintonianism that had invested its energy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but had paid the Persian Gulf scant attention. There was a pattern of half-hearted responses to terrorist attacks, pinpricks that fooled no one.

HAVING IT HIS WAY

It was into this witch's brew that Arafat launched the second intifada last year. In a rare alignment, there had come Arafat's way a U.S. president keen to do his best and an Israeli soldier-statesman eager to grant the Palestinian leader all the Israeli body politic could yield—and then some. Arafat turned away from what was offered and headed straight back into his people's familiar history: the maximalism, the inability to read what can and cannot be had in a world of nations. He would wait for the "Arab street" to rise up in rebellion and force Pax Americana to redeem his claims. He would again let play on his people the old dream that they could have it all, from the river to the sea. He must know better, he must know the scales of power, it is reasonable to presume. But there still lurks in the Palestinian and Arab imagination a view, depicted by the Moroccan historian Abdallah Laroui, that "on a certain day, everything would be obliterated and instantaneously reconstructed and the new inhabitants would leave, as if by magic, the land they had despoiled." Arafat knew the power of this redemptive idea. He must have reasoned that it is safer to ride that idea, and that there will always be another day and another offer.

For all the fury of this second intifada, a supreme irony hangs over Palestinian history. In the early 1990s, the Palestinians had nothing to lose. Pariahs in the Arab councils of power, they made their best historical decision—the peace of Oslo—only when they broke with the maximalism of their political tradition. It was then that they crossed from Arab politics into internal Israeli politics and, courtesy of Israel,

into the orbit of Pax Americana. Their recent return into inter-Arab politics was the resumption of an old, failed history.

Better the fire of an insurrection than the risks of reconciling his people to a peace he had not prepared them for: this was Arafat's way. This is why he spurned the offer at Camp David in the summer of 2000. "Yasir Arafat rode home on a white horse" from Camp David, said one of his aides, Nabil Shaath. He had shown that he "still cared about Jerusalem and the refugees." He had stood up, so Shaath said, to the combined pressure of the Americans and the Israelis. A creature of his time and his world, Arafat had come into his own amid the recriminations that followed the Arab defeat in 1948. Palestine had become an Arab shame, and the hunt for demons and sacrificial lambs would shape Arab politics for many years.

A temporizer and a trimmer, Arafat did not have it in him to tell the 1948 refugees in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan that they were no more likely to find political satisfaction than were the Jews of Alexandria, Fez, Baghdad, and Beirut who were banished from Arab lands following Israel's statehood. He lit the fuse of this second intifada in the hope that others would put out the flame. He had become a player in Israeli politics, and there came to him this peculiar satisfaction that he could topple Israeli prime ministers, wait them out, and force an outside diplomatic intervention that would tip the scales in his favor. He could not give his people a decent public order and employ and train the young, but he could launch a war in the streets that would break Israel's economic momentum and rob it of the normalcy brought by the peace of Oslo.

Arafat had waited for rain, but on September 11, 2001, there had come the floods. "This is a new kind of war, a new kind of battlefield, and the United States will need the help of Arab and Muslim countries," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat announced. The Palestinian issue, he added, was "certainly one of the reasons" for the attacks against the United States. An American-led brigade against terrorism was being assembled. America was set to embark on another expedition into Arab-Muslim domains, and Arafat fell back on the old consolation that Arab assets would be traded on his people's behalf. A dowry would have to be offered to the Arab participants in this brigade: a U.S.-imposed settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A cover would be needed for Arab regimes nervous about riding with the foreigner's posse, and it stood to reason that Arafat would claim that he could provide that kind of cover.

The terror that hit America sprang from entirely different sources. The plotters had been in American flight schools long before the "suicide martyrs" and the "children of the stones" had answered Arafat's call for an intifada. But the Palestinian leader and his lieutenants eagerly claimed that the fire raging in their midst had inspired the anti-American terror. A decade earlier, the Palestinians had hailed Saddam Hussein's bid for primacy in the Persian Gulf. Nonetheless, they had been given a claim on the peace—a role at the Madrid Conference of October 1991 and a solicitous U.S. policy. American diplomacy had arrived in the nick of time; the first intifada had burned out and degenerated into a hunt for demons and "collaborators." A similar fate lies in wait for the second intifada. It is reasonable to assume that Arafat expects rescue of a similar kind from the new American drive into Arab and Muslim lands.

No veto over national policies there will be given to Arafat. The states will cut their own deals. In the best of worlds, Pax Americana is doomed to a measure of solitude in the Middle East. This time around, the American predicament is particularly acute. Deep down, the Arab regimes feel that the threat of political Islam to their own turfs has been checked, and that no good can come out of an explicit public alliance with an American campaign in their midst. Foreign powers come and go, and there is very little protection they can provide against the wrath of an angry crowd. It is a peculiarity of the Arab-Islamic political culture that a ruler's authoritarianism is more permissible than his identification with Western powers—think of the fates of Sadat and of the Pahlavis of Iran.

Ride with the foreigners at your own risk, the region's history has taught. Syria's dictator, Hafiz al-Assad, died a natural death at a ripe old age, and his life could be seen as a kind of success. He never set foot on American soil and had stayed within his world. In contrast, the flamboyant Sadat courted foreign countries and came to a solitary, cruel end; his land barely grieved for him. A foreign power that stands sentry in that world cannot spare its local allies the retribution of those who brand them "collaborators" and betrayers of the faith. A coalition is in the offing, America has come calling, urging the region's rulers to "choose sides." What these rulers truly dread has come to pass: they might have to make fateful choices under the gaze of populations in the throes of a malignant anti-Americanism. The ways of that world being what they are, the United States will get more cooperation from the

ministers of interior and the secret services than it will from the foreign ministers and the diplomatic interlocutors. There will be allies in the shadows, but in broad daylight the rulers will mostly keep their distance. Pakistan's ruler, Pervez Musharraf, has made a brave choice. The rulers all around must be reading a good deal of their worries into his attempt to stay the course and keep his country intact.

A broad coalition may give America the comfort that it is not alone in the Muslim world. A strike against Afghanistan is the easiest of things—far away from the troubles in the Persian Gulf and Egypt, from the head of the trail in Arab lands. The Taliban are the Khmer Rouge of this era and thus easy to deal with. The frustrations to come lie in the more ambiguous and impenetrable realms of the Arab world. Those were not Afghans who flew into those towers of glass and steel and crashed into the Pentagon. They were from the Arab world, where anti-Americanism is fierce, where terror works with the hidden winks that men and women make at the perpetrators of the grimmest of deeds.

BRAVE OLD WORLD

"When those planes flew into those buildings, the luck of America ran out," Leon Wieseltier recently wrote in *The New Republic*. The 1990s were a lucky decade, a fool's paradise. But we had not arrived at the end of history, not by a long shot. Markets had not annulled historical passions, and a high-tech world's electronic age had not yet dawned. So in thwarted, resentful societies there was satisfaction on September 11 that the American bull run and the triumphalism that had awed the world had been battered, that there was soot and ruin in New York's streets. We know better now. Pax Americana is there to stay in the oil lands and in Israeli-Palestinian matters. No large-scale retreat from those zones of American primacy can be contemplated. American hegemony is sure to hold—and so, too, the resistance to it, the uneasy mix in those lands of the need for the foreigner's order, and the urge to lash out against it, to use it and rail against it all the same.

There is now the distinct thunder of war. The first war of the twenty-first century is to be fought not so far from where the last inconclusive war of the twentieth century was waged against Iraq. The war will not be easy for America in those lands. The setting will test it in ways it has not been tested before. There will be regimes asking for indulgence for their own terrible fights against Islamists and for logistical support. There will be rulers offering the bait of secrets that their security ser-

vices have accumulated through means at odds with American norms. Conversely, friends and sympathizers of terror will pass themselves off as constitutionalists and men and women of the "civil society." They will find shelter behind pluralist norms while aiding and abetting the forces of terror. There will be chameleons good at posing as America's friends but never turning up when needed. There will be one way of speaking to Americans, and another of letting one's population know that words are merely a pretense. There will step forth informers, hustlers of every shade, offering to guide the foreign power through the minefields and alleyways. America, which once held the world at a distance, will have to be willing to stick around eastern lands. It is both heartbreaking and ironic that so quintessentially American a figure as George W. Bush—a man who grew up in Midland, Texas, far removed from the complications of foreign places—must be the one to take his country on a journey into so alien, so difficult, a world.

Preparing for the Next Attack

William J. Perry

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THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

In the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, America has been mourning its dead and tending to its wounded. But the country also has been building up an angry resolve to respond to this outrage against humanity, and a pragmatic resolve to reduce its vulnerability to future attacks. The world has seen just how terrible the consequences can be when terrorists have the hatred to murder innocent civilians, the resources to coordinate and conduct systematic operations, and the fanaticism to sacrifice their own lives. The evil genius who conceived of using a passenger airplane in kamikaze mode calculated that its 200,000 pounds of jet fuel would make it a weapon of mass destruction. And so it was, with more than 3,000 deaths resulting from each plane used against the World Trade Center, more than ten times the fatality rate caused by past attacks with truck bombs.

The United States can take many actions to make this sort of attack more difficult to carry out, and it will do so, despite the inconvenience and expense. But as Washington moves to reduce the vulnerabilities exposed by the last strike, it should also try to anticipate the next one.

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As deadly as the World Trade Center disaster was, it could have produced a hundredfold more victims if the terrorists had possessed nuclear or biological weapons. And the future threat could come from hostile nations as well as terrorists.

Nuclear or biological weapons in the hands of terrorists or rogue states constitute the greatest single danger to American security—indeed, to world security—and a threat that is becoming increasingly less remote. Several nations hostile to the United States are already engaged in covert programs to develop nuclear weapons, and multinational terrorist groups have demonstrated both by word and by deed that their goal is to kill Americans and destroy symbols of American power. Such terrorists have escalated their methods from truck bombs to the near equivalent of a tactical nuclear weapon, and they clearly have the motivation to go further up the ladder of destruction. Indeed, Osama bin Ladin has told his followers that the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction is a "religious duty." The only question is whether they will succeed.

Since the end of the Cold War, the barriers to success have been lowered. The know-how for making nuclear weapons is increasingly available through the Internet. Security controls on the huge supply of nuclear weapons (which number in the tens of thousands) and fissile material (amounting to hundreds of tons) are becoming increasingly uncertain. And the thriving black market in fissile material suggests that demand is high. In the next few years this combination of forces could result in a nuclear incident with results more catastrophic than the destruction wreaked by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, which together killed an estimated 200,000 people.

A nuclear attack's capacity for destruction is familiar by now, but recent simulations indicate that an attack with smallpox germs could cause just as many deaths. Furthermore, there is good reason to fear that biological weapons could become the weapon of choice for terrorists. They can be produced without the massive infrastructure required for their nuclear counterparts, and biotechnology pharmaceutical developments are proliferating these production techniques. Hostile groups that cannot develop their own weapons, meanwhile, may be able to buy them through illicit channels. The Soviet Union produced a large supply of biological weapons during the Cold War, some of which may still be available. China, North Korea, and Iraq have all had biological weapons programs, as did the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan, which in 1995 released a chemical weapon, sarin, in a deadly attack on Tokyo's subways.

Finally, the threat posed by long-range missiles has received much attention. But a long-range missile in the hands of a hostile force does not pose a significant new danger unless the missile has a nuclear or biological warhead. Nuclear and biological weapons, in contrast, are dangerous even in the absence of missiles, since they can be delivered by a range of methods, including trucks, cargo ships, boats, and airplanes. Indeed, given its attractions, covert rather than overt delivery is not only feasible, it is the most likely method of attack.

Considering the level of catastrophe that could occur in a nuclear or biological attack, mitigating such threats should be an overriding security priority today, just as heading off a nuclear attack was an overriding priority during the Cold War. In that era the United States essentially depended on a single strategy: deterrence. Now it can add two other strategies to the mix—prevention (curbing emergent threats before they can spread) and defense. Rather than relying exclusively on any one strategy, the sensible approach is to deploy a balanced mix of all three. Missile defense should be one element of national policy, but if the single-minded pursuit of it conflicts with programs designed to curb proliferation and strengthen deterrence, it could decrease our own security rather than increase it.

HOW TO HANDLE A WEAPON

Prevention is the first line of defense against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but it requires cooperation from the other nuclear powers. Any actions that the United States takes to stop the spread of weapons can easily be nullified if Russia, for example, decides to sell its nuclear technology, weapons, or fissile material. Russian leaders know that it is in their national interest to fight proliferation. But they may at some point be torn between their security interests and the need to earn hard currency. This financial incentive might delude them into thinking that the sale of commercial nuclear technology to Iran, for instance, would not facilitate Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

The cooperation necessary to prevent proliferation is manifested through treaties already in force, such as the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and the Biological Weapons Convention; through treaties not yet implemented, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, START II, and START III; through bilateral and multilateral agreements, such as the Trilateral Agreement (among the United States, Russia, and Ukraine), the

Agreed Framework (between the United States and North Korea), and the missile agreement under discussion with North Korea; and through cooperative programs to reduce nuclear risks and manage Cold War–era nuclear arsenals, such as the Nunn-Lugar program with Russia and other former Soviet states.

Many of these programs have been quite successful. The Nunn-Lugar initiative, for example, in concert with start and the Trilateral Agreement, has already been responsible for the dismantling of more than 5,000 nuclear warheads and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. And as a result of programs designed to immobilize or commercialize leftover Soviet plutonium and weapons-grade uranium, material that was once intended for Soviet bombs will soon meet half the supply needs of American power reactors.

To prevent future proliferation, the United States should sustain and build on these programs, by extending the Nunn-Lugar efforts to tactical nuclear weapons, for example, and by funding proposed efforts to immobilize plutonium. But some weapons materials have already spread, and future prevention efforts will not always be effective (as evidenced by the expelling of U.N. weapons inspectors from Iraq). So the second line of defense must remain deterrence.

Even if START II and START III were fully implemented, the United States would still be left with a nuclear force capable of destroying any nation reckless enough to use nuclear weapons against it. In particular, a nuclear attack using ballistic missiles would be instantly tracked to its place of origin and thus invite immediate retaliation by U.S. nuclear forces—a fact known by all.

Some worry that a nation with nuclear weapons might attack a U.S. ally with conventional weapons, believing that Washington would not honor its defense commitment for fear of provoking a nuclear attack on U.S. cities. But any such move would be a serious mistake, since the United States would respond in kind—with its own conventional military forces—to a conventional attack on an ally. The aggressor might then threaten a nuclear strike but would have to contemplate, once again, the certain knowledge of immediate and catastrophic retaliation. So long as the United States maintains strong conventional forces, therefore, the threat of nuclear extortion reverts to the classic deterrence scenario. Moreover, if threatened, the United States has the capability to destroy a hostile nation's launch sites, storage sites, and production facilities with its long-range, precision-

guided, conventionally armed weapons—and others know it. Whatever Washington's stated policy, therefore, no hostile nation could rule out the possibility that the United States would strike back if attacked.

In short, the United States has a powerful and credible deterrent involving both nuclear and conventional weapons, which should make a direct nuclear attack or nuclear extortion by a nation very unlikely. The chance still exists, however, that a hostile nation armed with nuclear or biological weapons could end up under a leader who is mentally unbalanced or who miscalculates the consequences of his or her actions. And a terrorist group is probably less deterrable; its members might believe that an attack could not be traced back to them, or they might even be seeking to die for their cause. Both prevention and deterrence, in other words, could fail in the face of terrorism, and there is always the possibility, however remote, of an accidental or unauthorized launch from another nuclear power. Any of these contingencies would create a catastrophe, so it is reasonable for the United States to seek "catastrophe insurance," much as individuals buy earthquake insurance to cover the possibility that their house might be destroyed by such an event.

DEFENSE AGAINST THE DARK ARTS

The most immediate danger is of a terrorist group delivering a nuclear bomb or biological weapon with a truck, cargo ship, airplane, or boat. Such an attack could be tactically similar to what the United States has already experienced—in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1996 explosions at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and last fall's bombing of the U.S.S. *Cole*—and the ultimately responsible parties would be equally difficult to identify. The probable culprit would be a well-organized multinational group, acting with direct or indirect support from one or more hostile nations. Regular military defense tactics by the United States would be largely irrelevant, since the attackers would conceal the place and time of the strike, and Washington cannot maintain terrorist alerts continuously for the entire nation. The first line of defense against this threat, accordingly, is to develop an intelligence network able to give the government advance warning of an attack so that it can be stopped before it is launched.

As Washington tries to step up its intelligence activities, however, it will face two barriers: the restrictions imposed on U.S. intelligence

agencies' investigations of domestic suspects, and the disconnect between intelligence and law enforcement. Resolving these problems without unduly infringing on Americans' civil liberties will take judicious new legislation, as well as a restructuring of the executive branch. President Bush's creation of an Office of Homeland Security provides a useful basis for the necessary changes.

At the same time, Washington should pursue an aggressive campaign against the bases of terrorist groups and their possible state sponsors. Terrorist groups often have activities and support scattered in several countries, so the United States needs joint intelligence collection and analysis efforts with other nations, particularly those where terrorist cells are located. It will be perhaps most important (and most difficult) to get this type of cooperation from Russia and China. But just as future success in preventing nuclear proliferation will require joint programs with Russia and China, so will success in collecting intelligence on multinational terrorist groups.

Hostile nations also can pose a danger if they develop the capability to attack the United States with nuclear or biological weapons. In addition to the covert means available to terrorists, states could place their weapons in aircraft, perhaps in the guise of commercial planes, or cruise missiles, perhaps based in freighters off the U.S. coast. Here again, intelligence is key: putting the necessary defense measures in place requires a timely warning of the time and location of a planned strike.

A hostile nation might also strike with long-range ballistic missiles, a possibility that has received a great deal of attention recently. Not wanting to depend on deterrence alone in such a situation, the Bush administration has stated its intent to deploy a national missile defense (NMD) for added protection. NMD is, in a sense, an insurance policy that becomes relevant if both prevention and deterrence fail and the aggressor nation chooses to deliver its weapons using ballistic missiles instead of aircraft, cruise missiles, or covert means. The controversy surrounding missile defense may be thought of as a debate about how likely the United States is to need such insurance, how much the policy will cost, and whether the nation can collect on it if needed (i.e., whether the defenses will work). These are all reasonable questions to ask before committing to the purchase.

The ground-based missile defense system now well advanced in its development is designed to intercept incoming warheads in midflight—essentially trying to "hit a bullet with a bullet." Much contro-

versy has arisen about this system, particularly after several test failures. But even though success will demand quite advanced technology, I believe that the United States will demonstrate a convincing mastery of the system before long, perhaps in another five to ten tests. In a few years, therefore, NMD could demonstrate on the test range a technical effectiveness of 80–90 percent.

Assessing the likely operational effectiveness of such a system is a different matter, and it involves taking a realistic view of various possible degrading effects. An NMD system could sit unchallenged for years, for example, and then have to operate perfectly the first time it is needed, probably without any advance warning. Such a scenario is exactly the opposite of the situation on the test range, where the crew is primed and ready (and the firing is postponed if they are not). Experience with other military systems, moreover, suggests that they achieve their best performance only after significant use in combat conditions. Tactical air defenses are fine-tuned after operating against repeated waves of bombing attacks. A missile defense system operating against a nuclear attack would have to perform well during its first and only mission.

In a real attack, finally, one must expect the aggressors to employ technical or tactical countermeasures, such as decoys, chaff, radar jamming, or nuclear-induced radar blackout, to evade the NMD system. Washington is not likely to know which countermeasures might actually be used against its system, but it is prudent to expect them to be tailored to the specifics of the U.S. NMD program as it is described in the public record. Countermeasures are not simple to develop, but the incentive for the missile designer to acquire them is quite high. This inherent vulnerability of an air defense or missile defense system is a problem that can be addressed but never fully resolved.

Susceptibility to countermeasures is not new; indeed, it is a classic weakness common to all air defense systems. Missile defense systems have no significant operational history yet, but the United States and other countries have a history of air defense operations that extends over 60 years. Historically, these activities have demonstrated an ability in combat to shoot down between 3 and 30 percent of an attacking force; under some operational conditions they have done even less well. This record does not stop the United States from building and deploying such air defense systems to defend its military forces from repeated attacks by conventionally armed bombers, because a shoot-

down rate even as low as 10 percent would eventually exhaust an enemy's bomber force. But this low success rate is one reason the country has no comparable air defense system capable of defending its cities against a strike from nuclear-armed bombers, for which a shoot-down rate of even 30 percent would be insufficient.

Early in the Cold War, the United States considered deploying an air defense system to protect its population from the growing Soviet bomber fleet. The plans called for large radars, a nationwide command-and-control system, F-106 interceptor planes, and substantial complexes of antiaircraft missiles around each major urban area. A few of these units were actually deployed, but in the end Washington concluded that even if the system could achieve historically high shoot-down rates, it could not provide meaningful national protection against a nuclear attack from the air.

Moscow, meanwhile, made the opposite decision. At the time, U.S. intelligence estimated that to protect their cities against our B-47 and B-52 bombers, the Soviets spent more than $100 billion (in 1970 dollars) building and deploying their air defense system, which included thousands of surface-to-air missiles. In response, the U.S. Strategic Air Command developed technical and tactical countermeasures that they judged would enable a sufficient number of American bombers to penetrate the Soviet defenses and devastate the Soviet Union. This judgment was never put to a test, but its assessment of the Soviet system's vulnerability achieved credibility in the 1980s when a light civilian plane flew from West Germany and landed in Red Square without being intercepted.

The comparison between air defense and ballistic missile defense is imperfect, and one cannot simply apply the track records of the former to the latter. But it is hard to make a persuasive argument that shooting down a ballistic missile is easier than shooting down an airplane, or that a nation capable of deploying a force of intercontinental ballistic missiles could not build relatively challenging countermeasures. Even if the current NMD system eventually demonstrated a 90 percent rate of technical effectiveness on the test range, it is reasonable to question whether it could ever come close to that under operational conditions.

Today's U.S. policymakers must understand the fundamental limitations of missile defense systems against nuclear-armed missiles (just as their predecessors came to understand the limitations of air defense systems against nuclear-armed bombers) and recognize that even if

successful in that arena they would provide virtually no protection against a cruise missile or bomber attack, not to mention covert delivery by other means. Failure to recognize these limitations could create a false sense of security and lead to inappropriate defense priorities. In the 1930s, the Maginot line, erected to protect France against a German invasion, had just this effect on French leaders, with terrible consequences for their nation. The Maginot line failed not because it was poorly designed or implemented, but because the Germans recognized precisely how formidable a defense it was and devised a strategy for going around it. Committing the bulk of U.S. homeland defense resources and energies to NMD tempts a similar fate: hostile nations have not only countermeasure options but also the options of carrying their weapons on aircraft or cruise missiles, thus going around our defenses.

THE COST OF A LAYERED CUT

Several different NMD systems for protecting American military forces are in advanced stages of development. Theater defenses, which operate against medium-range missiles, will likely be deployed in the next few years at a cost that is reasonably well known. Coming up with a credible estimate of what a national missile defense would cost, on the other hand, is more difficult.

The Bush administration has not yet decided on a final design for such a system, but it has testified that it wants to move to a "layered" approach, in which different components could operate in sequence against a ballistic missile in its boost phase, in midcourse, and in its terminal phase. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that a full-scale version of the midcourse system now under development would cost $50 billion (for production and deployment of the sites and ten years of operation), plus an additional $10 billion for the space-based sensors. A system aimed solely at a missile's terminal stage probably would not require a new development program, since it could be based on the theater missile defense systems that will be deployed in a few years. But because terminal defenses can protect only relatively limited areas, a national network of them would have to include not only a global command-and-control system but separate and complex packages of missiles and radars for each urban area to be covered.

The boost-phase component of the project has not yet been designed. An air-based version of it, if alerted and deployed in a crisis, might provide an emergency defense against a missile launched from

North Korea or Iraq, but not against one from northern Iran. Complete coverage would require either a constellation of spacecraft or bases on the territories of Russia and several of the Central Asian republics. Because of their access to the missile during its boost phase, space-based systems have inherent advantages over those based on the ground, in the air, or at sea. But at the same time, they entail considerably more complex technical problems, raising difficult questions about cost, schedule, and feasibility.

It is hard to imagine either a space-based boost-phase system or a nationwide complex of terminal systems costing less than the ground-based midcourse defense system now under development. In the end, the cost of a layered approach to NMD could be several times higher than the $60 billion estimate for the midcourse system alone—enough to drain significant resources from other military needs. Even if the Defense Department were to save the money it hopes to by reforming the defense acquisition system and closing unnecessary bases, and even with the new willingness since September 11 to commit additional resources to national defense, the administration will have to make difficult choices about how to distribute its spending among force structure, readiness, and new investments, including missile defense.

During my tenure as secretary of defense, I found that setting funding priorities for defense programs and then defending those priorities to the president, Congress, and the public was a very demanding task. I judged then—and continue to believe now—that although the NMD program is important, it should have a lower priority than those programs that are key to maintaining military readiness. I would also accord NMD a lower priority than critical programs designed to upgrade American conventional forces. In particular, I believe there is an urgent need to replace U.S. fighter-bombers with the new generation of aircraft that have been developed over the last ten years, the technology of which (especially stealth capabilities and precise weapon delivery) will give the United States air supremacy in any military conflict for several decades to come. Operation Desert Storm demonstrated how air supremacy enhances all aspects of military operations, allowing the United States to win quickly, decisively, and with minimal casualties. It also illustrated to the rest of the world the futility of directly confronting the U.S. military. The current crisis has once again shown the unique role played by aircraft carriers in rapidly projecting American military power. Washington must support the pro-

grams under way to modernize U.S. carrier battle groups. U.S. forces must be transformed with modern information technology, which the Bush administration has rightly made a priority.

All these programs will be expensive, and they will compete with NMD for funding. Unlike NMD, however, these other investments serve more than one purpose. They allow the country to prevail in likely conflicts, they help sustain U.S. global leadership, they help deter conventional war, and they are a vital complement to nuclear forces in deterring the use of nuclear and biological weapons against the United States or its allies. Sacrificing the maintenance of U.S. conventional military supremacy to carry out an extensive NMD program would decrease rather than increase the nation's ability to deter nuclear as well as conventional war.

THE REST OF THE STORY

Responding to the dangers of proliferation and terrorism involves more than defense programs. The United States must also assign a higher priority and devote more funding to intelligence and law-enforcement programs that could help the authorities penetrate those terrorist groups planning attacks, as well as to intelligence efforts that illuminate the nature of the proliferation threat more generally.

Because even the best intelligence efforts can never offer perfect protection, the country also needs to increase its investments in programs designed to cope with an attack once it has occurred. In the case of a biological weapon, for example, quick and effective "consequence management" could reduce prospective fatalities as much as tenfold. Local and state governments, especially firefighters and police, will necessarily be on the front line, but national guard and reserve units can and should be strengthened to provide more effective support. None of these forces, however, has the special equipment, medicine, and training needed to deal fully with a biological attack—only the Centers for Disease Control can direct an effective response. To prepare itself to deal with the wide variety of microbes that might be used in a future attack, Washington must begin immediately to mobilize the medical and pharmaceutical industries so that they will be ready to respond with the needed vaccines, medicine, and health care facilities. All these steps and more, presumably, will be the responsibility of the new Office of Homeland Security, but overcoming bureaucratic divisions and programmatic inertia will be more difficult than some might expect.

Increased efforts to stop or slow proliferation, meanwhile, hold more promise than many critics seem to think. Since the end of the Cold War, four nations (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and South Africa) have given up their sizable nuclear arsenals and two others (Argentina and Brazil) have terminated their nuclear weapons programs short of success, a trend partially offset by the decisions of India and Pakistan to come out of the nuclear closet. Continuing the existing nonproliferation efforts is important, as is aggressively pursuing opportunities to reduce new threats before they emerge—for example, by negotiating an agreement whereby North Korea abandons its long-range missiles.

Serious nonproliferation efforts must involve Russia and China. Sustained dialogue with both is crucial, but the most important subject for such dialogue is proliferation, not missile defense or even reductions in strategic forces. Moscow and Beijing must take serious actions, in cooperation with the United States, to curb the unconventional weapons programs in Iraq, Iran, Libya, and North Korea. To get Moscow and Beijing on board, Washington should be prepared to make some compromises on other issues. Both governments appear to care less about proliferation than about preserving their ultimate nuclear deterrent. The United States should take the opposite approach, thus opening space for mutually beneficial discussions.

If effective agreements to curb proliferation cannot be reached, the threat will continue to grow. Indeed, if the present impasse in the consultations on missile defense continues, it could lead China to dramatically increase the long-range missile modernization program it now has under way and could lead both Russia and China to provide missile and counterdefense technology to nations hostile to the United States. If the attempt to deploy a missile defense resulted in an increase in proliferation, it would represent a net decrease in U.S. security. If discussions with Russia and China could succeed in reaching meaningful proliferation curbs, on the other hand, the Bush administration would seize a unique and historic opportunity to prevent new nuclear and biological threats from emerging. It is of course possible that the needed cooperation will not be forthcoming from Russia or China. But the stakes are too high to not make every effort.

If the Bush administration works to maintain U.S. conventional military supremacy, boosts efforts at intelligence gathering and consequence management, and pursues international cooperation on the pivotal nonproliferation issue, it is unlikely to have enough funds or

diplomatic leverage for the near-term deployment of a full-scale, layered NMD system. It should still be possible, however, to support an accelerated program to produce and deploy theater missile defenses. Once the new systems have been developed, they could be deployed rapidly during crises to defend against ballistic missile threats in those (relatively few) cases where the missile's boost phase would fall within range of the system. Deploying a naval-based missile defense system or an airborne laser to South Korea, for example—as the Clinton administration deployed Patriot missiles during the 1994 crisis caused by the breakdown in nonproliferation talks with North Korea—would be one way to respond to an attempt at nuclear extortion.

It should also be possible to maintain a robust missile defense research and development program, the results of which might change the calculus on such issues down the road. A central objective of this effort should be to gain a sophisticated understanding of missile defenses' vulnerability to countermeasures and develop appropriate means to defeat those countermeasures. In particular, the Defense Department should have a much more aggressive program to test the performance of American NMD systems against all realistic countermeasures. Testing can play an important role in validating the design of mechanisms to thwart countermeasures. But only very detailed and extensive simulations, monitored by an objective "red team" of outside observers, can allow officials to evaluate how well the system would work against the diverse countermeasures that it might have to face.

STEP BY STEP

The United States has suffered the most devastating terrorist attack in world history. It can and will respond. But the attack demonstrates that there are large, well-organized groups whose primary objective is to kill large numbers of Americans. These groups understand all too well that nuclear or biological weapons can fulfill that mission even better than truck bombs or kamikaze aircraft can. The United States also faces a small number of nations that believe they can advance their own interests by mounting unconventional threats. Future U.S. security therefore depends on actions taken today to prevent the proliferation of nuclear and biological weapons tomorrow. Nonproliferation efforts, in turn, depend on effective cooperation with the other nuclear powers. Achieving such cooperation is therefore a critical national security objective.

Even if the United States fails to prevent proliferation, it still has a powerful and credible deterrent of both nuclear and conventional weapons. But it is reasonable to take out insurance against the contingency that both prevention and deterrence fail. National missile defense is such an insurance policy. As the government considers the priority to give to missile defense relative to other national security efforts, both within the defense budget and without, it should recognize that NMD would not provide any protection against the most likely forms of terrorist attack, nor would it be effective against a strike by cruise missiles or bombers. The insurance policy would thus cover a possible but not the most likely contingency, would come at a high price, and could stimulate an increase in the level and sophistication of the threats the country faces.

Theater missile defenses, in contrast, address a clear and direct threat to American deployed forces from short-range missiles, and the military should move to deploy the next generation of them as expeditiously as possible. It makes sense to continue a robust research and development program for defenses against ballistic missiles, but it would be a mistake to let such efforts interfere with attempts to prevent proliferation or hamper achieving the joint international programs necessary to respond effectively to the immediate terrorist challenge. In any event, informed judgments about the wisdom of deploying an NMD system can be made only after officials can get realistic estimates of its effectiveness in the face of probable countermeasures and credible estimates of its financial and diplomatic costs. That day is still several years away.

Somebody Else's Civil War

Michael Scott Doran

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> Call it a city on four legs
> heading for murder. ...
> New York is a woman
> holding, according to history,
> a rag called liberty with one hand
> and strangling the earth with the other.
> —Adonis [Ali Ahmed Said],
> "The Funeral of New York," 1971

In the weeks after the attacks of September 11, Americans repeatedly asked, "Why do they hate us?" To understand what happened, however, another question may be even more pertinent: "Why do they want to provoke us?"

David Fromkin suggested the answer in *Foreign Affairs* back in 1975. "Terrorism," he noted, "is violence used in order to create fear; but it is aimed at creating fear in order that the fear, in turn, will lead somebody else—not the terrorist—to embark on some quite different pro-

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gram of action that will accomplish whatever it is that the terrorist really desires." When a terrorist kills, the goal is not murder itself but something else—for example, a police crackdown that will create a rift between government and society that the terrorist can then exploit for revolutionary purposes. Osama bin Laden sought—and has received—an international military crackdown, one he wants to exploit for his particular brand of revolution.

Bin Laden produced a piece of high political theater he hoped would reach the audience that concerned him the most: the *umma*, or universal Islamic community. The script was obvious: America, cast as the villain, was supposed to use its military might like a cartoon character trying to kill a fly with a shotgun. The media would see to it that any use of force against the civilian population of Afghanistan was broadcast around the world, and the *umma* would find it shocking how Americans nonchalantly caused Muslims to suffer and die. The ensuing outrage would open a chasm between state and society in the Middle East, and the governments allied with the West—many of which are repressive, corrupt, and illegitimate—would find themselves adrift. It was to provoke such an outcome that bin Laden broadcast his statement following the start of the military campaign on October 7, in which he said, among other things, that the Americans and the British "have divided the entire world into two regions—one of faith, where there is no hypocrisy, and another of infidelity, from which we hope God will protect us."

Polarizing the Islamic world between the *umma* and the regimes allied with the United States would help achieve bin Laden's primary goal: furthering the cause of Islamic revolution within the Muslim world itself, in the Arab lands especially and in Saudi Arabia above all. He had no intention of defeating America. War with the United States was not a goal in and of itself but rather an instrument designed to help his brand of extremist Islam survive and flourish among the believers. Americans, in short, have been drawn into somebody else's civil war.

Washington had no choice but to take up the gauntlet, but it is not altogether clear that Americans understand fully this war's true dimensions. The response to bin Laden cannot be left to soldiers and police alone. He has embroiled the United States in an intra-Muslim ideological battle, a struggle for hearts and minds in which al Qaeda had already scored a number of victories—as the reluctance of America's Middle Eastern allies to offer public support for the campaign

against it demonstrated. The first step toward weakening the hold of bin Laden's ideology, therefore, must be to comprehend the symbolic universe into which he has dragged us.

AMERICA, THE HUBAL OF THE AGE

Bin Laden's October 7 statement offers a crucial window onto his conceptual world and repays careful attention. In it he states, "Hypocrisy stood behind the leader of global idolatry, behind the Hubal of the age—namely, America and its supporters." Because the symbolism is obscure to most Americans, this sentence was widely mistranslated in the press, but bin Laden's Muslim audience understood it immediately.

In the early seventh century, when the Prophet Muhammad began to preach Islam to the pagan Arab tribes in Mecca, Hubal was a stone idol that stood in the Kaaba—a structure that Abraham, according to Islamic tradition, originally built on orders from God as a sanctuary of Islam. In the years between Abraham and Muhammad, the tradition runs, the Arabs fell away from true belief and began to worship idols, with Hubal the most powerful of many. When bin Laden calls America "the Hubal of the age," he suggests that it is the primary focus of idol worship and that it is polluting the Kaaba, a symbol of Islamic purity. His imagery has a double resonance: it portrays American culture as a font of idolatry while rejecting the American military presence on the Arabian peninsula (which is, by his definition, the holy land of Islam, a place barred to infidels).

Muhammad's prophecy called the Arabs of Mecca back to their monotheistic birthright. The return to true belief, however, was not an easy one, because the reigning Meccan oligarchy persecuted the early Muslims. By calling for the destruction of Hubal, the Prophet's message threatened to undermine the special position that Mecca enjoyed in Arabia as a pagan shrine city. With much of their livelihood at stake, the oligarchs punished Muhammad's followers and conspired to kill him. The Muslims therefore fled from Mecca to Medina, where they established the *umma* as a political and religious community. They went on to fight and win a war against Mecca that ended with the destruction of Hubal and the spread of true Islam around the world.

Before the Prophet could achieve this success, however, he encountered the *Munafiqun*, the Hypocrites of Medina. Muhammad's acceptance of leadership over the Medinese reduced the power of a number of local tribal leaders. These men outwardly accepted Islam in order

to protect their worldly status, but in their hearts they bore malice toward both the Prophet and his message. Among other misdeeds, the treacherous *Munafiqun* abandoned Muhammad on the battlefield at a moment when he was already woefully outnumbered. The Hypocrites were apostates who accepted true belief but then rejected it, and as such they were regarded as worse than the infidels who had never embraced Islam to begin with. Islam can understand just how difficult it is for a pagan to leave behind all the beliefs and personal connections that he or she once held dear; it is less forgiving of those who accept the truth and then subvert it.

In bin Laden's imagery, the leaders of the Arab and Islamic worlds today are Hypocrites, idol worshippers cowering behind America, the Hubal of the age. His sword jabs simultaneously at the United States and the governments allied with it. His attack was designed to force those governments to choose: You are either with the idol-worshiping enemies of God or you are with the true believers.

The al Qaeda organization grew out of an Islamic religious movement called the Salafiyya—a name derived from *al-Salaf al-Salih*, "the venerable forefathers," which refers to the generation of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Salafis regard the Islam that most Muslims practice today as polluted by idolatry; they seek to reform the religion by emulating the first generation of Muslims, whose pristine society they consider to have best reflected God's wishes for humans. The Salafiyya is not a unified movement, and it expresses itself in many forms, most of which do not approach the extremism of Osama bin Laden or the Taliban. The Wahhabi ideology of the Saudi state, for example, and the religious doctrines of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and a host of voluntary religious organizations around the Islamic world are all Salafi. These diverse movements share the belief that Muslims have deviated from God's plan and that matters can be returned to their proper state by emulating the Prophet.

Like any other major religious figure, Muhammad left behind a legacy that his followers have channeled in different directions. An extremist current in the Salafiyya places great emphasis on jihad, or holy war. Among other things, the Prophet Muhammad fought in mortal combat against idolatry, and some of his followers today choose to accord this aspect of his career primary importance. The devoted members of al Qaeda display an unsettling willingness to martyr themselves because they feel that, like the Prophet, they are locked in a life-

or-death struggle with the forces of unbelief that threaten from all sides. They consider themselves an island of true believers surrounded by a sea of iniquity and think the future of religion itself, and therefore the world, depends on them and their battle against idol worship.

In almost every Sunni Muslim country the Salafiyya has spawned Islamist political movements working to compel the state to apply the *shari`a*—that is, Islamic law. Extremist Salafis believe that strict application of the *shari`a* is necessary to ensure that Muslims walk on the path of the Prophet. The more extremist the party, the more insistent and violent the demand that the state must apply the *shari`a* exclusively. In the view of extremist Salafis, the *shari`a* is God's thunderous commandment to Muslims, and failure to adopt it constitutes idolatry. By removing God from the realm of law, a domain that He has clearly claimed for Himself alone, human legislation amounts to worshiping a pagan deity. Thus it was on the basis of failure to apply the *shari`a* that extremists branded Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat an apostate and then killed him. His assassins came from a group often known as Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the remnants of which have in recent years merged with al Qaeda. In fact, investigators believe that Egyptian Islamic Jihad's leaders, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Muhammad Atef (who was killed in the U.S. air campaign), masterminded the attacks of September 11. In his 1996 "Declaration of War against the Americans," bin Laden showed that he and his Egyptian associates are cut from the same cloth. Just as Zawahiri and Atef considered the current regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt to be a nest of apostates, so bin Laden considered the Saudi monarchy (its Wahhabi doctrines notwithstanding) to have renounced Islam. According to bin Laden, his king adopted "polytheism," which bin Laden defined as the acceptance of "laws fabricated by men ... permitting that which God has forbidden." It is the height of human arrogance and irreligion to "share with God in His sole right of sovereignty and making the law."

Extremist Salafis, therefore, regard modern Western civilization as a font of evil, spreading idolatry around the globe in the form of secularism. Since the United States is the strongest Western nation, the main purveyor of pop culture, and the power most involved in the political and economic affairs of the Islamic world, it receives particularly harsh criticism. Only the apostate Middle Eastern regimes themselves fall under harsher condemnation.

It is worth remembering, in this regard, that the rise of Islam represents a miraculous case of the triumph of human will. With little more than their beliefs to gird them, the Prophet Muhammad and a small number of devoted followers started a movement that brought the most powerful empires of their day crashing to the ground. On September 11, the attackers undoubtedly imagined themselves to be retracing the Prophet's steps. As they boarded the planes with the intention of destroying the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, they recited battle prayers that contained the line "All of their equipment, and gates, and technology will not prevent [you from achieving your aim], nor harm [you] except by God's will." The hijackers' imaginations certainly needed nothing more than this sparse line to remind them that, as they attacked America, they rode right behind Muhammad, who in his day had unleashed forces that, shortly after his death, destroyed the Persian Empire and crippled Byzantium—the two superpowers of the age.

AMERICA, LAND OF THE CRUSADERS

When thinking about the world today and their place in it, the extremist Salafis do not reflect only on the story of the foundation of Islam. They also scour more than a millennium of Islamic history in search of parallels to the present predicament. In his "Declaration of War," for instance, bin Laden states that the stationing of American forces on the soil of the Arabian peninsula constitutes the greatest aggression committed against the Muslims since the death of the Prophet in AD 632.

To put this claim in perspective, it is worth remembering that in the last 1,300 years Muslims have suffered a number of significant defeats, including but not limited to the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate by the Mongols, an episode of which bin Laden is well aware. In 1258 the ruthless Mongol leader Hulegu sacked Baghdad, killed the caliph, and massacred hundreds of thousands of inhabitants, stacking their skulls, as legend has it, in a pyramid outside the city walls. Whatever one thinks about U.S. policy toward Iraq, few in America would argue that the use of Saudi bases to enforce the sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime constitutes a world-historical event on a par with the Mongol invasion of the Middle East. Before September 11, one might have been tempted to pass off as nationalist hyperbole bin Laden's assumption that U.S. policy represents the pinnacle of human evil. Now we know he is deadly serious.

The magnitude of the attacks on New York and Washington make it clear that al Qaeda does indeed believe itself to be fighting a war to save the *umma* from Satan, represented by secular Western culture. Extreme though they may be, these views extend far beyond al Qaeda's immediate followers in Afghanistan. Even a quick glance at the Islamist press in Arabic demonstrates that many Muslims who do not belong to bin Laden's terrorist network consider the United States to be on a moral par with Genghis Khan. Take, for instance, Muhammad Abbas, an Egyptian Islamist who wrote the following in the newspaper *Al Shaab* on September 21:

> Look! There is the master of democracy whom they have so often sanctified but who causes criminal, barbaric, bloody oppression that abandons the moral standards of even the most savage empires in history. In my last column I listed for readers the five million killed (may God receive them as martyrs) because of the crimes committed by this American civilization that America leads. These five million were killed in the last few decades alone.

Similar feelings led another *Al Shaab* columnist that day, Khalid al-Sharif, to describe the shock and delight that he felt while watching the World Trade Center crumbling:

> Look at that! America, master of the world, is crashing down. Look at that! The Satan who rules the world, east and west, is burning. Look at that! The sponsor of terrorism is itself seared by its fire.

The fanatics of al Qaeda see the world in black and white and advance a particularly narrow view of Islam. This makes them a tiny minority among Muslims. But the basic categories of their thought flow directly from the mainstream of the Salafiyya, a perspective that has enjoyed a wide hearing over the last 50 years. Familiarity thus ensures bin Laden's ideas a sympathetic reception in many quarters.

In Salafi writings, the United States emerges as the senior member of a "Zionist-Crusader alliance" dedicated to subjugating Muslims, killing them, and, most important, destroying Islam. A careful reading reveals that this alliance represents more than just close relations between the United States and Israel today. The international cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem is but one nefarious manifestation of a greater evil of almost cosmic proportions. Thus in his "Declaration of War" bin Laden lists 10 or 12

world hot spots where Muslims have recently died (including Bosnia, Chechnya, and Lebanon) and attributes all of these deaths to a conspiracy led by the United States, even though Americans actually played no role in pulling the trigger. And thus, in another document, "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders," bin Laden describes U.S. policies toward the Middle East as "a clear declaration of war on God, His messenger, and Muslims."

As strange as it may sound to an American audience, the idea that the United States has taken an oath of enmity toward God has deep roots in the Salafi tradition. It has been around for more than 50 years and has reached a wide public through the works of, among others, Sayyid Qutb, the most important Salafi thinker of the last half-century and a popular author in the Muslim world even today, nearly 40 years after his death. A sample passage taken from his writings in the early 1950s illustrates the point. Addressing the reasons why the Western powers had failed to support Muslims against their enemies in Pakistan, Palestine, and elsewhere, Qutb canvassed a number of common explanations such as Jewish financial influence and British imperial trickery but concluded,

> All of these opinions overlook one vital element in the question ... the Crusader spirit that runs in the blood of all Occidentals. It is this that colors all their thinking, which is responsible for their imperialistic fear of the spirit of Islam and for their efforts to crush the strength of Islam. For the instincts and the interests of all Occidentals are bound up together in the crushing of that strength. This is the common factor that links together communist Russia and capitalist America. We do not forget the role of international Zionism in plotting against Islam and in pooling the forces of the Crusader imperialists and communist materialists alike. This is nothing other than a continuation of the role played by the Jews since the migration of the Prophet to Medina and the rise of the Islamic state.

Sayyid Qutb, Osama bin Laden, and the entire extremist Salafiyya see Western civilization, in all periods and in all guises, as innately hostile to Muslims and to Islam itself. The West and Islam are locked in a prolonged conflict. Islam will eventually triumph, of course, but only after enduring great hardship. Contemporary history, defined as it is by Western domination, constitutes the darkest era in the entire history of Islam.

AMERICA AND THE MONGOL THREAT

When attempting to come to grips with the nature of the threat the modern West poses, extremist Salafis fall back on the writings of Ibn Taymiyya for guidance. A towering figure in the history of Islamic thought, he was born in Damascus in the thirteenth century, when Syria stood under the threat of invasion from the Mongols. Modern radicals find him attractive because he too faced the threat of a rival civilization. Ibn Taymiyya the firebrand exhorted his fellow Muslims to fight the Mongol foe, while Ibn Taymiyya the intellectual guided his community through the problems Muslims face when their social order falls under the shadow of non-Muslim power. It is only natural that bin Laden himself looks to such a master in order to legitimate his policies. Using Ibn Taymiyya to target America, however, marks an interesting turning point in the history of the radical Salafiyya.

Bin Laden's "Declaration of War" uses the logic of Ibn Taymiyya to persuade others in the Salafiyya to abandon old tactics for new ones. The first reference to him arises in connection with a discussion of the "Zionist-Crusader alliance," which according to bin Laden has been jailing and killing radical preachers—men such as Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, in prison for plotting a series of bombings in New York City following the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. Bin Laden argues that the "iniquitous Crusader movement under the leadership of the U.S.A." fears these preachers because they will successfully rally the Islamic community against the West, just as Ibn Taymiyya did against the Mongols in his day. Having identified the United States as a threat to Islam equivalent to the Mongols, bin Laden then discusses what to do about it. Ibn Taymiyya provides the answer: "To fight in the defense of religion and belief is a collective duty; there is no other duty after belief than fighting the enemy who is corrupting the life and the religion." The next most important thing after accepting the word of God, in other words, is fighting for it.

By calling on the *umma* to fight the Americans as if they were the Mongols, bin Laden and his Egyptian lieutenants have taken the extremist Salafiyya down a radically new path. Militants have long identified the West as a pernicious evil on a par with the Mongols, but they have traditionally targeted the internal enemy, the Hypocrites and apostates, rather than Hubal itself. Aware that he is shifting the focus considerably, bin Laden quotes Ibn Taymiyya at length to establish the basic point that "people of Islam should join forces and sup-

port each other to get rid of the main infidel," even if that means that the true believers will be forced to fight alongside Muslims of dubious piety. In the grand scheme of things, he argues, God often uses the base motives of impious Muslims as a means of advancing the cause of religion. In effect, bin Laden calls upon his fellow Islamist radicals to postpone the Islamic revolution, to stop fighting Hypocrites and apostates: "An internal war is a great mistake, no matter what reasons there are for it," because discord among Muslims will only serve the United States and its goal of destroying Islam.

The shift of focus from the domestic enemy to the foreign power is all the more striking given the merger of al Qaeda and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. The latter's decision to kill Sadat in 1981 arose directly from the principle that the cause of Islam would be served by targeting lax Muslim leaders rather than by fighting foreigners, and here, too, Ibn Taymiyya provided the key doctrine. In his day Muslims often found themselves living under Mongol rulers who had absorbed Islam in one form or another. Ibn Taymiyya argued that such rulers—who outwardly pretended to be Muslims but who secretly followed non-Islamic, Mongol practices—must be considered infidels. Moreover, he claimed, by having accepted Islam but having also failed to observe key precepts of the religion, they had in effect committed apostasy and thereby written their own death sentences. In general, Islam prohibits fighting fellow Muslims and strongly restricts the right to rebel against the ruler; Ibn Taymiyya's doctrines, therefore, were crucial in the development of a modern Sunni Islamic revolutionary theory.

Egyptian Islamic Jihad views leaders such as Sadat as apostates. Although they may outwardly display signs of piety, they do not actually have Islam in their hearts, as their failure to enforce the *shari`a* proves. This non-Islamic behavior demonstrates that such leaders actually serve the secular West, precisely as an earlier generation of outwardly Muslim rulers had served the Mongols, and as the Hypocrites had served idolatry. Islamic Jihad explained itself back in the mid-1980s in a long, lucid statement titled "The Neglected Duty." Not a political manifesto like bin Laden's tracts, it is a sustained and learned argument that targets the serious believer rather than the angry, malleable crowd. Unlike bin Laden's holy war, moreover, Islamic Jihad's doctrine, though violent, fits clearly in the mainstream of Salafi consciousness, which historically has been concerned much more with the state of the Muslims themselves than with relations between Is-

lam and the outside world. The decision to target America, therefore, raises the question of whether, during the 1990s, Egyptian Islamic Jihad changed its ideology entirely. Did its leaders decide that the foreign enemy was in fact the real enemy? Or was the 1993 bombing in New York tactical rather than strategic?

The answer would seem to be the latter. Bin Laden's "Declaration of War" itself testifies to the tactical nature of his campaign against America. Unlike "The Neglected Duty," which presents a focused argument, the "Declaration of War" meanders from topic to topic, contradicting itself along the way. On the one hand, it calls for unity in the face of external aggression and demands an end to internecine warfare; on the other, it calls in essence for revolution in Saudi Arabia. By presenting a litany of claims against the Saudi ruling family and by discussing the politics of Saudi Arabia at length and in minute detail, bin Laden protests too much: he reveals that he has not, in fact, set aside the internal war among the believers. Moreover, he also reveals that the ideological basis for that internal war has not changed. The members of the Saudi elite, like Sadat, have committed apostasy. Like the Hypocrites of Medina, they serve the forces of irreligion in order to harm the devotees of the Prophet and his message:

> You know more than anybody else about the size, intention, and the danger of the presence of the U.S. military bases in the area. The [Saudi] regime betrayed the *umma* and joined the infidels, assisting them ... against the Muslims. It is well known that this is one of the ten "voiders" of Islam, deeds of de-Islamization. By opening the Arabian Peninsula to the crusaders, the regime disobeyed and acted against what has been enjoined by the messenger of God.

Osama bin Laden undoubtedly believes that Americans are Crusader-Zionists, that they threaten his people even more than did the Mongols—in short, that they are the enemies of God Himself. But he also sees them as obstacles to his plans for his native land. The "Declaration of War" provides yet more testimony to the old saw that ultimately all politics is local.

THE FAILURE OF POLITICAL ISLAM

If the attacks on the United States represented a change in radical Salafi tactics, then one must wonder what prompted bin Laden and Zawahiri to make that change. The answer is that the attacks were a

response to the failure of extremist movements in the Muslim world in recent years, which have generally proved incapable of taking power (Sudan and Afghanistan being the major exceptions). In the last two decades, several violent groups have challenged regimes such as those in Egypt, Syria, and Algeria, but in every case the government has managed to crush, co-opt, or marginalize the radicals. In the words of the "Declaration of War,"

> the Zionist-Crusader alliance moves quickly to contain and abort any "corrective movement" appearing in Islamic countries. Different means and methods are used to achieve their target. Sometimes officials from the Ministry of the Interior, who are also graduates of the colleges of the *shari`a*, are [unleashed] to mislead and confuse the nation and the *umma* ... and to circulate false information about the movement, wasting the energy of the nation in discussing minor issues and ignoring the main one that is the unification of people under the divine law of Allah.

Given that in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere regimes have resorted to extreme violence to protect themselves, it is striking that bin Laden emphasizes here not the brutality but rather the counterpropaganda designed to divide and rule. Consciously or not, he has put his finger on a serious problem for the extremist Salafis: the limitations of their political and economic theories.

Apart from insisting on the implementation of the *shari`a*, demanding social justice, and turning the *umma* into the only legitimate political community, radical Salafis have precious little to offer in response to the mundane problems that people and governments face in the modern world. Extremist Islam is profoundly effective in mounting a protest movement: it can produce a cadre of activists whose devotion to the cause knows no bounds, it can galvanize people to fight against oppression. But it has serious difficulties when it comes to producing institutions and programs that can command the attention of diverse groups in society over the long haul. Its success relies mainly on the support of true believers, but they tend to fragment in disputes over doctrine, leadership, and agenda.

The limitations of extremist Salafi political theory and its divisive tendencies come to light clearly if one compares the goals of al Qaeda with those of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas, whose suicide bombers have also been in the headlines recently. The ideology of

Hamas also evolved out of the Egyptian extremist Salafiyya milieu, and it shares with al Qaeda a paranoid view of the world: the *umma* and true Islam are threatened with extinction by the spread of Western secularism, the policies of the Crusading West, and oppression by the Zionists. Both Hamas and al Qaeda believe that the faithful must obliterate Israel. But looking more closely at Hamas and its agenda, one can see that it parts company with al Qaeda in many significant ways. This is because Hamas operates in the midst of nationalistic Palestinians, a majority of whom fervently desire, among other things, an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state in part of historic Palestine.

The nationalist outlook of Hamas' public presents the organization with a number of thorny problems. Nationalism, according to the extremist Salafiyya, constitutes *shirk*—that is, polytheism or idolatry. If politics and religion are not distinct categories, as extremist Salafis argue, then political life must be centered around God and God's law. Sovereignty belongs not to the nation but to God alone, and the only legitimate political community is the *umma*. Pride in one's ethnic group is tolerable only so long as it does not divide the community of believers, who form an indivisible unit thanks to the sovereignty of the *shari`a*. One day, extremist Salafis believe, political boundaries will be erased and all Muslims will live in one polity devoted to God's will. At the moment, however, the priority is not to erase boundaries but to raise up the *shari`a* and abolish secular law. Nationalism is idolatry because it divides the *umma* and replaces a *shari`a*-centered consciousness with ethnic pride.

If Hamas were actually to denounce secular Palestinian nationalists as apostates, however, it would immediately consign itself to political irrelevance. To skirt this problem, the organization has developed an elaborate view of Islamic history that in effect elevates the Palestinian national struggle to a position of paramount importance for the *umma* as a whole. This allows Hamas activists to function in the day-to-day political world as fellow travelers with the nationalists. Thus one of the fascinating aspects of Palestinian extremist Salafiyya is a dog that hasn't barked: in contrast to its sibling movements in neighboring countries, Hamas has refrained from labeling the secular leaders in the Palestinian Authority as apostates. Even at the height of Yasir Arafat's crackdown against Hamas, the movement never openly branded him as an idolater.

Like al Qaeda, Hamas argues that a conspiracy between Zionism and the West has dedicated itself to destroying Islam, but for obvious reasons it magnifies the role of Zionism in the alliance. The Hamas Covenant, for example, sees Zionism as, among other things, a force determining many of the greatest historical developments of the modern period:

> [Zionists] were behind the French Revolution, the communist revolution. ... They were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic caliphate [i.e., the Ottoman Empire]. ... They obtained the Balfour Declaration [favoring establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine], [and] formed the League of Nations, through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state. It was they who instigated the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations and the Security Council. ... There is no war going on anywhere, without [them] having their finger in it.

Do a number of intelligent and educated people actually believe this? Yes, because they must; their self-understanding hinges on it. Since their political struggle must be for the greater good of the *umma* and of Islam as a whole, their enemy must be much more than just one part of the Jewish people with designs on one sliver of Muslim territory. The enemy must be the embodiment of an evil that transcends time and place.

Although the sanctity of Jerusalem works in Hamas' favor, in Islam Jerusalem does not enjoy the status of Mecca and Medina and is only a city, not an entire country. To reconcile its political and religious concerns, therefore, Hamas must inflate the significance of Palestine in Islamic history: "The present Zionist onslaught," the covenant says, "has also been preceded by Crusading raids from the West and other Tatar [Mongol] raids from the East." The references here are to Saladin, the Muslim leader who defeated the Crusaders in Palestine at the battle of Hattin in 1187, and to the Muslim armies that defeated the Mongols at another Palestinian site called Ayn Jalut in 1260. On this basis Hamas argues that Palestine has always been the bulwark against the enemies of Islam; the *umma*, therefore, must rally behind the Palestinians to destroy Israel, which represents the third massive onslaught against the true religion since the death of the Prophet.

Despite the similarities in their perspectives, therefore, al Qaeda and Hamas have quite different agendas. Al Qaeda justifies its politi-

cal goals on the basis of the holiness of Mecca and Medina and on the claim that the presence of U.S. forces in Arabia constitutes the greatest aggression that the Muslims have ever endured. Hamas sees its own struggle against Israel as the first duty of the *umma*. The two organizations undoubtedly share enough in common to facilitate political cooperation on many issues, but at some point their agendas diverge radically, a divergence that stems from the different priorities inherent in their respective Saudi and Palestinian backgrounds.

The differences between al Qaeda and Hamas demonstrate how local conditions can mold the universal components of Salafi consciousness into distinct world views. They display the creativity of radical Islamists in addressing a practical problem similar to that faced by communists in the early twentieth century: how to build a universal political movement that can nevertheless function effectively at the local level. This explains why, when one looks at the political map of the extremist Salafiyya, one finds a large number of organizations all of which insist that they stand for the same principles. They do, in fact, all insist on the implementation of the *shari`a*, but the specific social and political forces fueling that insistence differ greatly from place to place. They all march to the beat of God's drummer, but the marchers tend to wander off in different directions.

The new tactic of targeting America is designed to overcome precisely this weakness of political Islam. Bin Laden succeeded in attacking Hubal, the universal enemy: he identified the only target that all of the Salafiyya submovements around the world can claim equally as their own, thereby reflecting and reinforcing the collective belief that the *umma* actually is the political community. He and his colleagues adopted this strategy not from choice but from desperation, a desperation born of the fact that in recent years the extremist Salafis had been defeated politically almost everywhere in the Arab and Muslim world. The new tactic, by tapping into the deepest emotions of the political community, smacks of brilliance, and—much to America's chagrin—will undoubtedly give political Islam a renewed burst of energy.

EXPLAINING THE ECHO

The decision to target the United States allows al Qaeda to play the role of a radical "Salafi International." It resonates beyond the small community of committed extremists, however, reaching not just moderate Salafis but, in addition, a broad range of disaffected citizens ex-

periencing poverty, oppression, and powerlessness across the Muslim world. This broader resonance of what appears to us as such a wild and hateful message is the dimension of the problem that Americans find most difficult to understand.

One reason for the welcoming echo is the extent to which Salafi political movements, while failing to capture state power, have nevertheless succeeded in capturing much cultural ground in Muslim countries. Many authoritarian regimes (such as Mubarak's Egypt) have cut a deal with the extremists: in return for an end to assassinations, the regime acquiesces in some of the demands regarding implementation of the *shari`a*. In addition, it permits the extremist groups to run networks of social welfare organizations that often deliver services more efficiently than does a state sector riddled with corruption and marred by decay. This powerful cultural presence of the Salafis across the Islamic world means not only that their direct ranks have grown but also that their symbolism is more familiar than ever among a wider public.

But the attack on America also resonates deeply among secular groups in many countries. The immediate response in the secular Arab press, for example, fell broadly into three categories. A minority denounced the attacks forcefully and unconditionally, another minority attributed them to the Israelis or to American extremists like Timothy McVeigh, and a significant majority responded with a version of "Yes, but"—yes, the terrorist attacks against you were wrong, but you must understand that your own policies in the Middle East have for years sown the seeds of this kind of violence.

This rationalization amounts to a political protest against the perceived role of the United States in the Middle East. Arab and Islamic commentators, and a number of prominent analysts of the Middle East in this country, point in particular to U.S. enforcement of the sanctions on Iraq and U.S. support for Israel in its struggle against Palestinian nationalism. Both of these issues certainly cause outrage, and if the United States were to effect the removal of Israeli settlements from the West Bank and alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people, some of that outrage would certainly subside. But although a change in those policies would dampen some of bin Laden's appeal, it would not solve the problem of the broader anger and despair that he taps, because the sources of those feelings lie beyond the realm of day-to-day diplomacy.

Indeed, secular political discourse in the Islamic world in general and the Arab world in particular bears a striking resemblance to the

Salafi interpretation of international affairs, especially insofar as both speak in terms of Western conspiracies. The secular press does not make reference to Crusaders and Mongols but rather to a string of "broken promises" dating back to World War I, when the European powers divided up the Ottoman Empire to suit their own interests. They planted Israel in the midst of the Middle East, so the analysis goes, in order to drive a wedge between Arab states, and the United States continues to support Israel for the same purpose. Bin Laden played to this sentiment in his October 7 statement when he said,

> What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years. Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than eighty years. Its sons are being killed, its blood is being shed, its holy places are being attacked, and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed.

For 80 years—that is, since the destruction of the Ottoman Empire—the Arabs and the Muslims have been humiliated. Although they do not share bin Laden's millenarian agenda, when secular commentators point to Palestine and Iraq today they do not see just two difficult political problems; they see what they consider the true intentions of the West unmasked.

Arab commentators often explain, for instance, that Saddam Hussein and Washington are actually allies. They ridicule the notion that the United States tried to depose the dictator. After all, it is said, the first Bush administration had the forces in place to remove the Baath Party and had called on the Iraqi populace to rise up against the tyrant. When the people actually rose, however, the Americans watched from the sidelines as the regime brutally suppressed them. Clearly, therefore, what the United States really wanted was to divide and rule the Arabs in order to secure easy access to Persian Gulf oil—a task that also involves propping up corrupt monarchies in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Keeping Saddam on a leash was the easiest way to ensure that Iran could not block the project.

Needless to say, this world view is problematic. Since World War I, Arab societies have been deeply divided among themselves along ethnic, social, religious, and political lines. Regardless of what the dominant Arab discourse regarding broken promises has to say, most of these divisions were not created by the West. The European powers and the United States have sometimes worked to divide the Arabs,

sometimes to unify them. Mostly they have pursued their own interests, as have all the other actors involved. Bin Laden is a participant in a profoundly serious civil war over Arab and Muslim identity in the modern world. The United States is also a participant in that war, because whether it realizes it or not, its policies affect the fortunes of the various belligerents. But Washington is not a primary actor, because it is an outsider in cultural affairs and has only a limited ability to define for believers the role of Islam in public life.

The war between extremist Salafis and the broader populations around them is only the tip of the iceberg. The fight over religion among Muslims is but one of a number of deep and enduring regional struggles that originally had nothing to do with the United States and even today involve it only indirectly. Nonetheless, U.S. policies can influence the balance of power among the protagonists in these struggles, sometimes to a considerable degree.

Until the Arab and Muslim worlds create political orders that do not disenfranchise huge segments of their own populations, the civil war will continue and will continue to touch the United States. Washington can play an important role in fostering authentic and inclusive polities, but ultimately Arabs and Muslims more generally must learn to live in peace with one another so as to live comfortably with outsiders. Whether they will do so is anybody's guess.

It is a stark political fact that in the Arab and Muslim worlds today economic globalization and the international balance of power both come with an American face, and neither gives much reason for optimism. Osama bin Laden's rhetoric, dividing the world into two camps—the *umma* versus the United States and puppet regimes—has a deep resonance because on some levels it conforms, if not to reality, then at least to its appearances. This is why, for the first time in modern history, the extremist Salafis have managed to mobilize mass popular opinion.

This development is troubling, but the United States still has some cards to play. Its policies, for instance, on both West Bank settlements and Iraq, are sorely in need of review—but only after bin Laden has been vanquished. These policy changes might help, but the root problem lies deeper. Once al Qaeda has been annihilated without sparking anti-American revolutions in the Islamic world, the United States should adopt a set of policies that ensure that significant numbers of Muslims—not Muslim regimes but Muslims—identify their own interests with those of the United States, so that demagogues like bin

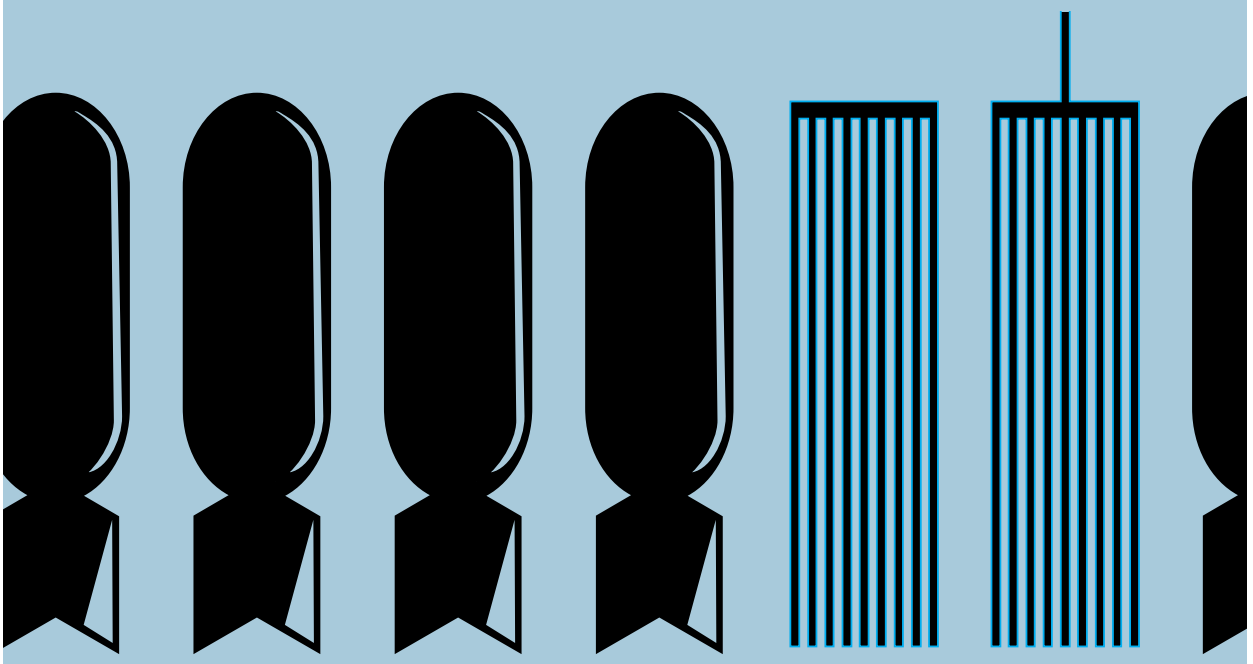
Laden cannot aspire to speak in the name of the entire *umma*. In 1991, millions of Iraqis constituted just such a reservoir of potential supporters, yet America turned its back on them. Washington had its reasons, but they were not the kind that can be justified in terms of the American values that we trumpet to the world. Today we are paying a price for that hypocrisy. This is not to say that we caused or deserved the attacks of September 11 in any way. It is to say, however, that we are to some extent responsible for the fact that so few in the Arab and Muslim worlds express vocal and unequivocal support for our cause, even when that cause is often their cause as well.

Since the events of September 11, innumerable articles have appeared in the press discussing America's loss of innocence. To foreigners, this view of Americans as naive bumpkins, a band of Forrest Gumps who just arrived in town, is difficult to fathom. Whether the MTV generation knows it or not, the United States has been deeply involved in other peoples' civil wars for a long time. A generation ago, for example, we supposedly lost our innocence in Vietnam. Back then, Adonis, the poet laureate of the Arab world, meditated on the ambivalence Arabs feel toward America. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, his poem seems prophetic:

> New York, you will find in my land
> ... the stone of Mecca and the waters of the Tigris.
> In spite of all this,
> you pant in Palestine and Hanoi.
> East and west you contend with people
> whose only history is fire.

These tormented people knew us before we were virgins.

MISSION CREEP



Transforming the Military

Donald H. Rumsfeld

MAY/JUNE 2002

RIDING INTO THE FUTURE

Just before Christmas last year, I traveled to Afghanistan and the neighboring countries, where I had the opportunity to spend time with American troops in the field. Among the many I met was an extraordinary group of men: the special forces who had been involved in the attack on Mazar-i-Sharif.

From the moment they landed in Afghanistan, these troops began adapting to the circumstances on the ground. They sported beards and traditional scarves and rode horses trained to run into machine gun fire. They used pack mules to transport equipment across some of the roughest terrain in the world, riding at night, in darkness, near minefields and along narrow mountain trails with drops so sheer that, as one soldier put it, "it took me a week to ease the death-grip on my horse." Many had never been on horseback before.

As they linked up and trained with anti-Taliban forces, they learned from their new allies about the realities of war on Afghan soil and assisted them with weapons, food, supplies, tactics, and training. And they planned the assault on Mazar-i-Sharif.

On the appointed day, one of the special forces teams slipped in and hid well behind enemy lines, ready to call in the air strikes. The bomb

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blasts would be the signal for the others to charge. When the moment came, they signaled their targets to coalition aircraft and looked at their watches. "Two minutes." "Thirty seconds." "Fifteen seconds." Then, out of nowhere, a hail of precision-guided bombs began to land on Taliban and al Qaeda positions. The explosions were deafening, and the timing so precise that, as the soldiers described it, hundreds of Afghan horsemen emerged, literally, out of the smoke, riding down on the enemy through clouds of dust and flying shrapnel. A few of these Afghans carried rocket-propelled grenades; some had fewer than ten rounds of ammunition in their guns, but they rode boldly—Afghans and Americans together—into tank, mortar, artillery, and sniper fire.

It was the first U.S. cavalry attack of the twenty-first century.

After the battle, one U.S. soldier described how an Afghan fighter motioned for him come over and began to pull up the leg of his pants. "I thought he was going to show me a wound," he said. Instead, the fighter showed him a prosthetic limb—he had ridden into battle with only one good leg.

What won the battle for Mazar-i-Sharif—and set in motion the Taliban's fall from power—was a combination of the ingenuity of the U.S. special forces; the most advanced, precision-guided munitions in the U.S. arsenal, delivered by U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps crews; and the courage of valiant, one-legged Afghan fighters on horseback.

That day, on the plains of Afghanistan, the nineteenth century met the twenty-first century and defeated a dangerous and determined adversary—a remarkable achievement.

LEARNING FAST

When President George W. Bush called me back to the Pentagon after a quarter-century away and asked me to come up with a new defense strategy, he knew I was an old-timer. I doubt he imagined for a second we would bring back the cavalry. But this is precisely what transformation is all about.

Here we were, in 2002, fighting the first war of the twenty-first century, and the horse cavalry was back—and being used in previously unimaginable ways. It shows that a revolution in military affairs is about more than building new high-tech weapons—although that is certainly part of it. It is also about new ways of thinking and new ways of fighting.

In World War II, the German blitzkrieg revolutionized warfare, but it was accomplished by a German military that was only 10 to 15

percent transformed. The Germans saw that the future of war lay not with massive armies and protracted trench warfare, but in small, high-quality, mobile shock forces, supported by airpower, and capable of pulling off "lightning strikes" against the enemy. They developed the lethal combination of fast-moving tanks, motorized infantry and artillery, and dive-bombers, all concentrated on one part of the enemy line. The effect was devastating.

What was revolutionary and unprecedented about the blitzkrieg was not the new capabilities the Germans employed, but rather the unprecedented ways in which they mixed new and existing technology. In a similar way, the battle for Mazar-i-Sharif was transformational. Coalition forces took existing military capabilities—from the most advanced (such as laser-guided weapons) to the antique (40-year-old B-52s updated with modern electronics) to the most rudimentary (a man with a gun on a horse)—and used them together in unprecedented ways, with devastating effect.

This is not to suggest that this same combination of tactics and capabilities should be a model for future battles. The lesson from the Afghan experience is not that the U.S. Army should start stockpiling saddles. Rather, it is that preparing for the future will require new ways of thinking, and the development of forces and capabilities that can adapt quickly to new challenges and unexpected circumstances. The ability to adapt will be critical in a world defined by surprise and uncertainty.

During the Cold War, we faced a fairly predictable set of threats. We knew a good deal about our adversary and its capabilities, and we fashioned the strategies and capabilities needed to deter them. And we were successful. We built a nuclear arsenal and entered the jet age with supersonic fighters. We built nuclear-powered submarines and ships and the first intercontinental-range bombers and missiles. We massed heavy forces in Europe, ready to repel a Soviet tank invasion over the northern German plain, and adopted a strategy of containment—sending military aid and advisers to destabilize Soviet puppet regimes and support friendly nations threatened by Soviet expansion.

For almost half a century, that mix of strategy, forces, and capabilities allowed us to keep the peace and defend freedom. But the Cold War is now over and the Soviet Union is gone—and with it the familiar security environment to which our nation had grown accustomed. As we painfully learned on September 11, the challenges of the new

century are not nearly as predictable as were those of the last. Who would have imagined, only a few months ago, that terrorists would take commercial airliners, turn them into missiles, and use them to strike the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, killing thousands? In the years ahead, we will probably be surprised again by new adversaries who may also strike in unexpected ways. And as they gain access to weapons of increasing range and power, the attacks could grow vastly more deadly than those we suffered on September 11.

Our challenge in this new century is a difficult one: to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen, and the unexpected. That may seem an impossible task. It is not. But to accomplish it, we must put aside comfortable ways of thinking and planning—take risks and try new things—so we can deter and defeat adversaries that have not yet emerged to challenge us.

OUT WITH THE OLD

Well before September 11, senior U.S. civilian and military leaders of the Defense Department were already in the process of doing just that. With the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, we took a long, hard look at the emerging security environment—and we came to the conclusion that a new strategy was needed.

We decided to move away from the "two major-theater war" construct, an approach that called for maintaining two massive occupation forces, capable of marching on and occupying the capitals of two aggressors at the same time and changing their regimes. This approach had served us well in the immediate post–Cold War period, but it now threatened to leave us overprepared for two specific conflicts and underprepared for unexpected contingencies and twenty-first-century challenges.

To ensure that we have the resources to prepare for the future, and to address the emerging challenges to homeland security, we needed a more realistic and balanced assessment of our near-term warfighting needs. Instead of maintaining two occupation forces, we decided to place greater emphasis on deterrence in four critical theaters, backed by the ability to swiftly defeat two aggressors at the same time, while preserving the option for one massive counteroffensive to occupy an aggressor's capital and replace its regime. Since neither aggressor would know which one the president would choose for regime change, the deterrent would be undiminished. But by removing the

requirement to maintain a second occupation force, we can free up new resources for the future and for other, lesser contingencies that may now confront us.

We also decided to move away from the old "threat-based" strategy that had dominated our country's defense planning for nearly half a century and adopt a new "capabilities-based" approach—one that focuses less on who might threaten us, or where, and more on how we might be threatened and what is needed to deter and defend against such threats.

It's like dealing with burglars: You cannot possibly know who wants to break into your home, or when. But you do know how they might try to get in. You know they might try to pick your lock, so you need a good, solid, dead bolt on your front door. You know they might try breaking through a window, so you need a good alarm. You know it is better to stop them before they get in, so you need a police force to patrol the neighborhood and keep bad guys off the streets. And you know that a big German Shepherd doesn't hurt, either.

The same logic holds true for national defense. Instead of building our armed forces around plans to fight this or that country, we need to examine our vulnerabilities—asking ourselves, as Frederick the Great did in his *General Principles of War*, "What design would I be forming if I were the enemy?"—and then fashion our forces as necessary to deter and defeat that threat. For example, we know that because the United States has unparalleled power on land, at sea, and in the air, it makes little sense for potential adversaries to try to compete with us directly. They learned in the Persian Gulf War that challenging our armed forces head-on is foolhardy. So rather than building up competing armies, navies, and air forces, they will likely seek to challenge us asymmetrically by looking for vulnerabilities and trying to exploit them.

Potential adversaries know, for example, that as an open society, the United States is vulnerable to new forms of terrorism. They suspect that U.S. space assets and information networks are vulnerable. They know that America's ability to project force into distant corners of the world depends, in some cases, on vulnerable foreign bases. And they know that we have no defense against ballistic missile attack—creating an incentive to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the means to deliver them.

Our job is to close off as many of those avenues of attack as possible. We must prepare for new forms of terrorism, to be sure, but also for attacks on U.S. space assets, cyber-attacks on our information net-

works, cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. At the same time, the United States must work to build up its own areas of advantage, such as our ability to project military power over long distances, our precision-strike weapons, and our space, intelligence, and undersea warfare capabilities.

A SIX-STEP STRATEGY

Before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, we had already decided that to keep the peace and defend freedom in the twenty-first century, the Defense Department must focus on achieving six transformational goals: first, to protect the U.S. homeland and our bases overseas; second, to project and sustain power in distant theaters; third, to deny our enemies sanctuary, making sure they know that no corner of the world is remote enough, no mountain high enough, no cave or bunker deep enough, no suv fast enough to protect them from our reach; fourth, to protect our information networks from attack; fifth, to use information technology to link up different kinds of U.S. forces so they can fight jointly; and sixth, to maintain unhindered access to space, and protect our space capabilities from enemy attack.

Our experiences on September 11 and in the subsequent Afghan campaign have reinforced the need to move the U.S. defense posture in these directions. That is why the 2003 defense budget has been designed to advance each of these six goals with significant increases in funding. We are increasing funding both for the development of transformational programs that give us entirely new capabilities, and for modernization programs that support transformation. Over the next five years, we will increase funding for defense of the U.S. homeland and overseas bases by 47 percent; for programs to deny enemies sanctuary by 157 percent; for programs to ensure long-distance power projection in hostile areas by 21 percent; for programs to harness information technology by 125 percent; for programs to attack enemy information networks and defend our own by 28 percent; and for programs to strengthen U.S. space capabilities by 145 percent.

At the same time, we have proposed terminating a number of systems not in line with the new defense strategy, or struggling, such as the DD-21 destroyer, the Navy Area Missile Defense program, 18 Army Legacy programs, and the Peacekeeper missile. We have also proposed retiring aging and expensive-to-maintain capabilities, such as the F-14 fighter and 1,000 Vietnam-era helicopters.

The goal is not to transform the entire U.S. military in one year, or even in one decade. That would be both unnecessary and unwise. Transforming the military is not an event; it is an ongoing process. There will be no point at which we can declare that U.S. forces have been "transformed."

Our challenge in the twenty-first century is to defend our cities, friends, allies, and deployed forces—as well as our space assets and computer networks—from new forms of attack, while projecting force over long distances to fight new adversaries. This will require rapidly deployable, fully integrated joint forces, capable of reaching distant theaters quickly and working with our air and sea forces to strike adversaries swiftly and with devastating effect. This will also take improved intelligence, long-range precision strike capabilities, and sea-based platforms to help counter the "access denial" capabilities of adversaries.

Our goal is not simply to fight and win wars; it is to prevent them. To do so, we must find ways to influence the decision-making of potential adversaries, to deter them not only from using existing weapons but also from building dangerous new ones in the first place. Just as the existence of the U.S. Navy dissuades others from investing in competing navies—because it would cost them a fortune and would not provide them a margin of military advantage—we must develop new assets, the mere possession of which discourages adversaries from competing. For example, deployment of effective missile defenses may dissuade others from spending to obtain ballistic missiles, because missiles will not provide them what they want: the power to hold U.S. and allied cities hostage to nuclear blackmail. Hardening U.S. space systems and building the means to defend them could dissuade potential adversaries from developing small "killer satellites" to attack U.S. satellite networks. New earth-penetrating and thermobaric weapons (such as those recently used against Taliban and al Qaeda forces hiding in the mountains near Gardez, Afghanistan) could make obsolete the deep underground facilities where terrorists hide and terrorist states conceal their WMD capabilities.

In addition to building new capabilities, transforming the U.S. military also requires rebalancing existing forces and capabilities, by adding more of what the Pentagon calls "low density/high demand" assets (a euphemism, in plain English, for "our priorities were wrong and we didn't buy enough of the things we now find we need"). For example,

the experience in Afghanistan showed how effective unmanned aircraft could be—but it also revealed their weaknesses and how few of them we have. The Department of Defense has known for some time that it does not have enough manned aircraft for reconnaissance and surveillance or command and control, enough air defense capabilities, enough chemical and biological defense units, or enough of certain types of special operations forces. But in spite of these shortages, the department postponed the needed investments, while continuing to fund what were, in retrospect, less valuable programs. That needs to change.

As we change investment priorities, we must begin shifting the balance in our arsenal between manned and unmanned capabilities, between short- and long-range systems, between stealthy and non-stealthy systems, between shooters and sensors, and between vulnerable and hardened systems. And we must make the leap into the information age, which is the critical foundation of all our transformation efforts.

After September 11, we found that our new responsibilities in homeland defense exacerbated these shortages. No U.S. president should have to choose between protecting citizens at home and U.S. interests and forces overseas. We must be able to do both. The notion that we could transform while cutting the budget was seductive, but false.

Of course, although transformation requires building new capabilities and expanding arsenals of existing ones, it also means reducing stocks of unnecessary weapons. Just as the country no longer needs a massive, heavy force to repel a Soviet tank invasion, it also no longer needs the many thousands of offensive nuclear warheads amassed during the Cold War to deter a Soviet nuclear attack. Back then, U.S. security depended on having a nuclear force large enough, and diverse enough, to survive and retaliate against a Soviet first strike. Today, our adversaries have changed—and so has the deterrence calculus. The terrorists who struck on September 11 were clearly not deterred by the massive U.S. nuclear arsenal. We need to find new ways to deter new adversaries. That is why President Bush is taking a new approach to deterrence: one that combines deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces with improved conventional capabilities and missile defenses that can protect the United States and its friends, forces, and allies from limited missile attack.

At the same time as we reduce the number of weapons in our nuclear arsenal, we must also refashion it, developing new conventional offensive and defensive systems more appropriate for deterring the

potential adversaries we face. And we must ensure the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons.

Taken together, this "new triad" of reduced offensive nuclear forces, advanced conventional capabilities, and a range of new defenses (ballistic missile defense, cruise missile defense, space defense, and cyberdefense) supported by a revitalized defense infrastructure, will form the basis of a new approach to deterrence.

But getting there will also require a new approach to balancing risks. In the past, the threat-based approach focused attention on near-term risks, crowding out investments in people, modernization, and transformation. Building a twenty-first-century military means balancing all of these risks, so that as we prepare for the nearer-term threats, we do not cheat the future, or the people who risk their lives to secure it for us.

We must transform not only our armed forces but also the Defense Department that serves them—by encouraging a culture of creativity and intelligent risk-taking. We must promote a more entrepreneurial approach: one that encourages people to be proactive, not reactive, and to behave less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists; one that does not wait for threats to emerge and be "validated" but rather anticipates them before they appear and develops new capabilities to dissuade and deter them.

Finally, we must change not only the capabilities at our disposal, but also how we think about war. Imagine for a moment that you could go back in time and give a knight in King Arthur's court an M-16. If he takes that weapon, gets back on his horse, and uses the stock to knock in his opponent's head, that is not transformation. Transformation occurs when he gets behind a tree and starts shooting. All the high-tech weapons in the world won't transform the U.S. armed forces unless we also transform the way we think, train, exercise, and fight.

SHIFTING ON THE FLY

Some believe that, with the United States in the midst of a difficult and dangerous war on terrorism, now is not the time to transform the U.S. armed forces. I believe the opposite is true: Now is precisely the time to make changes. The events of September 11 powerfully make the case for action.

Every day, the Department of Defense is faced with urgent near-term requirements that create pressure to push the future off the table. But September 11 taught us that the future holds many unknown

dangers, and that we fail to prepare for them at our peril. The challenge is to make certain that, as time passes and the shock of what befell us that day wears off, we do not simply go back to doing things the way they were done before.

The Pentagon is up to the task. In just one year—2001—we adopted a new defense strategy. We replaced the decade-old two-major-theater-war construct with an approach more appropriate for the twenty-first century. We adopted a new strategy for balancing risks and reorganized and revitalized the missile defense research and testing program, free of the constraints of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We reorganized the department to better focus on space capabilities. Through the Nuclear Posture Review, we adopted a new approach to strategic deterrence that increases security while reducing our reliance on strategic nuclear weapons. And we will soon announce a new unified command structure. All this was done while fighting a war on terrorism—not a bad start for a department supposedly so resistant to change.

Of course, as the Pentagon transforms, we must not make the mistake of assuming that the experience in Afghanistan is a model for the next military campaign. Preparing to refight the last war is a mistake repeated through much of military history and one that we must and will avoid. But we can glean important lessons from recent experiences that apply to the future. Here are a few worth considering.

First, wars in the twenty-first century will increasingly require all elements of national power: economic, diplomatic, financial, law enforcement, intelligence, and both overt and covert military operations. Clausewitz said, "War is the continuation of politics by other means." In this century, more of those means may not be military.

Second, the ability of forces to communicate and operate seamlessly on the battlefield will be critical to success. In Afghanistan, we saw composite teams of U.S. special forces on the ground, working with Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps pilots in the sky to identify targets and coordinate the timing of air strikes—with devastating consequences for the enemy. The lesson of this war is that effectiveness in combat will depend heavily on "jointness"—that is, the ability of the different branches of our military to communicate and coordinate their efforts on the battlefield. But achieving jointness in wartime requires building it in peacetime. We must train like we fight and fight like we train.

Third, our policy in this war of accepting help from any country, on a basis comfortable for its government, and allowing that country to

characterize how it is helping (instead of our creating that characterization for it), is enabling us to maximize both other countries' cooperation and our effectiveness against the enemy.

Fourth, wars can benefit from coalitions of the willing, to be sure, but they should not be fought by committee. The mission must determine the coalition, the coalition must not determine the mission, or else the mission will be dumbed down to the lowest common denominator.

Fifth, defending the United States requires prevention and sometimes preemption. It is not possible to defend against every threat, in every place, at every conceivable time. Defending against terrorism and other emerging threats requires that we take the war to the enemy. The best—and, in some cases, the only—defense is a good offense.

Sixth, rule nothing out—including ground forces. The enemy must understand that we will use every means at our disposal to defeat them, and that we are prepared to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to achieve victory.

Seventh, getting U.S. special forces on the ground early dramatically increases the effectiveness of an air campaign. Afghanistan showed that precision-guided bombs from the sky are much more effective if we get boots and eyes on the ground to tell the bombers exactly where to aim.

And finally, be straight with the American people. Tell them the truth—and when you cannot tell them something, tell them you cannot tell them. The American people understand what we are trying to accomplish, what is needed to get the job done, that it will not be easy, and that there will be casualties. And they must know that, good news or bad, we will tell it straight. Broad bipartisan public support must be rooted in a bond of trust, understanding, and common purpose.

Our men and women in uniform are doing a brilliant job in the war on terrorism. We are grateful to them—and proud. And the best way we can show our appreciation is to make sure that they have the resources, the capabilities, and the innovative culture not only to win today's war, but to deter and, if necessary, defeat the aggressors we will surely face in the dangerous century ahead.

America's Imperial Ambition

G. John Ikenberry

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THE LURES OF PREEMPTION

In the shadows of the Bush administration's war on terrorism, sweeping new ideas are circulating about U.S. grand strategy and the restructuring of today's unipolar world. They call for American unilateral and preemptive, even preventive, use of force, facilitated if possible by coalitions of the willing—but ultimately unconstrained by the rules and norms of the international community. At the extreme, these notions form a neoimperial vision in which the United States arrogates to itself the global role of setting standards, determining threats, using force, and meting out justice. It is a vision in which sovereignty becomes more absolute for America even as it becomes more conditional for countries that challenge Washington's standards of internal and external behavior. It is a vision made necessary—at least in the eyes of its advocates—by the new and apocalyptic character of contemporary terrorist threats and by America's unprecedented global dominance. These radical strategic ideas and impulses could transform today's world order in a way that the end of the Cold War, strangely enough, did not.

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The exigencies of fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and the debate over intervening in Iraq obscure the profundity of this geopolitical challenge. Blueprints have not been produced, and Yalta-style summits have not been convened, but actions are afoot to dramatically alter the political order that the United States has built with its partners since the 1940s. The twin new realities of our age—catastrophic terrorism and American unipolar power—do necessitate a rethinking of the organizing principles of international order. America and the other major states do need a new consensus on terrorist threats, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the use of force, and the global rules of the game. This imperative requires a better appreciation of the ideas coming out of the administration. But in turn, the administration should understand the virtues of the old order that it wishes to displace.

America's nascent neoimperial grand strategy threatens to rend the fabric of the international community and political partnerships precisely at a time when that community and those partnerships are urgently needed. It is an approach fraught with peril and likely to fail. It is not only politically unsustainable but diplomatically harmful. And if history is a guide, it will trigger antagonism and resistance that will leave America in a more hostile and divided world.

PROVEN LEGACIES

The mainstream of American foreign policy has been defined since the 1940s by two grand strategies that have built the modern international order. One is realist in orientation, organized around containment, deterrence, and the maintenance of the global balance of power. Facing a dangerous and expansive Soviet Union after 1945, the United States stepped forward to fill the vacuum left by a waning British Empire and a collapsing European order to provide a counter-weight to Stalin and his Red Army.

The touchstone of this strategy was containment, which sought to deny the Soviet Union the ability to expand its sphere of influence. Order was maintained by managing the bipolar balance between the American and Soviet camps. Stability was achieved through nuclear deterrence. For the first time, nuclear weapons and the doctrine of mutual assured destruction made war between the great powers irrational. But containment and global power-balancing ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Nuclear deterrence is no longer the defining logic of the

existing order, although it remains a recessed feature that continues to impart stability in relations among China, Russia, and the West.

This strategy has yielded a bounty of institutions and partnerships for America. The most important have been the NATO and U.S.-Japan alliances, American-led security partnerships that have survived the end of the Cold War by providing a bulwark for stability through commitment and reassurance. The United States maintains a forward presence in Europe and East Asia; its alliance partners gain security protection as well as a measure of regularity in their relationship with the world's leading military power. But Cold War balancing has yielded more than a utilitarian alliance structure; it has generated a political order that has value in itself.

This grand strategy presupposes a loose framework of consultations and agreements to resolve differences: the great powers extend to each other the respect of equals, and they accommodate each other until vital interests come into play. The domestic affairs of these states remain precisely that—domestic. The great powers compete with each other, and although war is not unthinkable, sober statecraft and the balance of power offer the best hope for stability and peace.

George W. Bush ran for president emphasizing some of these themes, describing his approach to foreign policy as "new realism": the focus of American efforts should shift away from Clinton-era preoccupations with nation building, international social work, and the promiscuous use of force, and toward cultivating great-power relations and rebuilding the nation's military. Bush's efforts to integrate Russia into the Western security order have been the most important manifestation of this realist grand strategy at work. The moderation in Washington's confrontational rhetoric toward China also reflects this emphasis. If the major European and Asian states play by the rules, the great-power order will remain stable. (In a way, it is precisely because Europe is not a great power—or at least seems to eschew the logic of great-power politics—that it is now generating so much discord with the United States.)

The other grand strategy, forged during World War II as the United States planned the reconstruction of the world economy, is liberal in orientation. It seeks to build order around institutionalized political relations among integrated market democracies, supported by an opening of economies. This agenda was not simply an inspiration of American businessmen and economists, however. There have always been

geopolitical goals as well. Whereas America's realist grand strategy was aimed at countering Soviet power, its liberal grand strategy was aimed at avoiding a return to the 1930s, an era of regional blocs, trade conflict, and strategic rivalry. Open trade, democracy, and multilateral institutional relations went together. Underlying this strategy was the view that a rule-based international order, especially one in which the United States uses its political weight to derive congenial rules, will most fully protect American interests, conserve its power, and extend its influence.

This grand strategy has been pursued through an array of postwar initiatives that look disarmingly like "low politics": the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development are just a few examples. Together, they form a complex layer cake of integrative initiatives that bind the democratic industrialized world together. During the 1990s, the United States continued to pursue this liberal grand strategy. Both the first Bush and the Clinton administrations attempted to articulate a vision of world order that was not dependent on an external threat or an explicit policy of balance of power. Bush the elder talked about the importance of the transatlantic community and articulated ideas about a more fully integrated Asia-Pacific region. In both cases, the strategy offered a positive vision of alliance and partnership built around common values, tradition, mutual self-interest, and the preservation of stability. The Clinton administration likewise attempted to describe the post–Cold War order in terms of the expansion of democracy and open markets. In this vision, democracy provided the foundation for global and regional community, and trade and capital flows were forces for political reform and integration.

The current Bush administration is not eager to brandish this Clinton-looking grand strategy, but it still invokes that strategy's ideas in various ways. Support for Chinese entry into the WTO is based on the liberal anticipation that free markets and integration into the Western economic order will create pressures for Chinese political reform and discourage a belligerent foreign policy. Administration support for last year's multilateral trade-negotiating round in Doha, Qatar, also was premised on the economic and political benefits of freer trade. After September 11, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick even linked trade expansion authority to the fight against terrorism: trade, growth, integration, and political stability go together. Richard Haass, policy planning director at the State Department, argued recently

that "the principal aim of American foreign policy is to integrate other countries and organizations into arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with U.S. interests and values"—again, an echo of the liberal grand strategy. The administration's recent protectionist trade actions in steel and agriculture have triggered such a loud outcry around the world precisely because governments are worried that the United States might be retreating from this postwar liberal strategy.

AMERICA'S HISTORIC BARGAINS

These two grand strategies are rooted in divergent, even antagonistic, intellectual traditions. But over the last 50 years they have worked remarkably well together. The realist grand strategy created a political rationale for establishing major security commitments around the world. The liberal strategy created a positive agenda for American leadership. The United States could exercise its power and achieve its national interests, but it did so in a way that helped deepen the fabric of international community. American power did not destabilize world order; it helped create it. The development of rule-based agreements and political-security partnerships was good both for the United States and for much of the world. By the end of the 1990s, the result was an international political order of unprecedented size and success: a global coalition of democratic states tied together through markets, institutions, and security partnerships.

This international order was built on two historic bargains. One was the U.S. commitment to provide its European and Asian partners with security protection and access to American markets, technology, and supplies within an open world economy. In return, these countries agreed to be reliable partners providing diplomatic, economic, and logistical support for the United States as it led the wider Western postwar order. The other is the liberal bargain that addressed the uncertainties of American power. East Asian and European states agreed to accept American leadership and operate within an agreed-upon political-economic system. The United States, in response, opened itself up and bound itself to its partners. In effect, the United States built an institutionalized coalition of partners and reinforced the stability of these mutually beneficial relations by making itself more "user-friendly"—that is, by playing by the rules and creating ongoing political processes that facilitated consultation and joint decision-making. The United States made its power safe for the world, and in

return the world agreed to live within the U.S. system. These bargains date from the 1940s, but they continue to shore up the post–Cold War order. The result has been the most stable and prosperous international system in world history. But new ideas within the Bush administration—crystallized by September 11 and U.S. dominance—are unsettling this order and the political bargains behind it.

A NEW GRAND STRATEGY

For the first time since the dawn of the Cold War, a new grand strategy is taking shape in Washington. It is advanced most directly as a response to terrorism, but it also constitutes a broader view about how the United States should wield power and organize world order. According to this new paradigm, America is to be less bound to its partners and to global rules and institutions while it steps forward to play a more unilateral and anticipatory role in attacking terrorist threats and confronting rogue states seeking WMD. The United States will use its unrivaled military power to manage the global order.

This new grand strategy has seven elements. It begins with a fundamental commitment to maintaining a unipolar world in which the United States has no peer competitor. No coalition of great powers without the United States will be allowed to achieve hegemony. Bush made this point the centerpiece of American security policy in his West Point commencement address in June: "America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenges—thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace." The United States will not seek security through the more modest realist strategy of operating within a global system of power balancing, nor will it pursue a liberal strategy in which institutions, democracy, and integrated markets reduce the importance of power politics altogether. America will be so much more powerful than other major states that strategic rivalries and security competition among the great powers will disappear, leaving everyone—not just the United States—better off.

This goal made an unsettling early appearance at the end of the first Bush administration in a leaked Pentagon memorandum written by then Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, he wrote, the United States must act to prevent the rise of peer competitors in Europe and Asia. But the 1990s made this strategic aim moot. The United States grew faster

than the other major states during the decade, it reduced military spending more slowly, and it dominated investment in the technological advancement of its forces. Today, however, the new goal is to make these advantages permanent—a fait accompli that will prompt other states to not even try to catch up. Some thinkers have described the strategy as "breakout," in which the United States moves so quickly to develop technological advantages (in robotics, lasers, satellites, precision munitions, etc.) that no state or coalition could ever challenge it as global leader, protector, and enforcer.

The second element is a dramatic new analysis of global threats and how they must be attacked. The grim new reality is that small groups of terrorists—perhaps aided by outlaw states—may soon acquire highly destructive nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons that can inflict catastrophic destruction. These terrorist groups cannot be appeased or deterred, the administration believes, so they must be eliminated. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has articulated this frightening view with elegance: regarding the threats that confront the United States, he said, "There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know. ... Each year, we discover a few more of those unknown unknowns." In other words, there could exist groups of terrorists that no one knows about. They may have nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons that the United States did not know they could get, and they might be willing and able to attack without warning. In the age of terror, there is less room for error. Small networks of angry people can inflict unimaginable harm on the rest of the world. They are not nation-states, and they do not play by the accepted rules of the game.

The third element of the new strategy maintains that the Cold War concept of deterrence is outdated. Deterrence, sovereignty, and the balance of power work together. When deterrence is no longer viable, the larger realist edifice starts to crumble. The threat today is not other great powers that must be managed through second-strike nuclear capacity but the transnational terrorist networks that have no home address. They cannot be deterred because they are either willing to die for their cause or able to escape retaliation. The old defensive strategy of building missiles and other weapons that can survive a first strike and be used in a retaliatory strike to punish the attacker will no longer ensure security. The only option, then, is offense.

The use of force, this camp argues, will therefore need to be preemptive and perhaps even preventive—taking on potential threats before they can present a major problem. But this premise plays havoc with the old international rules of self-defense and United Nations norms about the proper use of force. Rumsfeld has articulated the justification for preemptive action by stating that the "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence of weapons of mass destruction." But such an approach renders international norms of self-defense—enshrined by Article 51 of the UN Charter—almost meaningless. The administration should remember that when Israeli jets bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1981 in what Israel described as an act of self-defense, the world condemned it as an act of aggression. Even British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the American ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, criticized the action, and the United States joined in passing a UN resolution condemning it.

The Bush administration's security doctrine takes this country down the same slippery slope. Even without a clear threat, the United States now claims a right to use preemptive or preventive military force. At West Point, Bush put it succinctly when he stated that "the military must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world. All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price." The administration defends this new doctrine as a necessary adjustment to a more uncertain and shifting threat environment. This policy of no regrets errs on the side of action—but it can also easily become national security by hunch or inference, leaving the world without clear-cut norms for justifying force.

As a result, the fourth element of this emerging grand strategy involves a recasting of the terms of sovereignty. Because these terrorist groups cannot be deterred, the United States must be prepared to intervene anywhere, anytime to preemptively destroy the threat. Terrorists do not respect borders, so neither can the United States. Moreover, countries that harbor terrorists, either by consent or because they are unable to enforce their laws within their territory, effectively forfeit their rights of sovereignty. Haass recently hinted at this notion in *The New Yorker*:

> What you are seeing in this administration is the emergence of a new principle or body of ideas ... about what you might call the limits of sovereignty. Sovereignty entails obligations. One is not to massacre

> your own people. Another is not to support terrorism in any way. If a government fails to meet these obligations, then it forfeits some of the normal advantages of sovereignty, including the right to be left alone inside your own territory. Other governments, including the United States, gain the right to intervene. In the case of terrorism, this can even lead to a right of preventive ... self-defense. You essentially can act in anticipation if you have grounds to think it's a question of when, and not if, you're going to be attacked.

Here the war on terrorism and the problem of the proliferation of WMD get entangled. The worry is that a few despotic states—Iraq in particular, but also Iran and North Korea—will develop capabilities to produce weapons of mass destruction and put these weapons in the hands of terrorists. The regimes themselves may be deterred from using such capabilities, but they might pass along these weapons to terrorist networks that are not deterred. Thus another emerging principle within the Bush administration: the possession of WMD by unaccountable, unfriendly, despotic governments is itself a threat that must be countered. In the old era, despotic regimes were to be lamented but ultimately tolerated. With the rise of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, they are now unacceptable threats. Thus states that are not technically in violation of any existing international laws could nevertheless be targets of American force—if Washington determines that they have a prospective capacity to do harm.

The recasting of sovereignty is paradoxical. On the one hand, the new grand strategy reaffirms the importance of the territorial nation-state. After all, if all governments were accountable and capable of enforcing the rule of law within their sovereign territory, terrorists would find it very difficult to operate. The emerging Bush doctrine enshrines this idea: governments will be held responsible for what goes on inside their borders. On the other hand, sovereignty has been made newly conditional: governments that fail to act like respectable, law-abiding states will lose their sovereignty.

In one sense, such conditional sovereignty is not new. Great powers have willfully transgressed the norms of state sovereignty as far back as such norms have existed, particularly within their traditional spheres of influence, whenever the national interest dictated. The United States itself has done this within the western hemisphere since the nineteenth century. What is new and provocative in this notion today, however, is the Bush administration's inclination to apply it on

a global basis, leaving to itself the authority to determine when sovereign rights have been forfeited, and doing so on an anticipatory basis.

The fifth element of this new grand strategy is a general depreciation of international rules, treaties, and security partnerships. This point relates to the new threats themselves: if the stakes are rising and the margins of error are shrinking in the war on terrorism, multilateral norms and agreements that sanction and limit the use of force are just annoying distractions. The critical task is to eliminate the threat. But the emerging unilateral strategy is also informed by a deeper suspicion about the value of international agreements themselves. Part of this view arises from a deeply felt and authentically American belief that the United States should not get entangled in the corrupting and constraining world of multilateral rules and institutions. For some Americans, the belief that American sovereignty is politically sacred leads to a preference for isolationism. But the more influential view—particularly after September 11—is not that the United States should withdraw from the world but that it should operate in the world on its own terms. The Bush administration's repudiation of a remarkable array of treaties and institutions—from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming to the International Criminal Court to the Biological Weapons Convention—reflects this new bias. Likewise, the United States signed a formal agreement with Russia on the reduction of deployed nuclear warheads only after Moscow's insistence; the Bush administration wanted only a "gentlemen's agreement." In other words, the United States has decided it is big enough, powerful enough, and remote enough to go it alone.

Sixth, the new grand strategy argues that the United States will need to play a direct and unconstrained role in responding to threats. This conviction is partially based on a judgment that no other country or coalition—even the European Union—has the force-projection capabilities to respond to terrorist and rogue states around the world. A decade of U.S. defense spending and modernization has left allies of the United States far behind. In combat operations, alliance partners are increasingly finding it difficult to mesh with U.S. forces. This view is also based on the judgment that joint operations and the use of force through coalitions tend to hinder effective operations. To some observers, this lesson became clear in the allied bombing campaign over Kosovo. The sentiment was also expressed during the U.S. and allied military actions in Afghanistan. Rumsfeld explained this

point earlier this year, when he said, "The mission must determine the coalition; the coalition must not determine the mission. If it does, the mission will be dumbed down to the lowest common denominator, and we can't afford that."

No one in the Bush administration argues that NATO or the U.S.-Japan alliance should be dismantled. Rather, these alliances are now seen as less useful to the United States as it confronts today's threats. Some officials argue that it is not that the United States chooses to depreciate alliance partnerships, but that the Europeans are unwilling to keep up. Whether that is true, the upgrading of the American military, along with its sheer size relative to the forces of the rest of the world, leaves the United States in a class by itself. In these circumstances, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the illusion of true alliance partnership. America's allies become merely strategic assets that are useful depending on the circumstance. The United States still finds attractive the logistical reach that its global alliance system provides, but the pacts with countries in Asia and Europe become more contingent and less premised on a vision of a common security community.

Finally, the new grand strategy attaches little value to international stability. There is an unsentimental view in the unilateralist camp that the traditions of the past must be shed. Whether it is withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty or the resistance to signing other formal arms-control treaties, policymakers are convinced that the United States needs to move beyond outmoded Cold War thinking. Administration officials have noted with some satisfaction that America's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty did not lead to a global arms race but actually paved the way for a historic arms-reduction agreement between the United States and Russia. This move is seen as a validation that moving beyond the old paradigm of great-power relations will not bring the international house down. The world can withstand radically new security approaches, and it will accommodate American unilateralism as well. But stability is not an end in itself. The administration's new hawkish policy toward North Korea, for example, might be destabilizing to the region, but such instability might be the necessary price for dislodging a dangerous and evil regime in Pyongyang.

In this brave new world, neoimperial thinkers contend that the older realist and liberal grand strategies are not very helpful. American security will not be ensured, as realist grand strategy assumes, by the preservation of deterrence and stable relations among the major

powers. In a world of asymmetrical threats, the global balance of power is not the linchpin of war and peace. Likewise, liberal strategies of building order around open trade and democratic institutions might have some long-term impact on terrorism, but they do not address the immediacy of the threats. Apocalyptic violence is at our doorstep, so efforts at strengthening the rules and institutions of the international community are of little practical value. If we accept the worst-case imagining of "we don't know what we don't know," everything else is secondary: international rules, traditions of partnership, and standards of legitimacy. It is a war. And as Clausewitz famously remarked, "War is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst."

IMPERIAL DANGERS

Pitfalls accompany this neoimperial grand strategy, however. Unchecked U.S. power, shorn of legitimacy and disentangled from the postwar norms and institutions of the international order, will usher in a more hostile international system, making it far harder to achieve American interests. The secret of the United States' long brilliant run as the world's leading state was its ability and willingness to exercise power within alliance and multinational frameworks, which made its power and agenda more acceptable to allies and other key states around the world. This achievement has now been put at risk by the administration's new thinking.

The most immediate problem is that the neoimperialist approach is unsustainable. Going it alone might well succeed in removing Saddam Hussein from power, but it is far less certain that a strategy of counterproliferation, based on American willingness to use unilateral force to confront dangerous dictators, can work over the long term. An American policy that leaves the United States alone to decide which states are threats and how best to deny them weapons of mass destruction will lead to a diminishment of multilateral mechanisms—most important of which is the nonproliferation regime.

The Bush administration has elevated the threat of WMD to the top of its security agenda without investing its power or prestige in fostering, monitoring, and enforcing nonproliferation commitments. The tragedy of September 11 has given the Bush administration the authority and willingness to confront the Iraqs of the world. But that will not be enough when even more complicated cases come along—

when it is not the use of force that is needed but concerted multilateral action to provide sanctions and inspections. Nor is it certain that a preemptive or preventive military intervention will go well; it might trigger a domestic political backlash to American-led and military-focused interventionism. America's well-meaning imperial strategy could undermine the principled multilateral agreements, institutional infrastructure, and cooperative spirit needed for the long-term success of nonproliferation goals.

The specific doctrine of preemptive action poses a related problem: once the United States feels it can take such a course, nothing will stop other countries from doing the same. Does the United States want this doctrine in the hands of Pakistan, or even China or Russia? After all, it would not require the intervening state to first provide evidence for its actions. The United States argues that to wait until all the evidence is in, or until authoritative international bodies support action, is to wait too long. Yet that approach is the only basis that the United States can use if it needs to appeal for restraint in the actions of others. Moreover, and quite paradoxically, overwhelming American conventional military might, combined with a policy of preemptive strikes, could lead hostile states to accelerate programs to acquire their only possible deterrent to the United States: WMD. This is another version of the security dilemma, but one made worse by a neoimperial grand strategy.

Another problem follows. The use of force to eliminate WMD capabilities or overturn dangerous regimes is never simple, whether it is pursued unilaterally or by a concert of major states. After the military intervention is over, the target country has to be put back together. Peacekeeping and state building are inevitably required, as are long-term strategies that bring the UN, the World Bank, and the major powers together to orchestrate aid and other forms of assistance. This is not heroic work, but it is utterly necessary. Peacekeeping troops may be required for many years, even after a new regime is built. Regional conflicts inflamed by outside military intervention must also be calmed. This is the "long tail" of burdens and commitments that comes with every major military action.

When these costs and obligations are added to America's imperial military role, it becomes even more doubtful that the neoimperial strategy can be sustained at home over the long haul—the classic problem of imperial overstretch. The United States could keep its

military predominance for decades if it is supported by a growing and increasingly productive economy. But the indirect burdens of cleaning up the political mess in terrorist-prone failed states levy a hidden cost. Peacekeeping and state building will require coalitions of states and multilateral agencies that can be brought into the process only if the initial decisions about military intervention are hammered out in consultation with other major states. America's older realist and liberal grand strategies suddenly become relevant again.

A third problem with an imperial grand strategy is that it cannot generate the cooperation needed to solve practical problems at the heart of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. In the fight on terrorism, the United States needs cooperation from European and Asian countries in intelligence, law enforcement, and logistics. Outside the security sphere, realizing U.S. objectives depends even more on a continuous stream of amicable working relations with major states around the world. It needs partners for trade liberalization, global financial stabilization, environmental protection, deterring transnational organized crime, managing the rise of China, and a host of other thorny challenges. But it is impossible to expect would-be partners to acquiesce to America's self-appointed global security protectorate and then pursue business as usual in all other domains.

The key policy tool for states confronting a unipolar and unilateral America is to withhold cooperation in day-to-day relations with the United States. One obvious means is trade policy; the European response to the recent American decision to impose tariffs on imported steel is explicable in these terms. This particular struggle concerns specific trade issues, but it is also a struggle over how Washington exercises power. The United States may be a unipolar military power, but economic and political power is more evenly distributed across the globe. The major states may not have much leverage in directly restraining American military policy, but they can make the United States pay a price in other areas.

Finally, the neoimperial grand strategy poses a wider problem for the maintenance of American unipolar power. It steps into the oldest trap of powerful imperial states: self-encirclement. When the most powerful state in the world throws its weight around, unconstrained by rules or norms of legitimacy, it risks a backlash. Other countries will bridle at an international order in which the United States plays only by its own rules. The proponents of the new grand strategy have assumed that the

United States can single-handedly deploy military power abroad and not suffer untoward consequences; relations will be coarser with friends and allies, they believe, but such are the costs of leadership. But history shows that powerful states tend to trigger self-encirclement by their own overestimation of their power. Charles V, Louis XIV, Napoleon, and the leaders of post-Bismarck Germany sought to expand their imperial domains and impose a coercive order on others. Their imperial orders were all brought down when other countries decided they were not prepared to live in a world dominated by an overweening coercive state. America's imperial goals and modus operandi are much more limited and benign than were those of age-old emperors. But a hard-line imperial grand strategy runs the risk that history will repeat itself.

BRING IN THE OLD

Wars change world politics, and so too will America's war on terrorism. How great states fight wars, how they define the stakes, how they make the peace in its aftermath—all give lasting shape to the international system that emerges after the guns fall silent. In mobilizing their societies for battle, wartime leaders have tended to describe the military struggle as more than simply the defeat of an enemy. Woodrow Wilson sent U.S. troops to Europe not only to stop the Kaiser's army but to destroy militarism and usher in a worldwide democratic revolution. Franklin Roosevelt saw the war with Germany and Japan as a struggle to secure the "four great freedoms." The Atlantic Charter was a statement of war aims that called not just for the defeat of fascism but for a new dedication to social welfare and human rights within an open and stable world system. To advance these visions, Wilson and Roosevelt proposed new international rules and mechanisms of cooperation. Their message was clear: If you bear the burdens of war, we, your leaders, will use this dreadful conflict to usher in a more peaceful and decent order among states. Fighting the war had as much to do with building global relations as it did with vanquishing an enemy.

Bush has not fully articulated a vision of postwar international order, aside from defining the struggle as one between freedom and evil. The world has seen Washington take determined steps to fight terrorism, but it does not yet have a sense of Bush's larger, positive agenda for a strengthened and more decent international order.

This failure explains why the sympathy and goodwill generated around the world for the United States after September 11 quickly

disappeared. Newspapers that once proclaimed, "We are all Americans," now express distrust toward America. The prevailing view is that the United States seems prepared to use its power to go after terrorists and evil regimes, but not to use it to help build a more stable and peaceful world order. The United States appears to be degrading the rules and institutions of international community, not enhancing them. To the rest of the world, neoimperial thinking has more to do with exercising power than with exercising leadership.

In contrast, America's older strategic orientations—balance-of-power realism and liberal multilateralism—suggest a mature world power that seeks stability and pursues its interests in ways that do not fundamentally threaten the positions of other states. They are strategies of co-option and reassurance. The new imperial grand strategy presents the United States very differently: a revisionist state seeking to parlay its momentary power advantages into a world order in which it runs the show. Unlike the hegemonic states of the past, the United States does not seek territory or outright political domination in Europe or Asia; "America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish," Bush noted in his West Point address. But the sheer power advantages that the United States possesses and the doctrines of preemption and counterterrorism that it is articulating do unsettle governments and people around the world. The costs could be high. The last thing the United States wants is for foreign diplomats and government leaders to ask, How can we work around, undermine, contain, and retaliate against U.S. power?

Rather than invent a new grand strategy, the United States should reinvigorate its older strategies, those based on the view that America's security partnerships are not simply instrumental tools but critical components of an American-led world political order that should be preserved. U.S. power is both leveraged and made more legitimate and user-friendly by these partnerships. The neoimperial thinkers are haunted by the specter of catastrophic terrorism and seek a radical reordering of America's role in the world. America's commanding unipolar power and the advent of frightening new terrorist threats feed this imperial temptation. But it is a grand strategic vision that, taken to the extreme, will leave the world more dangerous and divided—and the United States less secure.

Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror

Thomas Carothers

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SPLIT PERSONALITY

When George W. Bush took office two years ago, few observers expected that promoting democracy around the world would become a major issue in his presidency. During the 2000 presidential campaign Bush and his advisers had made it clear that they favored great-power realism over idealistic notions such as nation building or democracy promotion. And as expected, the incoming Bush team quickly busied itself with casting aside many policies closely associated with President Bill Clinton. Some analysts feared democracy promotion would also get the ax. But September 11 fundamentally altered this picture. Whether, where, and how the United States should promote democracy around the world have become central questions in U.S. policy debates with regard to a host of countries including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and many others.

Although the war on terrorism has greatly raised the profile of democracy as a policy matter, it has hardly clarified the issue. The United States faces two contradictory imperatives: on the one hand, the fight against al Qaeda tempts Washington to put aside its democratic scru-

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ples and seek closer ties with autocracies throughout the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, U.S. officials and policy experts have increasingly come to believe that it is precisely the lack of democracy in many of these countries that helps breed Islamic extremism.

Resolving this tension will be no easy task. So far, Bush and his foreign policy team have shown an incipient, albeit unsurprising, case of split personality: "Bush the realist" actively cultivates warm relations with "friendly tyrants" in many parts of the world, while "Bush the neo-Reaganite" makes ringing calls for a vigorous new democracy campaign in the Middle East. How the administration resolves this uncomfortable dualism is central not only to the future of the war on terrorism but also to the shape and character of Bush's foreign policy as a whole.

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

It is on and around the front lines of the campaign against al Qaeda that the tensions between America's pressing new security concerns and its democracy interests are most strongly felt. The most glaring case is Pakistan. The cold shoulder that Washington turned toward General Pervez Musharraf after he seized power in 1999 has been replaced by a bear hug. In recognition of the Pakistani leader's critical supporting role in the war on terrorism, the Bush administration has showered Musharraf with praise and attention, waived various economic sanctions, assembled a handsome aid package that exceeded $600 million in 2002, and restarted U.S.-Pakistan military cooperation.

Bush officials insist that they combine their embrace with frequent private messages to Musharraf about the importance of returning to democracy. But during the past year the Pakistani president has steadily consolidated his authoritarian grip, a process punctuated by a clumsy referendum last spring and a sweeping series of antidemocratic constitutional amendments in the summer. Bush and his aides have reacted only halfheartedly to this process, publicly repeating tepid calls for democracy but exerting no real pressure.

This soft line is a mistake and should be revised, yet the complexities of the situation must also be acknowledged. Pakistan's cooperation in the campaign against al Qaeda is not a nice extra—it is vital. In addition, a return to democracy in Pakistan is not simply a matter of getting an authoritarian leader to step aside. The two main civilian political parties have failed the country several times, and during the 1990s discredited themselves in many Pakistanis' eyes with patterns

of corruption, ineffectiveness, and authoritarian behavior. Democratization will require a profound, multifaceted process of change in which Pakistan's military will have to not only give up formal leadership of the country but pull out of politics altogether. Meanwhile, the civilian politicians will have to remake themselves thoroughly and dedicate themselves to rebuilding public confidence in the political system. Rather than erring on the side of deference to Musharraf, Washington should articulate such a long-term vision for Pakistan and pressure all relevant actors there to work toward it.

Central Asia, meanwhile, presents a mosaic of dilemmas relating to the tradeoff between democracy and security in U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. need for military bases and other forms of security cooperation in the region has moved Washington much closer to the autocratic leaders of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Even Saparmurat Niyazov, the totalitarian megalomaniac running Turkmenistan, received a friendly visit from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in April 2002. At the same time, U.S. officials are pushing for reform in the region, emphasizing to their local counterparts that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the region's states to obtain significant outside support for the full set of economic, political, and social reforms necessary to join the modern world.

Surprisingly, it is in Uzbekistan, one of the region's harshest dictatorships, where this dual approach may pay at least modest dividends. President Islam Karimov has undoubtedly received a boost at home from the new diplomatic attention, economic aid, and military partnership with the United States. Yet for the first time since Uzbekistan became independent, U.S. officials are also meeting regularly with a wide range of Uzbek officials and conveying strongly worded messages about the need for change. And there are signs of nascent political and economic reforms, albeit small, tentative ones. Karimov is still very much a dictator with little understanding of or interest in either democracy or market economics. But he also seems to realize that some positive moves are necessary to ensure his own political future and that the increased external support post–September 11 is a real opportunity.

Unfortunately, in Kazakhstan the U.S. approach appears less promising. President Nursultan Nazarbayev displays no interest in meeting the United States even partway. Instead, he is using the new context to tighten his dictatorial hold on the country and is openly spurning U.S. reform efforts. Given Kazakhstan's sizable oil and gas reserves,

and Nazarbayev's cooperation on both security and economic measures, he appears to have calculated correctly that the Bush administration is unlikely to step up its mild pressure for reform. If the United States is serious about trying to steer Kazakhstan away from potentially disastrous authoritarian decay, however, Washington will have to become more forceful.

Kyrgyzstan is a more ambiguous but still discouraging case. President Askar Akayev is less dictatorial than Karimov or Nazarbayev but has also slid toward authoritarianism in recent years. The Bush administration has made some effort to steer him away from this unfortunate path. But it has not taken full advantage of the Kyrgyz elite's obvious eagerness for a close security relationship with the United States to push hard on key issues such as freeing political prisoners or curbing corruption.

Running throughout all of the new U.S. security relationships in South and Central Asia is an institutional divide that weakens the administration's ability to balance security and democracy. The State Department has shown some real commitment to raising human rights and democracy issues with these countries. The Pentagon, on the other hand, often focuses more on the immediate goal of securing military access or cooperation and less on the politics of the relevant host government. Given the importance that foreign leaders place on the U.S. military, they may sometimes assume that friendly words from the Pentagon mean they can ignore other messages they are receiving. Ensuring a consistent U.S. front on democracy and human rights, therefore, is a prerequisite for a coherent approach.

Afghanistan is perhaps the most telling example of this challenge. The initial post–September 11 action by the United States in that country was of course not a downgrading of democracy concerns but a sudden step forward, through the ouster of the fundamentalist Taliban regime. But the conduct of U.S. military operations there has since undermined the administration's promises of a lasting, deep commitment to democratic reconstruction. The Pentagon initially relied on Afghan warlords as proxy fighters against al Qaeda, arming them and thus helping them consolidate their regional power. This assistance helped entrench the centrifugal politics that threaten Afghanistan's weak new government. Ironically, the strategy seems also to have been a partial military miscalculation, leading to the escape of a significant number of al Qaeda fighters at Tora Bora.

At the same time, administration opposition to the use of either U.S. or UN peacekeeping troops outside of Kabul, and significant shortfalls in the delivery of promised aid, make it impossible for the Karzai government to guarantee security, gain meaningful control beyond the capital, or achieve legitimacy by delivering peace to its citizens. Ethnic rivalries, the opium trade, and newly empowered local strongmen make a return to state failure and civil war a very real possibility. Despite the insistence of many U.S. officials in the immediate aftermath of September 11 on the connection between failed states and vital U.S. security interests, the Bush team's aversion to nation building has not really changed.

No easy solutions to Afghanistan's profound political problems are in sight. At a minimum, however, the administration must strengthen its commitment to making reconstruction work. This means not only delivering more fully on aid, but exerting real pressure on regional power brokers to accept the Kabul government's authority and working harder to establish an Afghan national army. No matter how pressing are the other fronts of the war against al Qaeda (such as the increasingly worrisome situation in northern Pakistan), the United States must fulfill the responsibilities for reconstruction that came with its invasion of Afghanistan.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

The tensions posed by the war on terrorism for U.S. support of democracy abroad have quickly spread out beyond the immediate front lines. Southeast Asia is one affected region. Indonesia has become an important theater in the U.S. antiterrorist campaign, because of U.S. fears that al Qaeda leaders are taking refuge there and that the country's numerous Islamist groups are connecting with extremist networks. The White House continues to support Indonesia's shaky, somewhat democratic government. But in a setback on human rights policy, the administration has proposed restarting aid to the Indonesian military. That aid was progressively reduced during the 1990s in response to the Indonesian forces' atrocious human rights record and was finally terminated in 1999, when Indonesian troops participated in massacres in East Timor. Administration officials have downplayed this decision to renew military aid, stressing that most of the proposed $50 million package is directed at the police rather than the military. But the willingness of the U.S. government to enter into a

partnership with a security force that just a few years ago was involved in a horrendous campaign of slaughter and destruction against civilians sends a powerful negative message throughout the region and beyond. Some officials argue that the new training programs will give U.S. military personnel a chance to instruct their Indonesian counterparts in human rights. But U.S. officials repeatedly made the same argument in defense of these programs in previous decades, right up to when the Indonesian military committed the human rights abuses that sank the relationship.

Malaysia's leader, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, is another beneficiary of a changed U.S. foreign policy. Mahathir has made himself useful to Washington by arresting Islamic militants, sharing intelligence, and cooperating in other ways with an antiterrorist campaign that neatly dovetails with his authoritarian domestic agenda. And in response, Washington's previous critical stance toward the Malaysian leader—highlighted in Vice President Al Gore's much-publicized call for *reformasi* during his visit to Kuala Lumpur in 1998—has been reversed. Top U.S. officials now laud Mahathir as "a force for regional stability" and "a model of economic development that has demonstrated tolerance," and President Bush praised him at an amicable joint press conference after Mahathir's visit to the White House in May 2002.

An emphasis on democracy and human rights is also in question in U.S. policy toward Russia and China. Russia's new role as a U.S. ally in the war on terrorism has progressed less smoothly than some initially hoped, with significant continuing differences over Iraq, Iran, Georgia, and other places. Nevertheless, President Bush regards President Vladimir Putin very favorably and has not pressed the Russian leader about his shortcomings on democracy and human rights, such as in Chechnya or with regard to maintaining a free press. Somewhat similarly, the Chinese government has been able to leverage the new security context to solidify a much friendlier U.S.-China relationship than seemed likely in the early months of 2001, when the Bush administration appeared to view China as threat number one.

In both cases, however, the change is more of degree than kind. Bush's surprisingly personal and warm embrace of Putin started before September 11, with Bush getting "a sense of [Putin's] soul" during their meeting in Slovenia in June 2001. And at no time prior to September 11, whether under Bush or Clinton before him, was the Russian government subjected to any significant U.S. government

criticism for Chechnya or any of its other democratic flaws. With respect to China, it is true that September 11 did block movement toward a new hard-line policy from Washington that some administration hawks may have wanted. But the current relatively positive state of relations, with mild U.S. pressure on human rights greatly outweighed by an ample, mutually beneficial economic relationship, is not especially different from the overall pattern of the past decade or more.

One can look even further afield and identify possible slippage in U.S. democracy policies resulting from the war on terrorism, such as insufficient attention to the growing crisis of democracy in South America or inadequate pressure on oil-rich Nigeria's flailing president, Olusegun Obasanjo, to turn around his increasingly poor governance of Africa's most populous nation. Ironically, and also sadly, however, the greatest source of negative ripple effects has come from the administration's pursuit of the war on terrorism at home. The heightened terrorist threat has inevitably put pressure on U.S. civil liberties. But the administration failed to strike the right balance early on, unnecessarily abridging or abusing rights through the large-scale detention of immigrants, closed deportation hearings, and the declaration of some U.S. citizens as "enemy combatants" with no right to counsel or even to contest the designation. The Justice Department's harsh approach sent a powerful negative signal around the world, emboldening governments as diverse as those of Belarus, Cuba, and India to curtail domestic liberties, supposedly in aid of their own struggles against terrorism. In the United States, an independent judiciary and powerful Congress ensure that the appropriate balance between security and rights is gradually being achieved. In many countries, however, the rule of law is weak and copycat restrictions on rights resound much more harmfully.

REAGAN REBORN?

Whereas "Bush the realist" holds sway on most fronts in the war on terrorism, a neo-Reaganite Bush may be emerging in the Middle East. In the initial period after September 11, the administration turned to its traditional autocratic allies in the Arab world, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, for help against al Qaeda. This move did not sacrifice any U.S. commitment to democracy; for decades, the United States had already suppressed any such concerns in the region, valuing autocratic stability for the sake of various economic and security interests. Over the course

of the last year, however, a growing chorus of voices within and around the administration has begun questioning the value of America's "friendly tyrants" in the Middle East. These individuals highlight the fact that whereas the autocratic allies once seemed to be effective bulwarks against Islamic extremism, the national origins of the September 11 attackers make clear that these nations are in fact breeders, and in the case of Saudi Arabia, financiers, of extremism. Invoking what they believe to be the true spirit of President Ronald Reagan's foreign policy, they call for a change toward promoting freedom in U.S. Middle East policy. The core idea of the new approach is to undercut the roots of Islamic extremism by getting serious about promoting democracy in the Arab world, not just in a slow, gradual way, but with fervor and force.

President Bush is clearly attracted by this idea. Last summer his declarations on the Middle East shifted noticeably in tone and content, setting out a vision of democratic change there. According to this vision, the United States will first promote democracy in the Palestinian territories by linking U.S. support for a Palestinian state with the achievement of new, more democratic Palestinian leadership. Second, the United States will effect regime change in Iraq and help transform that country into a democracy. The establishment of two successful models of Arab democracy will have a powerful demonstration effect, "inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world," as Bush declared at the United Nations in September. As the policies toward Iraq and Palestine unfold, the administration may also step up pressure on recalcitrant autocratic allies and give greater support to those Arab states undertaking at least some political reforms, such as some of the smaller Persian Gulf states. The decision last August to postpone a possible aid increase to Egypt as a response to the Egyptian government's continued persecution of human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim was a small step in this direction.

It is not yet clear how sharply Bush will shift U.S. Middle East policy toward promoting democracy. Certainly it is time to change the long-standing practice of reflexively relying on and actually bolstering autocracy in the Arab world. But the expansive vision of a sudden, U.S.-led democratization of the Middle East rests on questionable assumptions. To start with, the appealing idea that by toppling Saddam Hussein the United States can transform Iraq into a democratic model for the region is dangerously misleading. The United States can certainly oust the Iraqi leader and install a less re-

pressive and more pro-Western regime. This would not be the same, however, as creating democracy in Iraq.

The experience of other countries where in recent decades the United States has forcibly removed dictatorial regimes—Grenada, Panama, Haiti, and most recently Afghanistan—indicates that post-invasion political life usually takes on the approximate character of the political life that existed in the country before the ousted regime came to power. After the 1982 U.S. military intervention in Grenada, for example, that country was able to recover the tradition of moderate pluralism it had enjoyed before the 1979 takeover by Maurice Bishop and his gang. Haiti, after the 1994 U.S. invasion, has unfortunately slipped back into many of the pathologies that marked its political life before the military junta took over in 1991. Iraqi politics prior to Saddam Hussein were violent, divisive, and oppressive. And the underlying conditions in Iraq—not just the lack of significant previous experience with pluralism but also sharp ethnic and religious differences and an oil-dependent economy—will inevitably make democratization there very slow and difficult. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, the United States would have to commit itself to a massive, expensive, demanding, and long-lasting reconstruction effort. The administration's inadequate commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction undercuts assurances by administration officials that they will stay the course in a post-Saddam Iraq.

Furthermore, the notion that regime change in Iraq, combined with democratic progress in the Palestinian territories, would produce domino democratization around the region is far-fetched. A U.S. invasion of Iraq would likely trigger a surge in the already prevalent anti-Americanism in the Middle East, strengthening the hand of hard-line Islamist groups and provoking many Arab governments to tighten their grip, rather than experiment more boldly with political liberalization. Throughout the region, the underlying economic, political, and social conditions are unfavorable for a wave of democratic breakthroughs. This does not mean the Arab world will never democratize. But it does mean that democracy will be decades in the making and entail a great deal of uncertainty, reversal, and turmoil. The United States can and should actively support such democratic change through an expanded, sharpened set of democracy aid programs and real pressure and support for reforms. But as experience in other parts of the world has repeatedly demonstrated, the future of the region will be determined primarily by its own inhabitants.

Aggressive democracy promotion in the Arab world is a new article of faith among neoconservatives inside and outside the administration. However, it combines both the strengths and the dangers typical of neo-Reaganite policy as applied to any region. Perhaps the most important strength is the high importance attached to the president's using his bully pulpit to articulate a democratic vision and to attach his personal prestige to the democracy-building endeavor.

But two dangers are also manifest. One is the instrumentalization of prodemocracy policies—wrapping security goals in the language of democracy promotion and then confusing democracy promotion with the search for particular political outcomes that enhance those security goals. This was often a problem with the Reagan administration's attempts to spread democracy in the 1980s. To take just one example, for the presidential elections in El Salvador in 1984, the Reagan administration labored mightily to establish the technical structures necessary for a credible election. The administration then covertly funneled large amounts of money to the campaign of its preferred candidate, José Napoleón Duarte, to make sure he won the race. This same tension between democracy as an end versus a means has surfaced in the administration's press for democracy in the Palestinian territories. Bush has urged Palestinians to reform, especially through elections, yet at the same time administration officials have made clear that certain outcomes, such as the reelection of Yasir Arafat, are unacceptable to the United States. A postinvasion process of installing a new "democratic" regime in Iraq would likely exhibit similar contradictions between stated principle and political reality.

The administration demonstrated worrisome signs of the same tendency last April during the short-lived coup against Venezuela's problematic populist president, Hugo Chávez. Washington appeared willing or even eager to accept a coup against the leader of an oil-rich state who is despised by many in the U.S. government for his anti-American posturing and dubious economic and political policies. But given that it came in a region that has started to work together to oppose coups, and that other regional governments condemned Chavez's ouster, the administration's approach undermined the United States' credibility as a supporter of democracy. If democracy promotion is reduced to an instrumental strategy for producing political outcomes favorable to U.S. interests, the value and legitimacy of the concept will be lost.

The second danger is overestimating America's ability to export democracy. U.S. neoconservatives habitually overstate the effect of America's role in the global wave of democratic openings that occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s. For example, they often argue that the Reagan administration brought democracy to Latin America through its forceful anticommunism in the 1980s. Yet the most significant democratization that occurred in Argentina, Brazil, and various other parts of South America took place in the early 1980s, when Reagan was still trying to embrace the fading right-wing dictators that Jimmy Carter had shunned on human rights grounds. Excessive optimism about U.S. ability to remake the Middle East, a region far from ripe for a wave of democratization, is therefore a recipe for trouble—especially given the administration's proven disinclination to commit itself deeply to the nation building that inevitably follows serious political disruption.

A FINE BALANCE

The clashing imperatives of the war on terrorism with respect to U.S. democracy promotion have led to a split presidential personality and contradictory policies—decreasing interest in democracy in some countries and suddenly increasing interest in one region, the Middle East. The decreases are widespread and probably still multiplying, given the expanding character of the antiterrorism campaign. Yet they are not fatal to the overall role of the United States as a force for democracy in the world. Some of them are relatively minor modifications of policies that for years imperfectly fused already conflicting security and political concerns. And in at least some countries where it has decided warmer relations with autocrats are necessary, the Bush administration is trying to balance new security ties with proreform pressures.

More broadly, in many countries outside the direct ambit of the war on terrorism, the Bush administration is trying to bolster fledgling democratic governments and pressure nondemocratic leaders for change, as have the past several U.S. administrations. Sometimes diplomatic pressure is used, as with Belarus, Zimbabwe, and Burma. In other cases, Washington relies on less visible means such as economic and political support as well as extensive democracy aid programs, as with many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, southeastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Central America, and elsewhere. Quietly and steadily during the last 20 years, democracy promotion has become

institutionalized in the U.S. foreign policy and foreign aid bureaucracies. Although not an automatically overriding priority, it is almost always one part of the foreign policy picture. Partly to address "the roots of terrorism," moreover, the administration has also proposed a very large new aid fund, the $5 billion Millennium Challenge Account. By signaling that good governance should be a core criterion for disbursing aid from this fund, President Bush has positioned it as a potentially major tool for bolstering democracies in the developing world.

Although the new tradeoffs prompted by the war on terrorism are unfortunate, and in some cases overdone, the fact that U.S. democracy concerns are limited by security needs is hardly a shocking new problem. Democracy promotion has indeed become gradually entrenched in U.S. policy, but both during and after the Cold War it has been limited and often greatly weakened by other U.S. interests. President Clinton made liberal use of pro-democracy rhetoric and did support democracy in many places, but throughout his presidency, U.S. security and economic interests—whether in China, Egypt, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, or various other countries—frequently trumped an interest in democracy. The same was true in the George H.W. Bush administration and certainly also under Ronald Reagan, whose outspoken support for freedom in the communist world was accompanied by close U.S. relations with various authoritarian regimes useful to the United States, such as those led by Suharto in Indonesia, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, the generals of Nigeria, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico.

George W. Bush is thus scarcely the first U.S. president to evidence a split personality on democracy promotion. But the suddenness and prominence of his condition, as a result of the war on terrorism, makes it especially costly. It is simply hard for most Arabs, or many other people around the world, to take seriously the president's eloquent vision of a democratic Middle East when he or his top aides casually brush away the authoritarian maneuverings of Musharraf in Pakistan, offer warm words of support for Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, or praise Mahathir in Malaysia. The war on terrorism has laid bare the deeper fault line that has lurked below the surface of George W. Bush's foreign policy from the day he took office—the struggle between the realist philosophy of his father and the competing pull of neo-Reaganism.

There is no magic solution to this division, which is rooted in a decades-old struggle for the foreign policy soul of the Republican

Party and will undoubtedly persist in various forms throughout this administration and beyond. For an effective democracy-promotion strategy, however, the Bush team must labor harder to limit the trade-offs caused by the new security imperatives and also not go overboard with the grandiose idea of trying to unleash a democratic tsunami in the Middle East. This means, for example, engaging more deeply in Pakistan to urge military leaders and civilian politicians to work toward a common vision of democratic renovation, adding teeth to the reform messages being delivered to Central Asia's autocrats, ensuring that the Pentagon reinforces proreform messages to new U.S. security partners, not cutting Putin slack on his democratic deficits, going easy on the praise for newly friendly tyrants, more effectively balancing civil rights and security at home, and openly criticizing other governments that abuse the U.S. example. In the Middle East, it means developing a serious, well-funded effort to promote democracy that reflects the difficult political realities of the region but does not fall back on an underlying acceptance of only cosmetic changes. This will entail exerting sustained pressure on autocratic Arab allies to take concrete steps to open up political space and undertake real institutional reforms, bolstering democracy aid programs in the region, and finding ways to engage moderate Islamist groups and encourage Arab states to bring them into political reform processes.

Such an approach is defined by incremental gains, long-term commitment, and willingness to keep the post–September 11 security imperatives in perspective. As such it has neither the hard-edged appeal of old-style realism nor the tantalizing promise of the neoconservative visions. Yet in the long run it is the best way to ensure that the war on terrorism complements rather than contradicts worldwide democracy and that the strengthening of democracy abroad is a fundamental element of U.S. foreign policy in the years ahead.

Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?

Madeleine K. Albright

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003

EITHER, OR

> Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.
>
> There are only two powers now in the world. One is America, which is tyrannical and oppressive. The other is a warrior who has not yet been awakened from his slumber and that warrior is Islam.
>
> Make no mistake about it: the choice for sure is between two visions of the world.

Few readers will fail to identify the first quotation cited above: it was uttered by President George W. Bush, speaking soon after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Few readers, similarly, will be surprised to learn that the second quote came from a Sunni Muslim cleric in Baghdad, Imam Mouaid al-Ubaidi. The third quote, however, may be a bit harder to identify: it was spoken by French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, describing the different world views now

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held by Washington and Paris. And it should remind us that not everyone divides the world along the same lines as the United States.

Framing choices is central to national security policy. Since World War II, no nation has played a more influential role in defining such alternatives than the United States. Today, however, the Bush administration purports to be redefining the fundamental choice "every nation, in every region" must make. America's radical adversaries—eager to promote themselves as the United States' chief nemeses—are echoing the attempt. Those caught in the middle, however, suggest the choices before them may not be quite so simple.

For President Bush, September 11 came as a revelation, leading him to the startled conclusion that the globe had changed in ways gravely hazardous to the security—indeed, the very survival—of the United States. This conclusion soon led Bush to a fateful decision: to depart, in fundamental ways, from the approach that has characterized U.S. foreign policy for more than half a century. Soon, reliance on alliance had been replaced by redemption through preemption; the shock of force trumped the hard work of diplomacy, and long-time relationships were redefined.

In making these changes, Bush explicitly rejected the advice offered by one senior statesman who warned, "this most recent surprise attack [should] erase the concept in some quarters that the United States can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism, or in anything else, for that matter." So said George H.W. Bush, the United States' 41st president. But his son, the 43rd president, offered his own perspective shortly before going to war with Iraq: "At some point, we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America."

The second Bush administration, believing that its perception of the meaning of September 11 is self-evidently right, has failed to make a sustained effort to persuade the rest of the world to share it. As a result, the world does not in fact subscribe to the same view. Certainly, most of the world does not agree with Bush that September 11 "changed everything." This is not to say the attacks were met by indifference. On the contrary, NATO, for the first time in its history, declared the crimes to be acts of aggression against the entire alliance. Almost every government in the Muslim world, including Iran and the Palestinian Authority, condemned the strikes. U.S. allies, from Canada to Japan to Australia, rushed to aid or complement the American military campaign against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghani-

stan. Pakistan, properly confronted by the administration with a stark choice, chose to cooperate as well. Even China and Russia, plagued by Muslim separatists, pledged solidarity. For months after September 11, it seemed the Bush administration would harness these reactions to unite the world in opposition to a common threat.

The president began well, emphasizing the array of nationalities victimized in the Twin Towers attacks and gathering broad support for the military operation he directed at the perpetrators. Al Qaeda's Taliban protectors were pushed from power, its training camps were destroyed, arms caches were seized, and many of its leaders were captured or killed. But instead of single-mindedly building on these gains, the Bush administration has since steadily enlarged and complicated its own mission.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, for example, President Bush focused not on al Qaeda and the work remaining in Afghanistan, but rather on the so-called axis of evil. In public remarks later that year, he emphasized not the value of building an antiterror coalition, but rather his unilateral intention to maintain U.S. "military strength beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless." He then asked Congress for the authority to explore new uses for nuclear weapons, creating the perception overseas that he was lowering the threshold for nuclear strikes—despite the United States' vast conventional military superiority and the risks posed to U.S. security by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

When the administration published its 2002 National Security Strategy last September, it took this process even further, transforming anticipatory self-defense—a tool every president has quietly held in reserve—into the centerpiece of its national security policy. This step, however, was dangerously easy to misconstrue. (Do we really want a world in which every country feels entitled to attack any other that might someday threaten it?) And when Bush did discuss the pursuit of al Qaeda, he portrayed it less as a global struggle against a global threat than as an effort to bring terrorists to "American justice"—as if justice alone were not enough.

Finally, in 2003, Washington did begin once more to rally world support—but this time against Iraq, not al Qaeda. To bolster the decision to oust Saddam Hussein, administration officials lumped his regime together with al Qaeda, describing them as complementary

halves of the same existential threat. U.S. officials declared that America would act against such threats when and wherever necessary, regardless of international law, notwithstanding the doubts of allies, and without concern for the outrage of those who might misunderstand U.S. actions. America, said the president, had no choice but to go to war to prevent its enemies from obtaining more weapons or growing more powerful. And so the United States duly went to war against Iraq, despite having convinced only four members of the UN Security Council to back the action.

NEITHER, NOR

Many observers see in the Bush administration's policies an admirable demonstration of spine in confronting those who threaten the safety of the American people. I would join the applause—if only those policies were safeguarding U.S. citizens more effectively.

But they are not. Moreover, I remain convinced that had Al Gore been elected president, and had the attacks of September 11 still happened, the United States and NATO would have gone to war in Afghanistan together, then deployed forces all around that country and stayed to rebuild it. Democrats, after all, confess support for nation building, and also believe in finishing the jobs we start. I also believe the United States and NATO together would have remained focused on fighting al Qaeda and would not have pretended—and certainly would not have been allowed to get away with pretending—that the ongoing failure to capture Osama bin Laden did not matter. As for Saddam, I believe the Gore team would have read the intelligence information about his activities differently and concluded that a war against Iraq, although justifiable, was not essential in the short term to protect U.S. security. A policy of containment would have been sufficient while the administration pursued the criminals who had murdered thousands on American soil.

The Bush administration's decision to broaden its focus from opposing al Qaeda to invading Iraq and threatening military action against others has had unintended and unwelcome consequences. According to the recent findings of the Pew Global Attitudes Project, which surveyed 16,000 people in 20 countries and the Palestinian territories in May, the percentage of those who have a favorable view of the United States has declined sharply (15 percentage points or more) in nations such as Brazil, France, Germany, Jordan, Nigeria, Russia,

and Turkey. In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority state, the view of the United States plunged from 75 percent favorable to 83 percent negative between 2000 and 2003. Support for the U.S.-led war on terror has declined in each of the countries listed above, along with pivotal Pakistan, where it stands at a disheartening 20 percent. The citizens of such NATO allies as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy rated Russia's Vladimir Putin more highly as a world leader than Bush. Significant majorities of those interviewed in Russia and in 7 of 8 predominantly Muslim countries (Kuwait being the exception) claimed to be somewhat or very worried about the potential threat to their societies posed by the U.S. military. I never thought the day would come when the United States would be feared by those it has neither the intention nor the cause to harm.

The ouster of Saddam has indeed made the world, or at least Iraq, a better place. But when the United States commits tens of billions of dollars to any worthwhile project, that is the least it should be able to say. Even more vital is progress toward mobilizing the kind of multinational, multicultural, multifaceted, and multiyear initiative required to discredit, disrupt, and dismantle al Qaeda and whatever splinter factions it may one day spawn. That initiative will require a maximum degree of global coordination and the integration of force, diplomacy, intelligence, and law. It will require strong working relationships in regions where radical ideologies thrive and pro-Western sentiments are scant. And above all, it will require vigorous leadership from Islamic moderates, who must win the struggle for control of their own faith. Unfortunately, the Iraq war and the subsequent U.S. occupation of Baghdad—the capital of Islam during that faith's golden age—have made more difficult the choices Islamic moderates and others around the world must make.

The problem is that President Bush has reframed his initial question. Instead of simply asking others to oppose al Qaeda, he now asks them to oppose al Qaeda, support the invasion of an Arab country, and endorse the doctrine of preemption—all as part of a single package. Faced with this choice, many who staunchly oppose al Qaeda have nevertheless decided that they do not want to be "with" the United States, just as some Iraqis are now making clear their opposition both to Saddam and to those who freed them from him.

It is perhaps unsurprising to find attitudes of this sort widespread in the Arab world. But it is more remarkable to find them taking hold

in much of Europe. President Bush ran for office pledging to be "a uniter, not a divider," but as the numbers suggest, he has proved highly divisive among the United States' closest friends. This was true even before September 11, thanks to his administration's scorn for international measures such as the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. But the divide deepened considerably in the run-up to the second Gulf War, and it has moderated only slightly since. Transatlantic friction, of course, is not new. But European unease with American pretensions, coupled with American doubts about European resolve, has created the potential for a long-term and dangerous rift.

Some commentators have tried to explain European opposition to the war as being based on a slavish allegiance to multilateral organizations, a sense of relative powerlessness, or simple jealousy of the United States. Such analyses, however, miss the possibility that the American arguments simply were not fully persuasive. I personally felt the war was justified on the basis of Saddam's decade-long refusal to comply with UN Security Council resolutions on WMD. But the administration's claim that Saddam posed an imminent threat was poorly supported, as was its claim of his alleged connections to al Qaeda. The war's opponents also raised a number of questions that were not very ably answered regarding American plans for postwar reconstruction and the possibility that the war would actually enhance al Qaeda's appeal to potential recruits. It should be no wonder, then, that there were disagreements about the wisdom of going to war. It was, after all, a war of choice, not of necessity. And it was initiated by Washington in a show of dominance prompted by a sense of vulnerability that most Europeans do not fully share.

The concerns raised by European critics of the war were neither trivial nor unanswerable. They should, however, have been answered not with exaggerated, unproven allegations, but with a combination of patience and ample evidence. By linking Baghdad to al Qaeda, the Bush administration sought to equate opposition to fighting Iraq with gutlessness in confronting bin Laden. This tactic, wildly unfair, contributed to a perception within the American public that the French and the Germans were not simply quarrelsome but traitorous. The real problem with the war critics, however, was not their timidity toward al Qaeda but their record of having cut Saddam too much slack in complying with UN Security Council resolutions over the last decade. The French and the Russians were especially culpable in this re-

gard; their special pleading had, for years, given Saddam hope that he could divide the council and get sanctions lifted without coming clean about his weapons programs.

The best rebuttal Washington had to qualms about regime change was that military force was the only way (in the absence of effective UN inspections) to enforce the council's resolutions and thereby strengthen both the UN's credibility and international law. Unfortunately, the Bush administration made its eagerness to pull the plug on chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix and his team transparent and billed its preemptive war doctrine as a replacement for international law. As a consequence, much of the world saw the invasion not as a way to put muscle into accepted rules, but rather as the inauguration of a new set of rules, written and applied solely by the United States.

It didn't have to be this way. After World War II, the United States was also at a pinnacle of power, and also faced new and unprecedented dangers. Yet the Truman administration still sat down and haggled with a flock of less powerful countries about what the rules of the new international game should be. The current administration, however, has created the impression that it does not care what others think, and it has thereby set the world's teeth on edge.

As I suggested above, responsibility for the transatlantic split does not rest on the shoulders of the Bush administration alone. The French certainly have not helped matters, by arguing, for example, that the very purpose of European integration should be to create a counterweight to American power. This constitutes de Villepin's choice "between two visions of the world," by which he means a choice between a unipolar world in which Washington acts as an unrestrained hegemon and a multipolar one in which American power is offset and balanced by other forces, most particularly a united Europe. But that argument is ludicrous. The idea that the power of the United States endangers the interests of European democracies, rather than strengthens and helps shield them, is utter nonsense. American power may harm French pride, but it also helped roll back Hitler, save a blockaded Berlin, defeat communism, and rid the Balkans of a rampaging Slobodan Milosevic.

The divisions that have arisen between the United States and many in Europe can and must be narrowed. The challenge for Europe is to reject French hyperventilating about American hyperpower and keep its perspective. The United States has not lost its moorings, and the

American people, with an assist from Secretary of State Colin Powell and other voices of reason, will not let the administration go too far.

The challenge for the United States, however, is to frame a choice for Europe that most of Europe can embrace with dignity (if not always with France). To help this mission along, NATO should be used in Afghanistan (where it has finally gained a role, two years after September 11) and in Iraq, where its umbrella might help relieve the pressure on hard-pressed U.S. troops. The Bush administration should enthusiastically welcome European efforts to develop an independent rapid reaction capability, especially to conduct peacekeeping operations and respond to humanitarian emergencies. When Europeans perform important jobs, as the Germans and the Turks have done over the past year in Afghanistan, they deserve congratulations, regardless of differences over less basic issues. Furthermore, the Europeans should be invited, not directed, to work closely with Washington on the toughest challenges, including that posed by Iran's nuclear program. Perhaps above all, the Europeans should be treated as adults. If they have differences with U.S. policy, those differences should be considered seriously, not dismissed as signs of weakness (or age) or tantamount to treason. Washington needs to recall that "allies" and "satellites" are distinctly different things.

JUDGING SUCCESS IN IRAQ

Perhaps one reason this administration does not feel the need to consult much with others is its surety of vision. President Bush proclaimed last March that the war in Iraq would prove a decisive first step toward the transformation of the entire Middle East. The demonstration of U.S. resolve, so his logic went, would cause terrorists and those who shelter and sponsor them to tremble. According to the president, "the terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed." The creation of a democratic Iraq, to be achieved with the assistance of a modest number of American troops for a relatively short period of time, would send an instructive message to undemocratic Arab regimes and provide a helpful model for a potential new Palestinian state. Deprived of Iraqi payments to the families of suicide bombers, anti-Israeli terrorists would soon close their bomb factories, and serious peace negotiations could begin. Saddam's fall would also provide a useful lesson to would-be WMD proliferators, both in faraway North Korea and in nearby Iran.

Whatever one might think of the likelihood that this vision will be realized, it certainly qualifies as sweeping and well intentioned. Those who suspect the war in Iraq was a grab for oil are mistaken; it was a grab for a place in history. It deserves time now to play itself out. No one expected every element to fall into place smoothly. Critics such as myself may carp about bumps in the road and setbacks, but the problems will matter little if momentum does build toward a truly democratic and stable Iraq, the weakening of al Qaeda, an end to anti-Israeli terrorism, a halt to Iran's nuclear ambitions, and movement toward accountable government within the Arab world. These are the standards for success the Bush administration set for itself in going to war with Iraq at the moment and under the circumstances it did. The administration merits the courtesy of a reasonable period of time to achieve those goals.

Whether time will in fact bring such successes depends on a series of choices the United States can help frame. The most basic concerns the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the use of terror as a means to achieve political change.

To most Americans, the choice is simple. As the president has said, the use of terror is something you are either for or against, and if you are against it, certain actions must follow. Americans may find it absurd that decent people could believe differently. But history shows that most people, not exceptionally villainous themselves, can nonetheless be persuaded that evil is not evil but rather something else. Romans saw glory in the pillage of the Parthians; pious Catholics saw purity of faith in the Spanish Inquisition; the United States' founding fathers saw economic necessity in slavery; Bosnian Serbs saw justice for past wrongs in ethnic cleansing. Even many Nazi collaborators and appeasers were sure they were doing the right thing; after all, what could be more moral than "peace in our time"? In 1940, the poet Archibald MacLeish wrote, "Murder is not absolved of immorality by committing murder. Murder is absolved of immorality by bringing men to think that murder is not evil. This only the perversion of the mind can bring about. And the perversion of the mind is only possible when those who should be heard in its defense are silent." The lesson for us now is that the longer the illusion of evil as somehow justified lasts—whether buttressed by propaganda, ignorance, convenience, or fear—the harder it is to dispel. That is why we must take nothing for granted. We must be relentless in shaping a global consensus that terrorism is fully, fundamentally, and always wrong. No exceptions, no excuses.

I made this argument to Arab leaders many times when I was secretary of state. Their responses, however, were rarely satisfactory. Most often, my interlocutors would condemn terror unconditionally before commenting parenthetically on the legitimacy of the struggle to free occupied Arab lands. In other words, terrorism was despicable—except where it was most regularly practiced, namely in and against Israel. To this day, it remains the majority Arab view that the militarily overmatched Palestinians are justified in fighting Israelis with whatever means they have. On the issue of terrorist financing, the answers I received were equally inadequate. When I confronted one Saudi leader about payments to Hamas, he said they were merited because Hamas, unlike Yasir Arafat and his government, actually delivered social services to the Palestinian people. As for payments to the families of suicide bombers, those were justified not as an enticement or a reward but as a humanitarian gesture.

The attitude of Arab conservatives toward the terrorism practiced by al Qaeda is another matter. Bin Laden is the cobra that turned on its master. The teaching of Wahhabi Islam in Saudi Arabia's mosques, generously supported by the royal family, has combined with a mix of other factors (globalization, rising unemployment, and the U.S. military presence) to create a global center for the dissemination of hatred. To the discomfort of Saudi leaders, that hatred is now directed not only at the United States and Israel, but also at them. The three explosions set off in Riyadh in May killed 34 people, and hopefully destroyed the last set of lingering Saudi illusions as well. The Saudis have since arrested more than a dozen suspects, fired hundreds of radical clerics, and suspended a thousand more. They also claim to have implemented new regulations designed to prevent the flow of charitable contributions from Saudis overseas to terrorist groups. At the same time, however, the country's leading liberal newspaper editor recently lost his job for seeming to suggest there was a connection between terror and what is being taught in radical mosques. As his firing suggests, the fight for the collective heart and mind of Saudi Arabia has barely begun. Crown Prince Abdullah and his successors must do more than simply condemn extremism and terror; they must rip them out by roots that have become deeply implanted in the kingdom's sandy soil.

Even if the Saudis succeed in such efforts, the roots of terror will continue to throw up shoots elsewhere. The Iraqi imam quoted at the beginning of this article did not explicitly advocate terror in his

speech, but he did use the kind of clash-of-civilizations terminology that tends to make Samuel Huntington look retrospectively prescient. The "with us or against us" choice put forward by President Bush has been pulled apart and reassembled, with Islam taking the high ground and with alleged American evil substituted for the real evil: terror. This bit of sophistry illustrates the immense difficulty the United States will have trying to categorize Iraqis on the basis of whether they are willing to cooperate openly with the United States. Iraqis, and Arabs more generally, need the space to design their own choices free from the diktats of authoritarian leaders and notwithstanding the preferences of the United States (provided those choices exclude violence, include tolerance, and are fair to women). This will, I concede, be no simple matter to put into practice.

There are, however, grounds for hope. It is true that the Pew survey found widespread antipathy toward American policies, especially in the Middle East. But it also found widespread enthusiasm among Arab populations for values closely associated with the United States, such as freedom of expression, political pluralism, and equal treatment under the law. Solid majorities in places such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco now believe that Western-style democracy would work well in their countries. And since democracy is built from the bottom up, one step at a time, U.S. leaders have an opportunity (risky as it is) to go around Arab governments to find values in common with the much-vaunted "Arab street." Washington might, for example, spend less time condemning what the Qatar-based independent al Jazeera television network chooses to broadcast and more time acknowledging the importance of its right to choose and encouraging other media outlets to start up.

Although I was proud of the Clinton administration's foreign policy, and I understand that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, I regret not having done more to push for liberalization within the Arab world. We did nudge at times, supporting Kuwaiti leaders in their initiative to give women the vote and encouraging the creation of representative bodies in Bahrain and Jordan. But we did not make it a priority. Arab public opinion, after all, can be rather scary. The same Pew survey that detected Arab enthusiasm for democracy also found that the "world leader" in whom Palestinians have the most confidence is Osama bin Laden. Who wants to give people with such opinions the right to choose their own leaders? The answer is us: we should do everything possible to see that they are given that right.

For years, Arab populations have received a distorted message from Washington: that the United States stands for democracy, freedom, and human rights everywhere except in the Middle East and for everyone except the Arabs. The time has come to erase that perception and the reality that too often lies behind it. Democracy will not end terrorism in the Arab world, but neither will it nourish it, as despotism does. Bin Laden's appeal is based on what he symbolizes: defiance. In fact, he offers nothing except death and destruction, and Muslim majorities will reject this if they are offered real alternatives.

Indeed, democratization is the most intriguing part of the administration's gamble in Iraq. The creation of a stable and united Iraqi democracy would be a tremendous accomplishment, with beneficial repercussions in other Arab societies. But was invading Iraq the right way to start building democratic momentum in the Arab world? The answer will depend on how divided Iraq remains, and how dicey the security situation becomes. U.S. soldiers will have a hard time democratizing Iraq if they are forced to remain behind walls and inside tanks. And U.S. officials will lack credibility preaching the virtues of freedom if they feel compelled to censor broadcasts, search houses, ban political parties, and repeatedly reject Iraqi demands for more complete self-rule. The Bush administration was determined to retain for itself the authority to supervise every aspect of Iraq's postwar transition. History will judge whether that was a wise decision, but I am reminded in this context of one of "Rumsfeld's Rules," the Pentagon chief's guide for wise public policy: "It is easier to get into something than to get out of it."

CHANGING DIRECTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A second, concurrent test of Arab democratization is occurring within the Palestinian Authority, where the Bush administration deserves credit for pushing for reform of Palestinian institutions. The selection of Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and the appointment of Finance Minister Salam Fayyad are necessary steps toward democracy and sound governance. The creation of political freedom is essential to allow the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian leaders, comfortable with democratic ways. At the same time, democracy—if it does come—is unlikely to produce a Palestinian government willing to make peace on terms Israelis will accept, or at least not for many years. The Pew survey found that 80 percent of Palestinians do not believe they can realize their rights while coexisting with an Israeli

state. That doubt is surely justified if Palestinian rights are thought to include the recovery of all lands taken during the 1967 war, full sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount), and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their pre-1948 homes. Unless those demands are modified, or the issues somehow sidestepped, the journey to a Middle East peace will stretch far beyond the boundaries envisioned in the current road map.

Making progress will therefore require new thinking on both sides. The Israelis must help Abbas to succeed in a way they never did with Arafat. This will mean recognizing the elementary fact that Abbas is accountable to the Palestinians, not to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon or Bush. Unless the new Palestinian regime is able to show greater results than Arafat delivered, Abbas will soon find himself a footnote to history.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, must reject terror—not because the United States or other outsiders want them to, but because terror, far more than Israel, is the enemy of the Palestinian people. It is destructive not only of the Palestinian economy and Palestinian territorial hopes, but of the people's very soul. Terror is a choice, and when people have the power to choose, they have the power to change. The Bush administration, European governments, the Arab world, and Palestinian moderates must all work to create a Palestinian consensus that excludes and excoriates terror. As long as murderers are hailed as martyrs, there can be no real peace, nor any Palestinian state worthy of the name.

The Israelis, too, must be wary of the impact of their own policies of aggressive self-defense. Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir once said that she blamed Arabs less for killing Israelis than for making it necessary for Israelis to kill. Israel has a right to protect itself against terror and, at times, to take preemptive action. But it should never forget that it is destined to live next door to the Palestinians forever, sharing the same land. There is no military solution to that.

REFRAMING THE CHOICE

After September 11, President Bush asked the world to stand with the United States against the terrorists who had attacked the country. In the years since, however, he has broadened that request and altered its tone. No longer is Bush asking the world to join a common struggle; instead, he is demanding that it follow along as the United States wages its own battle against threats the president has defined. September 11 proved,

Bush has said, that the institutions, alliances, and rules of the past are no longer adequate to protect the American people. Terrorists who cannot be deterred are on the loose. If they gain access to WMD, unspeakable horrors will ensue. And so the United States, Bush has warned, will act when and where it perceives an actual, possible, or potential connection between terrorists and dangerous technology. Those who join it will be rewarded. Those who do not will be scorned, and worse.

I credit Bush for his ambition and for taking political risks he did not have to take. I harbor no doubts about his sincerity. I agree with him that the United States cannot be complacent. I share his assessment of the need not simply to oppose but also to defeat the declared enemies of the country. For the good of the United States, I hope his policies succeed. But I am left with the feeling that he has needlessly placed obstacles in his own path.

After all, the attacks of September 11 were dramatic and shocking, but hardly the first time this country has realized the extreme danger it will face if it allows WMD to fall into the wrong hands. President Bill Clinton warned regularly of that very thing. One of his earliest accomplishments was to persuade Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to give up their nuclear weapons. He promoted the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program tirelessly, spending American money to secure nuclear materials and expertise throughout the former Soviet Union. Clinton made himself an expert on the threat of a biological weapons attack on U.S. soil. He reorganized the National Security Council to broaden and intensify the fight against terrorism months before the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania brought global notoriety to bin Laden. Year after year, Clinton traveled to the UN in New York to emphasize two themes: the importance of halting WMD proliferation and the need for nations to unite in eliminating terrorist sanctuaries and funding. But President Clinton differed from his successor in that he believed the United States' ability to beat the country's enemies would be strengthened if NATO were strong and united, UN agencies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency were enhanced, and America's friends around the world were consulted and respected. Clinton saw fighting terror as a team enterprise, not a solo act.

September 11 showed that what the United States had been doing to identify and defeat al Qaeda was not enough. It did not, however, discredit the premise that to defeat al Qaeda, Americans need the active help and cooperation of other countries.

The Bush administration has chosen to take the problem of al Qaeda and meld it with the challenge of halting WMD proliferation—two issues that overlap but are by no means identical in the military, political, and technical issues they raise. Defeating al Qaeda would not end the problem of proliferation; al Qaeda is deadly even without nuclear, chemical, and biological arms. Meanwhile, the nuclear programs of North Korea and Iran are driven by nationalism, not terrorism, and must be dealt with primarily on that basis. September 11, the administration's eureka moment, caused it to lump together terrorists and rogue regimes and to come up with a prescription for fighting them—namely, preemption—that frightens and divides the world at precisely the moment U.S. security depends on bringing people together.

I believe a different approach, focused more sharply and insistently on al Qaeda, with the Middle East, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea treated vigorously but separately, might have yielded a better result. Such an approach would, I believe, have enabled Bush to formulate a much clearer choice on the core issue of terror for allies in Europe and for the most critical audience of all: the sometimes silent majority of Muslims in the Middle East and around the world. The seriousness of that choice would have been backed under this scenario by Washington's own seriousness in Afghanistan, which would have remained the focus of U.S. nation-building efforts. Rather than flaunting American power, the U.S. government would have stressed the collective power of a world united in asserting that terrorism is wrong, just as genocide, apartheid, and slavery are wrong. U.S. efforts would have been directed not simply at the apprehension of al Qaeda suspects, but also at stopping the teaching of hate, the glorification of murder, and the endless manufacture of lies about the West that continues to this day in much of the Middle East and South Asia. Reinforced by a united Europe, American officials would have pressed over time for the gradual opening of Arab political and economic systems and for support for the democratic changes that surveys suggest most Arabs want. Washington would also have shown its respect for the value of every human life by staying engaged on a daily basis in the uphill struggle to halt killing on both sides in the strife-torn Middle East.

By complicating its own choice, the administration has instead complicated the choices faced by others, divided Europe, and played into the hands of extremists who would like nothing better than to make the clash of civilizations the defining struggle of our age.

It is late, but not too late, for the Bush administration to adjust its course. It has already shed some of its more optimistic illusions about Iraq, pledged presidential involvement in the Middle East, mended some fences with Europe, and reduced the level of self-congratulation in its official pronouncements.

It would be helpful now if the doctrine of preemption were to disappear quietly from the U.S. national security lexicon and be returned to reserve status. It is imperative, as well, that the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq actually be completed before victory is once again declared. To that end, perhaps administration officials will recognize that although none of the existing international institutions can do everything, each can do something. Perhaps the United States' current leaders will even put aside their reflexive disdain for all things Clintonian and consider the model of Kosovo. There, a NATO-led peacekeeping force, with Russian participation and assisted by a new civilian police force, is providing security for administrators from the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who are working with local parties to prepare a democratic transition. Not only is this setup operating fairly well, it has also given everyone involved a sense of mission and a stake in success. It takes patience to work with allies and to bring out the best in international organizations. But doing so also delivers great benefits: costs are shared, burdens distributed, legitimacy enhanced, diverse talents engaged. And everyone joins in wanting success.

Finally, the administration should do more of what President Bush did during his recent, welcome trip to Africa—play to the United States' true strengths. The idea that Americans—residents of the most powerful land in history—are now truly living in fear of bin Laden has failed to impress the majority of people around the globe, whose concerns about terrorism are dwarfed by the challenge they face in simply staying alive despite the ever-present perils of poverty, hunger, and disease. The United States' cause would therefore be heard more clearly and listened to more closely if the administration substituted bridges for bluster and spoke more often of choices relevant to the day-to-day lives of more of the world's people. That means spelling out consistently not only what Americans are against, but also what they are for, and making clear that this includes helping people everywhere live richer, freer, and longer lives.

The Law of War in the War on Terror

Kenneth Roth

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What are the boundaries of the Bush administration's "war on terrorism?" The recent battles fought against the Afghan and Iraqi governments were classic wars between organized military forces. But President George W. Bush has suggested that his campaign against terrorism goes beyond such conflicts; he said on September 29, 2001, "Our war on terror will be much broader than the battlefields and beachheads of the past. The war will be fought wherever terrorists hide, or run, or plan."

This language stretches the meaning of the word "war." If Washington means "war" metaphorically, as when it speaks about a "war" on drugs, the rhetoric would be uncontroversial, a mere hortatory device intended to rally support for an important cause. Bush, however, seems to think of the war on terrorism quite literally—as a real war—and this concept has worrisome implications. The rules that bind governments are much looser during wartime than in times of peace. The Bush administration has used war rhetoric precisely to give itself the extraordinary powers enjoyed by a wartime government to detain or even kill suspects without trial. In the process, the administration may have made it easier for itself to detain or eliminate suspects. But it has also threatened the most basic due process rights.

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LAW AT PEACE, LAW AT WAR

By literalizing its "war" on terror, the Bush administration has broken down the distinction between what is permissible in times of peace and what can be condoned during a war. In peacetime, governments are bound by strict rules of law enforcement. Police can use lethal force only if necessary to meet an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury. Once a suspect is detained, he or she must be charged and tried. These requirements—what one can call "law-enforcement rules"—are codified in international human rights law.

In times of war, law-enforcement rules are supplemented by a more permissive set of rules: namely, international humanitarian law, which governs conduct during armed conflict. Under such "war rules," unlike during peacetime, an enemy combatant can be shot without warning (unless he or she is incapacitated, in custody, or trying to surrender), regardless of any imminent threat. If a combatant is captured, he or she can be held in custody until the end of the conflict, without any trial.

These two sets of rules have been well developed over the years, both by tradition and by detailed international conventions. There is little law, however, to explain exactly when one set of rules should apply instead of the other. For example, the Geneva Conventions—the principal codification of war rules —apply to "armed conflict," but the treaties do not define the term. Fortunately, in its commentary on them, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the conventions' official custodian, has provided some guidance. One test that the ICRC suggests can help determine whether wartime or peacetime rules apply is to examine the intensity of hostilities in a given situation. The Bush administration, for example, has claimed that al Qaeda is at "war" with the United States because of the magnitude of its attacks on September 11, 2001, its bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, its attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in Yemen, and the bombing of residential compounds in Saudi Arabia. Each of these attacks was certainly a serious crime warranting prosecution. But technically speaking, was the administration right to claim that they add up to a war? The ICRC's commentary does not provide a clear answer.

In addition to the intensity of hostilities, the ICRC suggests considering factors such as the regularity of armed clashes and the degree to which opposing forces are organized. Whether a conflict is politically motivated also seems to play an unacknowledged role in deciding whether it is a "war" or not. Thus organized crime or drug trafficking,

although methodical and bloody, are generally understood to fall under law-enforcement rules, whereas armed rebellions, once sufficiently organized and violent, are usually seen as "wars." The problem with these guidelines, however, is that they were written to address political conflicts rather than global terrorism. Thus they do not make it clear whether al Qaeda should be considered an organized criminal operation (which would not trigger the application of war rules) or a rebellion (which would).

Even in the case of war, another factor in deciding whether law-enforcement or war rules should be applied is the nature of a given suspect's involvement. Such an approach can be useful because war rules treat as combatants only those who are taking an active part in hostilities. Typically, this category includes members of a military who have not laid down their arms as well as others who are fighting or approaching a battle, directing an attack, or defending a position. Under this rule, even civilians who pick up arms and start fighting can be considered combatants and treated accordingly. But this definition is difficult to apply to terrorism, where roles and activities are clandestine and a person's relationship to specific violent acts is often unclear.

HARD CASES

Given that so much confusion exists about whether to apply wartime or law-enforcement rules to a given situation, a better approach would be to make the decision based on its public policy implications. Unfortunately, the Bush administration seems to have ignored such concerns. Consider, for example, the cases of Jose Padilla and Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri. Federal officials arrested Padilla, a U.S. citizen, in May 2002 when he arrived from Pakistan at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, allegedly to scout out targets for a radiological ("dirty") bomb. As for al-Marri, a student from Qatar, he was arrested in December 2001 at his home in Peoria, Illinois, for allegedly being a "sleeper" agent: an inactive terrorist who, once activated, would help others launch attacks. President Bush, invoking war rules, has declared both men to be "enemy combatants," allowing the U.S. government to hold them without charge or trial until the end of the war against terrorism—whenever that is.

But should Padilla and al-Marri, even if they have actually done what the government claims, really be considered warriors? Aren't they more like ordinary criminals? A simple thought experiment

shows how dangerous are the implications of treating them as combatants. The Bush administration has asserted that the two men planned to wage war against the United States and therefore can be considered de facto soldiers. But if that is the case, then under war rules, the two men could have been shot on sight, regardless of whether they posed any immediate danger to the United States (although they might have been spared under what is known as the doctrine of "military necessity," which holds that lethal force should not be used if an enemy combatant can be neutralized through lesser means). Under the administration's logic, then, Padilla could have been gunned down as he stepped off his plane at O'Hare, and al-Marri as he left his home in Peoria. That, after all, is what it means to be a combatant in time of war.

But the Bush administration has not claimed that either suspect was anywhere near to carrying out his alleged terrorist plan. Neither man, therefore, posed the kind of imminent threat that would justify the use of lethal force under law-enforcement rules. Given this fact, it would have been deeply disturbing if they were shot as enemy soldiers. Of course, the White House has not proposed killing them; instead, it plans to detain the two men indefinitely. But if Padilla and al-Marri should not be considered enemy combatants for the purpose of killing them, they should not be considered enemy combatants for the purpose of detaining them, either.

A similar classification problem, although with a possibly different result, arose in the case of Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi. Al-Harethi, who Washington alleges was a senior al Qaeda official, was killed by a drone-fired missile in November 2002 while driving in a remote tribal area of Yemen. Five of his companions, including a U.S. citizen, also died in the attack, which was carried out by the CIA. The Bush administration apparently considered al-Harethi to be an enemy combatant for his alleged involvement in the October 2000 U.S.S. *Cole* bombing. In this instance, the case for applying war rules was stronger than with Padilla or al-Marri (although the Bush administration never bothered to spell it out). Al-Harethi's mere participation in the 2000 attack on the *Cole* would not have made him a combatant in 2002, since he could have subsequently withdrawn from al Qaeda; war rules permit attacking only current combatants, not past ones. And if al-Harethi were a civilian, he could not have legally been attacked unless he was actively engaged in hostilities at the time. But the administration alleged that

al-Harethi was a "top bin Laden operative in Yemen," implying that he was in the process of preparing future attacks. If true, this would have made the use of war rules against him more appropriate. And unlike in the cases of Padilla and al-Marri, arresting al-Harethi may not have been an option. The Yemeni government has little control over the tribal area where he was killed; indeed, 18 Yemeni soldiers had reportedly died in an earlier attempt to arrest him.

Although there may have been a reasonable case for applying war rules to al-Harethi, the Bush administration has applied these rules with far less justification in other episodes outside the United States. For example, in October 2001, Washington sought the surrender of six Algerian men in Bosnia. At first, the U.S. government followed law-enforcement rules and secured the men's arrest. But then, after a three-month investigation, Bosnia's Supreme Court ordered the suspects released for lack of evidence. Instead of providing additional evidence, however, Washington simply switched to war rules. It pressured the Bosnian government to hand the men over anyway and whisked them out of the country—not to trial, but to indefinite detention at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay.

The administration followed a similar pattern in June 2003, when five al Qaeda suspects were detained in Malawi. Malawi's high court ordered local authorities to follow the law and either charge or release the five men, all of whom were foreigners. Ignoring local law, the Bush administration then insisted that the men be handed over to U.S. security forces instead. The five were spirited out of the country to an undisclosed location—not for trial, but for interrogation. The move sparked riots in Malawi. The men were released a month later in Sudan, after questioning by Americans failed to turn up any incriminating evidence.

A BAD EXAMPLE

These cases are not anomalies. In the last two and a half years, the U.S. government has taken custody of a series of al Qaeda suspects in countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand. In many of these cases, the suspects were not captured on a traditional battlefield. Yet instead of allowing the men to be charged with a crime under local law-enforcement rules, Washington had them treated as combatants and delivered to a U.S. detention facility.

There is something troubling about such a policy. Put simply, using war rules when law-enforcement rules could reasonably be followed is

dangerous. Errors, common enough in ordinary criminal investigations, are all the more likely when a government relies on the kind of murky intelligence that drives many terrorist investigations. If law-enforcement rules are used, a mistaken arrest can be rectified at trial. But if war rules apply, the government is never obliged to prove a suspect's guilt. Instead, a supposed terrorist can be held for however long it takes to win the "war" against terrorism. And the consequences of error are even graver if the supposed combatant is killed, as was al-Harethi. Such mistakes are an inevitable hazard of the battlefield, where quick life-and-death decisions must be made. But when there is no such urgency, prudence and humanity dictate applying law-enforcement standards.

Washington must also remember that its conduct sets an example for governments around the world. After all, many other states would be all too eager to find an excuse to eliminate their enemies through war rules. Israel, to name one, has used this rationale to justify its assassination of terrorist suspects in Gaza and the West Bank. It is not hard to imagine Russia doing the same to Chechen leaders in Europe, Turkey using a similar pretext against Kurds in Iraq, China against Uighurs in Central Asia, or Egypt against Islamists at home.

Moreover, the Bush administration should recognize that international human rights law is not indifferent to the needs of a government facing a security crisis. Criminal trials risk disclosure of sensitive information, as the administration has discovered in prosecuting Zacarias Moussaoui. But under a concept known as "derogation," governments are permitted to suspend certain rights temporarily when they can show that it is necessary to meet a "public emergency threatening the life of the nation." The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the United States has ratified, requires governments seeking derogation to file a declaration justifying the move with the un secretary-general. Among the many governments to have done so are Algeria, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Poland, Russia, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom. Yet the United States, determined to avoid the formal scrutiny involved, has not bothered.

The Justice Department has defended the administration's use of war rules by citing a U.S. Supreme Court decision from World War II, *Ex Parte Quirin*. In that case, the Court ruled that German army saboteurs who landed in the United States could be tried as enemy combatants before military commissions. The Court distinguished its ruling from an earlier Civil War–era case, *Ex Parte Milligan*, which

held that a civilian resident of Indiana could not be tried in military court because local civil courts remained open and operational. Noting that the German saboteurs had entered the United States wearing at least parts of their uniforms, the Court in *Quirin* held that the *Milligan* protections applied only to people who are not members of an enemy's armed forces.

There are several reasons, however, why *Quirin* does not justify the Bush administration's broad use of war rules. First, the saboteurs in *Quirin* were agents of a government—Germany's—with which the United States was obviously at war. Whether the United States is actually at "war" with al Qaeda, however, remains uncertain under the law. Second, although the Court in *Quirin* defined a combatant as anyone operating with hostile intent behind military lines, the case has arguably been superseded by the 1949 Geneva Conventions (ratified by the United States), which, as noted above, rule that people are combatants only if they either are members of an enemy's armed force or are taking active part in hostilities. *Quirin* thus does not help determine whether, under current law, people such as Padilla and al-Marri should be considered civilians (who, under *Milligan*, must be brought before civil courts) or combatants (who can face military treatment). Moreover, *Quirin* only establishes who can be tried before a military tribunal. The Bush administration, however, has asserted that it has the right to hold Padilla, al-Marri, and other detained "combatants" without a trial of any kind—in effect, precluding serious independent assessment of the grounds for potentially lifelong detention. Finally, whereas the government in *Quirin* was operating under a specific grant of authority from Congress, the Bush administration has acted on its own in taking the difficult decision to treat Padilla and al-Marri as combatants, without allowing the popular input that a legislative debate would provide.

STAY SAFE

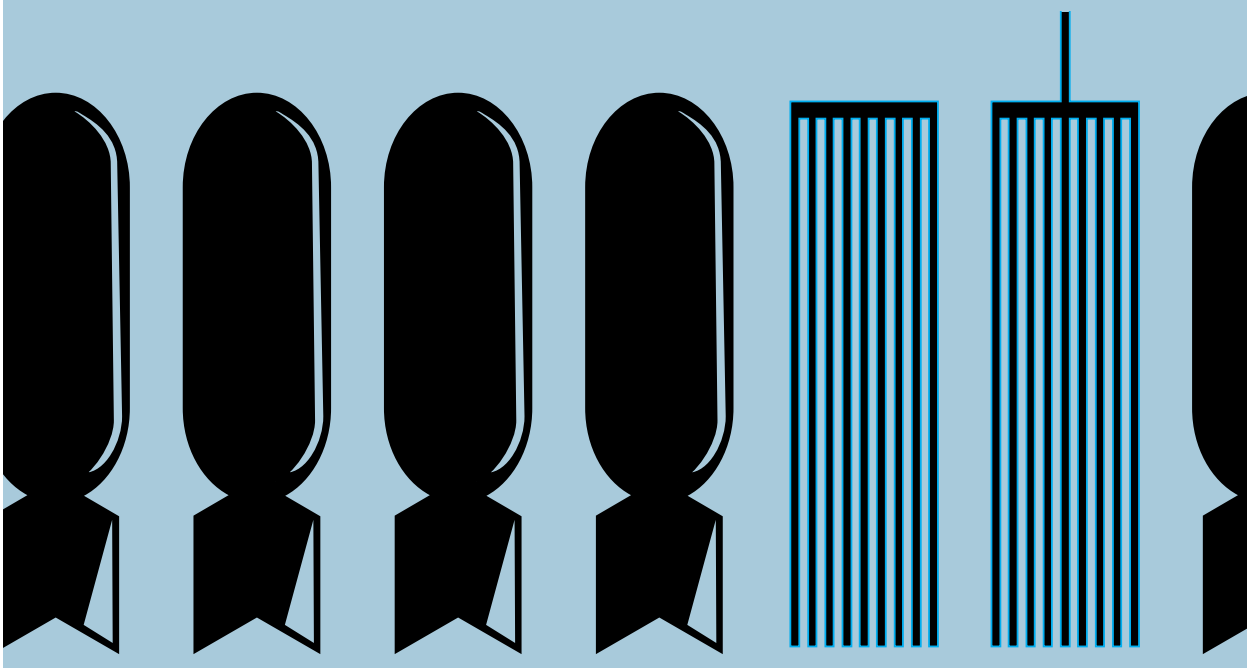
The United States should not lightly suspend due process rights, as the Bush administration has done with its "enemy combatants"—particularly when a mistake could result in death or lengthy detention without charge or trial. Law-enforcement rules should presumptively apply to all suspects in the "war" on terror, and the burden should fall on those who want to invoke war rules to demonstrate that they are necessary and appropriate.

The best way to determine if war rules should apply would be through a three-part test. To invoke war rules, Washington should have to prove, first, that an organized group is directing repeated acts of violence against the United States, its citizens, or its interests with sufficient intensity that it can be fairly recognized as an armed conflict; second, that the suspect is an active member of an opposing armed force or is an active participant in the violence; and, third, that law enforcement means are unavailable.

Within the United States, the third requirement would be nearly impossible to satisfy—as it should be. Given the ambiguities of terrorism, we should be guided more by *Milligan*'s affirmation of the rule of law than by *Quirin*'s exception to it. Outside the United States, Washington should never resort to war rules away from a traditional battlefield if local authorities can and are willing to arrest and deliver a suspect to an independent tribunal—regardless of how the tribunal then rules. War rules should be used in such cases only when no law-enforcement system exists (and the other conditions of war are present), not when the rule of law happens to produce inconvenient results. Even if military forces are used to make an arrest in such cases, law-enforcement rules can still apply; only when attempting an arrest is too dangerous should war rules be countenanced.

This approach would recognize that war rules have their place—but that, given the way they inherently compromise fundamental rights, they should be used sparingly. Away from a traditional battlefield, they should be used, even against a warlike enemy, as a tool of last resort—when there is no reasonable alternative, not when a functioning criminal justice system is available. Until there are better guidelines on when to apply war and law-enforcement rules, this three-part test, drawn from the policy consequences of the decision, offers the best way to balance security and civil rights. In the meantime, the Bush administration should abandon its excessive use of war rules. In attempting to make Americans safer, it has made all Americans, and everyone else, less free.

REASSESSING THE THREAT



Is There Still a Terrorist Threat?

The Myth of the Omnipresent Enemy

John Mueller

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2006

For the past five years, Americans have been regularly regaled with dire predictions of another major al Qaeda attack in the United States. In 2003, a group of 200 senior government officials and business executives, many of them specialists in security and terrorism, pronounced it likely that a terrorist strike more devastating than 9/11—possibly involving weapons of mass destruction—would occur before the end of 2004. In May 2004, Attorney General John Ashcroft warned that al Qaeda could "hit hard" in the next few months and said that 90 percent of the arrangements for an attack on U.S. soil were complete. That fall, *Newsweek* reported that it was "practically an article of faith among counterterrorism officials" that al Qaeda would strike in the run-up to the November 2004 election. When that "October surprise" failed to materialize, the focus shifted: a taped encyclical from Osama bin Laden, it was said, demonstrated that he was too weak to attack before the election but was marshalling his resources to do so months after it.

On the first page of its founding manifesto, the massively funded Department of Homeland Security intones, "Today's terrorists can strike at any place, at any time, and with virtually any weapon."

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But if it is so easy to pull off an attack and if terrorists are so demonically competent, why have they not done it? Why have they not been sniping at people in shopping centers, collapsing tunnels, poisoning the food supply, cutting electrical lines, derailing trains, blowing up oil pipelines, causing massive traffic jams, or exploiting the countless other vulnerabilities that, according to security experts, could so easily be exploited?

One reasonable explanation is that almost no terrorists exist in the United States and few have the means or the inclination to strike from abroad. But this explanation is rarely offered.

HUFFING AND PUFFING

Instead, Americans are told—often by the same people who had once predicted imminent attacks—that the absence of international terrorist strikes in the United States is owed to the protective measures so hastily and expensively put in place after 9/11. But there is a problem with this argument. True, there have been no terrorist incidents in the United States in the last five years. But nor were there any in the five years before the 9/11 attacks, at a time when the United States was doing much less to protect itself. It would take only one or two guys with a gun or an explosive to terrorize vast numbers of people, as the sniper attacks around Washington, D.C., demonstrated in 2002. Accordingly, the government's protective measures would have to be nearly perfect to thwart all such plans. Given the monumental imperfection of the government's response to Hurricane Katrina, and the debacle of FBI and National Security Agency programs to upgrade their computers to better coordinate intelligence information, that explanation seems far-fetched. Moreover, Israel still experiences terrorism even with a far more extensive security apparatus.

It may well have become more difficult for terrorists to get into the country, but, as thousands demonstrate each day, it is far from impossible. Immigration procedures have been substantially tightened (at considerable cost), and suspicious U.S. border guards have turned away a few likely bad apples. But visitors and immigrants continue to flood the country. There are over 300 million legal entries by foreigners each year, and illegal crossings number between 1,000 and 4,000 a day—to say nothing of the generous quantities of forbidden substances that the government has been unable to intercept or even detect despite decades of a strenuous and well-funded "war on drugs."

Every year, a number of people from Muslim countries—perhaps hundreds—are apprehended among the illegal flow from Mexico, and many more probably make it through. Terrorism does not require a large force. And the 9/11 planners, assuming Middle Eastern males would have problems entering the United States legally after the attack, put into motion plans to rely thereafter on non-Arabs with passports from Europe and Southeast Asia.

If al Qaeda operatives are as determined and inventive as assumed, they should be here by now. If they are not yet here, they must not be trying very hard or must be far less dedicated, diabolical, and competent than the common image would suggest.

Another popular explanation for the fact that there have been no more attacks asserts that the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, although it never managed to snag bin Laden, severely disrupted al Qaeda and its operations. But this claim is similarly unconvincing. The 2004 train bombings in Madrid were carried out by a tiny group of men who had never been to Afghanistan, much less to any of al Qaeda's training camps. They pulled off a coordinated nonsuicidal attack with 13 remote-controlled bombs, ten of which went off on schedule, killing 191 and injuring more than 1,800. The experience with that attack, as well as with the London bombings of 2005, suggests that, as the former U.S. counterterrorism officials Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon have noted, for a terrorist attack to succeed, "all that is necessary are the most portable, least detectable tools of the terrorist trade: ideas."

It is also sometimes suggested that the terrorists are now too busy killing Americans and others in Iraq to devote the time, manpower, or energy necessary to pull off similar deeds in the United States. But terrorists with al Qaeda sympathies or sensibilities have managed to carry out attacks in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere in the past three years; not every single potential bomb thrower has joined the fray in Iraq.

Perhaps, some argue, terrorists are unable to mount attacks in the United States because the Muslim community there, unlike in many countries in Europe, has been well integrated into society. But the same could be said about the United Kingdom, which experienced a significant terrorist attack in 2005. And European countries with less well-integrated Muslim communities, such as Germany, France, and Norway, have yet to experience al Qaeda terrorism. Indeed, if terrorists are smart, they will avoid Muslim communities because that is the

lamppost under which policing agencies are most intensely searching for them. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks were ordered generally to stay away from mosques and American Muslims. That and the Madrid plot show that tiny terrorist conspiracies hardly need a wider support network to carry out their schemes.

Another common explanation is that al Qaeda is craftily biding its time. But what for? The 9/11 attacks took only about two years to prepare. The carefully coordinated, very destructive, and politically productive terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 were conceived, planned from scratch, and then executed all within six months; the bombs were set off less than two months after the conspirators purchased their first supplies of dynamite, paid for with hashish. (Similarly, Timothy McVeigh's attack in Oklahoma City in 1995 took less than a year to plan.) Given the extreme provocation of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, one would think that terrorists might be inclined to shift their timetable into higher gear. And if they are so patient, why do they continually claim that another attack is just around the corner? It was in 2003 that al Qaeda's top leaders promised attacks in Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Yemen. Three years later, some bombs had gone off in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, and Jordan (as well as in the unlisted Turkey) but not in any other of the explicitly threatened countries. Those attacks were tragic, but their sparseness could be taken as evidence that it is not only American alarmists who are given to extravagant huffing and puffing.

TERRORISTS UNDER THE BED

A fully credible explanation for the fact that the United States has suffered no terrorist attacks since 9/11 is that the threat posed by homegrown or imported terrorists—like that presented by Japanese Americans during World War II or by American Communists after it—has been massively exaggerated. Is it possible that the haystack is essentially free of needles?

The FBI embraces a spooky I-think-therefore-they-are line of reasoning when assessing the purported terrorist menace. In 2003, its director, Robert Mueller, proclaimed, "The greatest threat is from al Qaeda cells in the U.S. that we have not yet identified." He rather mysteriously deemed the threat from those unidentified entities to be "increasing in part because of the heightened publicity" surrounding

such episodes as the 2002 Washington sniper shootings and the 2001 anthrax attacks (which had nothing to do with al Qaeda). But in 2001, the 9/11 hijackers received no aid from U.S.-based al Qaeda operatives for the simple reason that no such operatives appear to have existed. It is not at all clear that that condition has changed.

Mueller also claimed to know that "al Qaeda maintains the ability and the intent to inflict significant casualties in the U.S. with little warning." If this was true—if the terrorists had both the ability and the intent in 2003, and if the threat they presented was somehow increasing—they had remained remarkably quiet by the time the unflappable Mueller repeated his alarmist mantra in 2005: "I remain very concerned about what we are not seeing."

Intelligence estimates in 2002 held that there were as many as 5,000 al Qaeda terrorists and supporters in the United States. However, a secret FBI report in 2005 wistfully noted that although the bureau had managed to arrest a few bad guys here and there after more than three years of intense and well-funded hunting, it had been unable to identify a single true al Qaeda sleeper cell anywhere in the country. Thousands of people in the United States have had their overseas communications monitored under a controversial warrantless surveillance program. Of these, fewer than ten U.S. citizens or residents per year have aroused enough suspicion to impel the agencies spying on them to seek warrants authorizing surveillance of their domestic communications as well; none of this activity, it appears, has led to an indictment on any charge whatever.

In addition to massive eavesdropping and detention programs, every year some 30,000 "national security letters" are issued without judicial review, forcing businesses and other institutions to disclose confidential information about their customers without telling anyone they have done so. That process has generated thousands of leads that, when pursued, have led nowhere. Some 80,000 Arab and Muslim immigrants have been subjected to fingerprinting and registration, another 8,000 have been called in for interviews with the FBI, and over 5,000 foreign nationals have been imprisoned in initiatives designed to prevent terrorism. This activity, notes the Georgetown University law professor David Cole, has not resulted in a single conviction for a terrorist crime. In fact, only a small number of people picked up on terrorism charges—always to great official fanfare—have been convicted at all, and almost all of these convictions have been for other

infractions, particularly immigration violations. Some of those convicted have clearly been mental cases or simply flaunting jihadist bravado—rattling on about taking down the Brooklyn Bridge with a blowtorch, blowing up the Sears Tower if only they could get to Chicago, beheading the prime minister of Canada, or flooding lower Manhattan by somehow doing something terrible to one of those tunnels.

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION?

One reason al Qaeda and "al Qaeda types" seem not to be trying very hard to repeat 9/11 may be that that dramatic act of destruction itself proved counterproductive by massively heightening concerns about terrorism around the world. No matter how much they might disagree on other issues (most notably on the war in Iraq), there is a compelling incentive for states—even ones such as Iran, Libya, Sudan, and Syria—to cooperate in cracking down on al Qaeda, because they know that they could easily be among its victims. The FBI may not have uncovered much of anything within the United States since 9/11, but thousands of apparent terrorists have been rounded, or rolled, up overseas with U.S. aid and encouragement.

Although some Arabs and Muslims took pleasure in the suffering inflicted on 9/11—*Schadenfreude* in German, *shamateh* in Arabic—the most common response among jihadists and religious nationalists was a vehement rejection of al Qaeda's strategy and methods. When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979, there were calls for jihad everywhere in Arab and Muslim lands, and tens of thousands flocked to the country to fight the invaders. In stark contrast, when the U.S. military invaded in 2001 to topple an Islamist regime, there was, as the political scientist Fawaz Gerges points out, a "deafening silence" from the Muslim world, and only a trickle of jihadists went to fight the Americans. Other jihadists publicly blamed al Qaeda for their post-9/11 problems and held the attacks to be shortsighted and hugely miscalculated.

The post-9/11 willingness of governments around the world to take on international terrorists has been much reinforced and amplified by subsequent, if scattered, terrorist activity outside the United States. Thus, a terrorist bombing in Bali in 2002 galvanized the Indonesian government into action. Extensive arrests and convictions—including of leaders who had previously enjoyed some degree of local fame and political popularity—seem to have severely degraded the capacity of the chief jihadist group in Indonesia, Jemaah Islamiyah. After terrorists

attacked Saudis in Saudi Arabia in 2003, that country, very much for self-interested reasons, became considerably more serious about dealing with domestic terrorism; it soon clamped down on radical clerics and preachers. Some rather inept terrorist bombings in Casablanca in 2003 inspired a similarly determined crackdown by Moroccan authorities. And the 2005 bombing in Jordan of a wedding at a hotel (an unbelievably stupid target for the terrorists) succeeded mainly in outraging the Jordanians: according to a Pew poll, the percentage of the population expressing a lot of confidence in bin Laden to "do the right thing" dropped from 25 percent to less than one percent after the attack.

THREAT PERCEPTIONS

The results of policing activity overseas suggest that the absence of results in the United States has less to do with terrorists' cleverness or with investigative incompetence than with the possibility that few, if any, terrorists exist in the country. It also suggests that al Qaeda's ubiquity and capacity to do damage may have, as with so many perceived threats, been exaggerated. Just because some terrorists may wish to do great harm does not mean that they are able to.

Gerges argues that mainstream Islamists—who make up the vast majority of the Islamist political movement—gave up on the use of force before 9/11, except perhaps against Israel, and that the jihadists still committed to violence constitute a tiny minority. Even this small group primarily focuses on various "infidel" Muslim regimes and considers jihadists who carry out violence against the "far enemy"—mainly Europe and the United States—to be irresponsible, reckless adventurers who endanger the survival of the whole movement. In this view, 9/11 was a sign of al Qaeda's desperation, isolation, fragmentation, and decline, not of its strength.

Those attacks demonstrated, of course, that al Qaeda—or at least 19 of its members—still possessed some fight. And none of this is to deny that more terrorist attacks on the United States are still possible. Nor is it to suggest that al Qaeda is anything other than a murderous movement. Moreover, after the ill-considered U.S. venture in Iraq is over, freelance jihadists trained there may seek to continue their operations elsewhere—although they are more likely to focus on places such as Chechnya than on the United States. A unilateral American military attack against Iran could cause that country to retaliate, probably with very wide support within the Muslim world, by aiding anti-

American insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq and inflicting damage on Israel and on American interests worldwide.

But while keeping such potential dangers in mind, it is worth remembering that the total number of people killed since 9/11 by al Qaeda or al Qaeda–like operatives outside of Afghanistan and Iraq is not much higher than the number who drown in bathtubs in the United States in a single year, and that the lifetime chance of an American being killed by international terrorism is about one in 80,000—about the same chance of being killed by a comet or a meteor. Even if there were a 9/11-scale attack every three months for the next five years, the likelihood that an individual American would number among the dead would be two hundredths of a percent (or one in 5,000).

Although it remains heretical to say so, the evidence so far suggests that fears of the omnipotent terrorist—reminiscent of those inspired by images of the 20-foot-tall Japanese after Pearl Harbor or the 20-foot-tall Communists at various points in the Cold War (particularly after Sputnik)—may have been overblown, the threat presented within the United States by al Qaeda greatly exaggerated. The massive and expensive homeland security apparatus erected since 9/11 may be persecuting some, spying on many, inconveniencing most, and taxing all to defend the United States against an enemy that scarcely exists.

Al Qaeda Strikes Back

Bruce Riedel

MAY/JUNE 2007

A FIERCER FOE

Al Qaeda is a more dangerous enemy today than it has ever been before. It has suffered some setbacks since September 11, 2001: losing its state within a state in Afghanistan, having several of its top operatives killed, failing in its attempts to overthrow the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. But thanks largely to Washington's eagerness to go into Iraq rather than concentrate on hunting down al Qaeda's leaders, the organization now has a solid base of operations in the badlands of Pakistan and an effective franchise in western Iraq. Its reach has spread throughout the Muslim world, where it has developed a large cadre of operatives, and in Europe, where it can claim the support of some disenfranchised Muslim locals and members of the Arab and Asian diasporas. Osama bin Laden has mounted a successful propaganda campaign to make himself and his movement the primary symbols of Islamic resistance worldwide. His ideas now attract more followers than ever.

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Bin Laden's goals remain the same, as does his basic strategy. He seeks to, as he puts it, "provoke and bait" the United States into "bleeding wars" throughout the Islamic world; he wants to bankrupt the country much as he helped bankrupt, he claims, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The demoralized "far enemy" would then go home, allowing al Qaeda to focus on destroying its "near enemies," Israel and the "corrupt" regimes of Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. occupation of Iraq helped move his plan along, and bin Laden has worked hard to turn it into a trap for Washington. Now he may be scheming to extend his strategy by exploiting or even triggering a war between the United States and Iran.

Decisively defeating al Qaeda will be more difficult now than it would have been a few years ago. But it can still be done, if Washington and its partners implement a comprehensive strategy over several years, one focused on both attacking al Qaeda's leaders and ideas and altering the local conditions that allow them to thrive. Otherwise, it will only be a matter of time before al Qaeda strikes the U.S. homeland again.

ONE LOST, TWO GAINED

The al Qaeda leadership did not anticipate the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001. Up to that point, Afghanistan had been a fertile breeding ground for the organization. According to some estimates, al Qaeda had trained up to 60,000 jihadists there. Al Qaeda leaders welcomed the invasion by U.S. and coalition forces on the assumption that they would quickly get mired in conflict, as the Soviets had two decades earlier. Al Qaeda and the Taliban thought they had decapitated the Afghan opposition and severely hampered its ability to fight by assassinating the Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah Masoud two days before 9/11.

But in December 2001, Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader and self-proclaimed "commander of the faithful," to whom bin Laden had sworn allegiance, lost Kandahar, the capital of the Taliban's fiefdom. The Taliban had already lost considerable support among Afghans by the time of the invasion because of their draconian implementation of fundamentalist Islamic law and their harsh crackdown on poppy cultivation, the mainstay of the Afghan economy. But the key to their defeat was the defection of Pakistan. According to Ahmed Rashid, the top expert on the Taliban, up to 60,000 Pakistani volunteers had

served in the Taliban militia before 9/11, alongside dozens of active-duty Pakistani army advisers and even small Pakistani army commando units. When these experts left, the Taliban lost their conventional military capability and political patronage, and al Qaeda lost a safe haven for its operational planning, training, and propaganda efforts.

The senior members of al Qaeda and the Taliban recovered quickly. In early 2002, they hid in the badlands along the Pakistani-Afghan border. Fighters went underground, and the trail for the top three men (bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's top deputy) went cold almost immediately. For the next two years, al Qaeda focused on surviving—and, with the Taliban, on building a new base of operations around Quetta, in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan.

Al Qaeda also moved swiftly to develop a capability in Iraq, where it had little or no presence before 9/11. (The 9/11 Commission found no credible evidence of any operational connection between al Qaeda and Iraq before the attacks, and the infamous report connecting the 9/11 mastermind Mohamed Atta with Iraqi intelligence officers in Prague has been discredited.) On February 11, 2003, bin Laden sent a letter to the Iraqi people, broadcast via the satellite network al Jazeera, warning them to prepare for the "Crusaders' war to occupy one of Islam's former capitals, loot Muslim riches, and install a stooge regime to follow its masters in Washington and Tel Aviv to pave the way for the establishment of Greater Israel." He advised Iraqis to prepare for a long struggle against invading forces and engage in "urban and street warfare" and emphasized "the importance of martyrdom operations which have inflicted unprecedented harm on America and Israel." He even encouraged the jihadists in Iraq to work with "the socialist infidels"—the Baathists—in a "convergence of interests."

Thousands of Arab volunteers, many of them inspired by bin Laden's words, went to Iraq in the run-up to the U.S. invasion. Some joined the fledgling network created by the longtime bin Laden associate Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who had fled Afghanistan and come to Iraq sometime in 2002 to begin preparations against the invasion. (Zarqawi had been a partner in al Qaeda's millennium plot to blow up the Radisson Hotel and other targets in Amman, Jordan, in December 2000. Later, in Herat, Afghanistan, he ran operations complementary to al Qaeda's.) Zarqawi's network killed an officer of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Laurence Foley, in Amman on October 28, 2002—the first anti-American operation connected to the invasion.

ROOT AND BRANCH

The U.S. invasion of Iraq took the pressure off al Qaeda in the Pakistani badlands and opened new doors for the group in the Middle East. It also played directly into the hands of al Qaeda leaders by seemingly confirming their claim that the United States was an imperialist force, which helped them reinforce various local alliances. In Iraq, Zarqawi adopted a two-pronged strategy to alienate U.S. allies and destabilize the country. He sought to isolate U.S. forces by driving out all other foreign forces with systematic terrorist attacks, most notably the bombings of the United Nations headquarters and the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad in the summer of 2003. More important, he focused on the fault line in Iraqi society—the divide between Sunnis and Shiites—with the goal of precipitating a civil war. He launched a series of attacks on the Shiite leadership, holy Shiite sites, and Shiite men and women on the street. He organized the assassination of the senior leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, in the summer of 2003, and the bombings of Shiite shrines in Najaf and Baghdad in March 2004 and in Najaf and Karbala in December 2004. Even by the ruthless standards of al Qaeda, Zarqawi excelled.

Zarqawi's strategy did prompt criticism from other jihadi groups and some second-guessing within al Qaeda, but it nevertheless succeeded brilliantly. In a letter to Zarqawi dated July 9, 2005, Zawahiri questioned the wisdom of igniting Sunni-Shiite hatred in the Muslim world, and Zarqawi became known within the movement as al Gharib (the Stranger) because of his extreme views. Still, he pressed ahead, and the al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan never challenged him publicly. Although he led only a small percentage of the Sunni militants in Iraq, Zarqawi was at the cutting edge of the insurgency, the engine of the civil war. By late 2004, he had formally proclaimed his allegiance to bin Laden, and bin Laden had anointed him "the prince of al Qaeda in Iraq."

Zarqawi's group, al Qaeda in Iraq, has continued to foment sectarian unrest. In February 2006, it attacked one of the country's most sacred Shiite sites, the Golden Mosque in Samarra. Zarqawi's death last summer changed little. In October 2006, the group proclaimed the independence of a Sunni state—"the Islamic State of Iraq"—in Sunni-majority areas, such as Baghdad, Mosul, and Anbar Province, declaring its opposition not just to the U.S. occupation but also to the Iranian-backed Shiite region in the south and to the

Kurdish region in the north (which it says is supported by Israel). Most of all, al Qaeda in Iraq has continued to orchestrate massacres against Shiites in Baghdad.

The visible success of its partners in Iraq has strengthened the hand of al Qaeda and its allies, old and new, in Pakistan. With the help of tactical advice and, probably, funds from al Qaeda, the Taliban had already regrouped by 2004. In 2005, bin Laden appeared in a Taliban video advising its commanders. By 2006, the Taliban had recovered sufficiently to launch a major offensive in Afghanistan and even attempted to retake Kandahar. New tactics imported from Iraq, such as suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices, became commonplace in Afghanistan. Taliban attacks rose from 1,632 in 2005 to 5,388 in 2006, according to the U.S. military, and suicide operations grew from 27 in 2005 to 139 in 2006. NATO troops held on to the major towns and cities but suffered significant losses, including over 90 dead.

Al Qaeda has also developed closer ties to Kashmiri terrorist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad. Some of those links predated 9/11. In late 1999, for example, bin Laden (as well as Taliban forces and Pakistani intelligence agents) was intimately involved in the hijacking of an Indian airliner by Kashmiri terrorists—an operation that then Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has since correctly described as the "dress rehearsal" for 9/11. Al Qaeda and Kashmiri groups have continued their deadly cooperation: the spectacular multiple bombings that rocked Mumbai last July had the marks of al Qaeda's modus operandi, and Indian authorities have linked them to al Qaeda's allies in Kashmir.

SPREADING THE WORD

With two new bases secured and local alliances reinforced, al Qaeda has worked to expand its reach beyond Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. To vividly showcase its strength, al Qaeda records most of its operations and transmits the gruesome coverage to jihadi Web sites all over the world. The U.S invasion of Iraq and the chaos that followed were a boon to al Qaeda's propaganda efforts, as they offered tangible evidence, al Qaeda's leaders could argue, both that Washington had imperialist plans and that the jihad against U.S. forces was working.

Bin Laden made a landmark video recording in October 2004, in time for the presidential election in the United States, promising to bankrupt Washington in Afghanistan and Iraq. Largely silent in 2005,

he made several announcements in 2006. On the fifth anniversary of 9/11, al Qaeda released a major statement entitled "The Manhattan Raid," featuring previously unseen videos of two of the 9/11 pilots and the most extensive discussion yet on the background and purpose of the operation. Zawahiri, al Qaeda's propaganda point man—whose role is to reassure the faithful that the movement is alive and well—has also become more prolific; he issued at least 15 messages in 2006. Overall, al Qaeda quadrupled its output of videos between 2005 and 2006—all propaganda instruments, of course, but also a means for the organization's leaders to rally its followers and send them instructions. According to one expert, there are also some 4,500 overtly jihadi Web sites that disseminate the al Qaeda leadership's messages.

Al Qaeda has expanded its influence in the Middle East and Europe. It has earned much credibility in the global jihadi subculture. Its grand plans to topple the governments of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia have failed, but its attacks against them illustrate the growing breadth of its ambitions and its increasing reach throughout the Middle East. And thanks to the international connections that Zarqawi established, the group has been able to provide foreign foot soldiers for the war in Iraq. Dozens of them have gone—and more continue to go—to Iraq to join the jihad. Most of them appear to be Saudis, although exact numbers are impossible to come by. The most striking case is perhaps that of Muriel Degauque, a Belgian woman and a convert to Islam, who blew herself up in a car-bomb attack against a U.S. convoy in Iraq in November 2005. Conversely, one of the 2005 attacks in Amman involved an Iraqi woman sent by Zarqawi. And thanks to Zarqawi's pipeline, a slew of al Qaeda faithful trained in Iraq can now be sent back to their homelands as experienced fighters.

Al Qaeda's relocation to Pakistan has also provided new opportunities for the group to expand its reach in the West, especially the United Kingdom. Thanks to connections to the Pakistani diaspora, visitors from Pakistan have relatively easy access to the Pakistani community in the United Kingdom, and Pakistani-born Britons can readily travel to Pakistan and back—facilitating recruitment, training, and communications for jihadists. (By one estimate, Pakistan received 400,000 visits from British residents in 2004.) The large communities of immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh living in the United Kingdom—and some disaffected Muslim British citizens—have become targets for recruitment. With entry into the United States made more

difficult because of U.S. homeland security measures, the United Kingdom has become a focal point of al Qaeda's activities in the West.

In November 2006, Eliza Manningham-Buller, the director general of the British Security Service, known as MI5, said that some 200 networks of Muslims of South Asian descent were being monitored in the United Kingdom. At "the extreme end of this spectrum," Manningham-Buller said, "are resilient networks directed from al Qaeda in Pakistan," and terrorist plots in the United Kingdom "often have links back to al Qaeda in Pakistan, and through those links al Qaeda gives guidance and training to its largely British foot soldiers here on an extensive and growing scale." Since 2001, these foot soldiers are suspected of having plotted 30 or so attacks on targets in the United Kingdom or aircraft leaving for the United States. (All but one of them have been disrupted.) These networks' most notable success was the July 7, 2005, attacks on the London public transport system. Videos later released by Zawahiri left no question that al Qaeda had sponsored the attacks.

Although links between Pakistan and other terrorist attacks in Europe are less well established, al Qaeda's influence on them is almost certain. The extent of al Qaeda's involvement in the March 11, 2004, attack on the Madrid subway is unclear, for example; the bombing may have been an independent, copycat operation. But some sources, including Abdel Bari Atwan, the well-connected editor of *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, claim it was an al Qaeda operation, and last year Zawahiri publicly counted that act as one of al Qaeda's successful "raids." There is no question, meanwhile, that al Qaeda was behind the November 2003 attacks in Istanbul against Jewish and British targets, including the British consulate, that killed or wounded over 800 people.

Al Qaeda's growing connections to Europe have made the United States more vulnerable, too. If it had not been foiled, the plot last August to destroy ten commercial airliners en route from the United Kingdom to the United States—which has been tied back to the Pakistani-British network and was probably timed to coincide with the sixth anniversary of 9/11—would have been devastating. Last January, John Negroponte, then the director of national intelligence, said that the operation was the most ambitious attempt to slaughter innocents since 9/11. He told the Senate that al Qaeda's core elements "continue to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets, with

the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they are cultivating stronger operational connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe."

NOW WHAT?

Al Qaeda today is a global operation—with a well-oiled propaganda machine based in Pakistan, a secondary but independent base in Iraq, and an expanding reach in Europe. Its leadership is intact. Its decentralized command-and-control structure has allowed it to survive the loss of key operatives such as Zarqawi. Its Taliban allies are making a comeback in Afghanistan, and it is certain to get a big boost there if NATO pulls out. It will also claim a victory when U.S. forces start withdrawing from Iraq. "The waves of the fierce crusader campaign against the Islamic world have broken on the rock of the mujahideen and have reached a dead end in Iraq and Afghanistan," a spokesperson for the newly proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq said on November 29, 2006. "For the first time since the fall of the Ottoman caliphate in the past century, the region is witnessing the revival of Islamic caliphates."

Whether or not such claims are true, al Qaeda is well placed to threaten global security in the near future. Because it thrives on failed and failing states, it will have opportunities to set up new operations. One appealing option may be Lebanon, where extremist Sunni groups have long operated, particularly in the country's second-largest city, Tripoli, which was controlled by a Sunni fundamentalist group during much of the 1980s, before Syria cracked down. If the Lebanese state is further weakened or civil war breaks out, al Qaeda may seek a foothold there. The United Nations force stationed in Lebanon is likely to be a target, since the jihadists consider it to be another crusading army in the Muslim world.

Gaza is another prime candidate: it is already divided between Hamas and Fatah, and there is evidence that a small al Qaeda apparatus is forming there. Israeli security sources have expressed growing alarm about this new al Qaeda presence on their doorstep. Yemen, bin Laden's ancestral homeland, may also make an appealing base. Last November, the group al Qaeda of Jihad Organization in the Land of Yemen claimed credit for attacking oil facilities in the Hadramawt region "as directed by our leader and commander Sheik Osama bin Laden ... [and in order] to target the Western economy and stop the robbery [and] the looting of Muslim resources." Bangladesh is yet

another possibility. The Jihad Movement in Bangladesh was one of the original signatories of bin Laden's 1998 declaration of war on the West. Last year, as bitter feuding between the two main political parties was increasingly ripping the country apart, there were growing indications that Bangladeshi fundamentalist groups were becoming radicalized. The political meltdown now under way in the capital, Dhaka, is creating the type of fractious environment in which al Qaeda thrives.

Africa presents some opportunities, too. Somalia has been a failed state for almost two decades and has had a long history of al Qaeda activity: in November 2002, it served as the base for an attack on two Israeli tourist targets in Kenya. The Ethiopian occupation of Somalia at the beginning of the year temporarily routed the Islamists, but al Qaeda is not finished in Mogadishu. In Algeria, meanwhile, al Qaeda is trying to revive the civil war that killed over 100,000 people in the 1990s. The Algerian Islamist movement the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, known by its French initials GSPC, swore allegiance to bin Laden last year, and he ordered that the group be renamed al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. It has since attacked oil targets and police stations, hoping that a spectacular series of assaults, especially on Western targets, could reignite the civil war.

Bin Laden might also be nurturing bolder plans, such as exploiting or even triggering an all-out war between the United States and Iran. Indeed, there is evidence that al Qaeda in Iraq—and elements of the Iraqi Sunni community—increasingly consider Iran's influence in Iraq to be an even greater problem than the U.S. occupation. Al Qaeda worries about the Sunni minority's future in a Shiite-dominated Iraq after the Americans leave. Propaganda material of Sunni jihadists in Iraq and elsewhere openly discusses their fear that Iran will dominate a postoccupation Iraq and seek to restore the type of regional control that the Persian Empire had in the sixteenth century. In a remarkable statement last November, Zarqawi's successor, Abu Hamza al-Masri, thanked President George W. Bush for sending the U.S. Army to Iraq and thus giving al Qaeda the "great historic opportunity" to engage Americans in direct fighting on Arab ground. (He also said that Bush was "the most stupid and ominous president" in U.S. history.) But he warned that the invasion had "revived the glory of the old Persian Safavid Empire in a very short period of time." Similarly, the self-proclaimed emir of the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, issued a statement in February 2007

welcoming news that the U.S. government was considering sending more troops to Iraq and saying that he was eagerly looking forward to an American nuclear attack on Iran.

A war between the "crusaders" and the "Safavids" would benefit the jihad against both groups: by pitting two of its worst enemies against each other, the Sunni Arab jihadi community would be killing two birds with one stone. Al Qaeda would especially like a full-scale U.S. invasion and occupation of Iran, which would presumably oust the Shiite regime in Tehran, further antagonize Muslims worldwide, and expand al Qaeda's battlefield against the United States so that it extends from Anbar Province in the west to the Khyber Pass in the east. It understands that the U.S. military is already too overstretched to invade Iran, but it expects Washington to use nuclear weapons. Baghdadi has told Sunnis in Iran to evacuate towns close to nuclear installations.

The biggest danger is that al Qaeda will deliberately provoke a war with a "false-flag" operation, say, a terrorist attack carried out in a way that would make it appear as though it were Iran's doing. The United States should be extremely wary of such deception. In the event of an attack, accurately assigning blame will require very careful intelligence work. It may require months, or even years, of patient investigating to identify the plotters behind well-planned and well-executed operations, as it did for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, and the 1996 attacks on the U.S. barracks at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton were wise to be patient in both those cases; Washington would be well advised to do the same in the event of a similar attack in the future. In the meantime, it should, of course, continue do its utmost to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and from fomenting violence and terrorism in the Middle East by using tough diplomacy and targeted sanctions. And it should not consider a military operation against Iran, as doing so would only strengthen al Qaeda's hand—much as the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq have.

WAR GAMES

The challenge of defeating al Qaeda is more complex today than it was in 2001. The organization is more diffuse, and its components operate more independently. Bin Laden continues to influence its direction and provide general guidance and, on occasion, specific instructions.

But overall the movement is more loosely structured, which leaves more room for independent and copycat terrorist operations.

Partly because of this evolution, Washington needs a grand strategy to defeat al Qaeda. The past five years have demonstrated that a primarily military approach will not work. The focus of Washington's new strategy must be to target al Qaeda's leaders, who provide the inspiration and direction for the global jihad. As long as they are alive and active, they will symbolize successful resistance to the United States and continue to attract new recruits. Settling for having them on the run or hiding in caves is not enough; it is a recipe for defeat, if not already an acknowledgment of failure. The death of bin Laden and his senior associates in Pakistan and Iraq would not end the movement, but it would deal al Qaeda a serious blow.

A critical first step toward decapitating al Qaeda is for Washington to enhance its commitment in Afghanistan. President Bush promised to do so last February, but more needs to be done. Defeating the resurgent Taliban will require a significant increase in NATO forces, and that will require U.S. leadership. The United States should urgently divert more troops from Iraq to Afghanistan as a way to encourage U.S. allies in Afghanistan to help supply the additional troops and equipment needed. NATO should also encourage its partners in the Mediterranean Dialogue—especially Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia—to contribute to the stabilization of Afghanistan. It should also create a contact group led by a senior NATO diplomat to engage with all of Afghanistan's neighbors to secure the country's borders, especially the 1,500-mile one with Pakistan. This group should include Iran, which has generally been a helpful player in Afghanistan in the last few years. NATO should reach out to India as well: New Delhi has already provided half a billion dollars in aid for Afghanistan, and, having long been a target of Islamist terrorism, India has a national interest in defeating it.

The United States should supplement this military buildup by taking the lead on a major economic reconstruction program in Afghanistan. Since 2001, the international community has delivered far less aid per capita to Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries, than it has to recovering states such as Bosnia. The country's infrastructure must be improved in order to develop a mainstream agricultural economy that can compete with illicit poppy cultivation, which breeds crime and corruption and strengthens the jihadi subculture.

The United States and its partners, including NATO, also need to take a firmer position with the Pakistani government to enlist its help in tracking down al Qaeda leaders. President Pervez Musharraf has taken some important steps against al Qaeda, especially after its attempts to assassinate him, and he has promised more than once a full crackdown on extremism. But mostly he has sought to tame jihadists—without much success—and his government has tolerated those who harbor bin Laden and his lieutenants, Taliban fighters and their Afghan fellow travelers, and Kashmiri terrorists. Many senior Pakistani politicians say privately that they believe Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) still has extensive links to bin Laden; some even claim it harbors him. Apprehending a few al Qaeda officers would not be enough, and so a systematic crackdown on all terrorists—Arab, Afghan, and Kashmiri—is critical. Hence, Pakistan should no longer be rewarded for its selective counterterrorism efforts. (Washington has already given it some $10 billion in aid since 9/11.) The new Congress must take a sharp look at evidence (including evidence gathered by Afghan authorities) of Pakistani cooperation to assess how it can be improved.

Congress should also press the Bush administration to ensure that Pakistan holds free and fair parliamentary elections this year and that Pakistani opposition leaders are allowed to compete in them. If it makes sense to bring democracy to Afghanistan, then surely it makes sense to bring it to Pakistan. The prevailing theory that strongmen such as Musharraf make for better counterterrorism partners is a canard; Musharraf, for one, has not delivered the goods. The Pakistani army and the ISI have tolerated and sponsored terrorism for the last two decades, and the nexus between Pakistan and terrorism will not be broken until Pakistani officers are back in their barracks and civilian rule is restored.

Iraq is, of course, another critical battlefield in the fight against al Qaeda. But it is time to recognize that engagement there is more of a trap than an opportunity for the United States. Al Qaeda and Iran both want Washington to remain bogged down in the quagmire. Al Qaeda has openly welcomed the chance to fight the United States in Iraq. U.S. diplomacy has certainly been clumsy and counterproductive, but there is little point in reviewing the litany of U.S. mistakes that led to this disaster. The objective now should be to let Iraqis settle their conflicts themselves. Rather than reinforce its failures, the United States should disengage from the civil war in Iraq, with a com-

plete, orderly, and phased troop withdrawal that allows the Iraqi government to take the credit for the pullout and so enhance its legitimacy.

No doubt al Qaeda will claim a victory when the United States leaves Iraq. (It already does so at the sheer mention of withdrawal.) But it is unlikely that the Islamic State of Iraq will fare well after the occupation ends. Anbar and adjacent Sunni provinces have little water, few other natural resources, and no access to the outside world except through hostile territory. The Shiites and the Kurdish militias will have no compunction about attacking the Islamic State of Iraq. (Al Qaeda's own propaganda indicates that it fears the Shiites' wrath after the United States' departure more than it fears what would happen if the Americans stayed.)

Another essential aspect of the United States' war against al Qaeda is the war of ideas. Washington must learn to develop more compelling narratives for its actions. Its calls for bringing democracy to Iraq have not resonated, partly because its actions have not matched its rhetoric. Human rights abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay have even further sullied the United States' reputation and honor. Washington should emphasize the concrete steps the United States is taking to heal differences between Islam and the West and to bring peace to Palestine and Kashmir, among other areas. Creating a new narrative will probably also require bringing to Washington (and London) new leaders who are untarnished by the events of the last few years.

The repackaging effort will also have to involve concrete actions to address the issues that al Qaeda invokes to win recruits, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict but also the conflict in Kashmir. The president of the United States must get personally involved in brokering peace in both instances. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this will not be easy, especially with Hamas in power in Gaza. But neglecting the issue is no solution either. Washington should consider various ideas for getting the opposing sides back to the negotiating table, including the Baker-Hamilton proposal calling for a new international conference. President Bush should also use the United States' enhanced relationship with India—thanks to the nuclear deal the two countries ratified last year—to encourage the nascent dialogue between India and Pakistan and seek an end to those states' rivalry. Such an end would make it easier for the Pakistani government to crack down on terrorist networks in Kashmir, some of which are partners of al Qaeda.

It is now fashionable to call the struggle against al Qaeda the long war. It need not be so, even though helping to rebuild Afghanistan will require a long-term commitment. Decisive actions in key arenas could bring significant results in short order, and a focused strategy could eventually destroy the al Qaeda movement. On the other hand, a failure to adjust U.S. strategy would increase the risk that al Qaeda will launch another "raid" on the United States, this time perhaps with a weapon of mass destruction. For the last several years, al Qaeda's priority has been to bleed the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Striking on U.S. soil has been a lesser goal. If al Qaeda survives, however, sooner or later it will attack the U.S. homeland again.

THE FEW SETBACKS

Despite its overall progress, al Qaeda has suffered several significant setbacks since 9/11, mostly in the Middle East, where it has called for toppling what it considers corrupt pro-U.S. governments. In February 2003, bin Laden wrote a now-famous sermon extolling the "band of knights," the jihadists who had attacked New York and the Pentagon on 9/11, and calling for the overthrow of all apostate leaders in the Persian Gulf—the "Karzais [referring to Afghan President Hamid Karzai] of Riyadh, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar." In a follow-up message in December 2004, he argued that in the revolution against Saudi Arabia, then Crown Prince Abdullah (now the king), Defense Minister Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, Interior Minister Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, and Bandar bin Sultan (then the Saudi ambassador to the United States) should be killed. He repeatedly urged jihadists to target the oil sector in Saudi Arabia to drive up world oil prices. According to Saudi officials, these public messages came with secret orders from bin Laden instructing cells to attack soft targets in Saudi Arabia.

The al Qaeda apparatus in the kingdom, which had been quiescent, exploded into action between 2003 and 2006—triggering the most serious and sustained domestic violence since the creation of modern Saudi Arabia in the early twentieth century. Targets included individual Westerners, the housing compounds of oil companies and Western firms such as the Vinnell Corporation, the Abqaiq oil processing facility (which produces 60 percent of Saudi Arabia's oil), the Ministry of the Interior, and the U.S. consulate in Jidda. Although the offensive coincided with the withdrawal of significant U.S. forces from the country, the pullout was not, as some analysts believed, bin Laden's

main goal; it was merely a step toward the overthrow of the "corrupt" regimes in the Islamic world and the ultimate destruction of Israel.

But the Saudi internal security forces fought back very effectively. According to Saudi authorities, they foiled more than 25 major attacks and by the end of 2006 had killed or captured over 260 terrorists, including all but one of the 26 men on the country's most wanted list. The backbone of the al Qaeda movement in the kingdom was apparently broken. After 9/11, al Qaeda also launched an offensive in Egypt, the home country of Zawahiri, preaching the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak. Hotels and tourist sites in the Sinai frequented by Israelis and Westerners were struck in October 2004 and July 2005—the July attacks, in Sharm al-Sheikh, killed almost a hundred people, outdoing the worst terrorist strike in Egypt up to that point (the Luxor massacre of 1997, which has also been linked to Zawahiri).

But the violence never spread beyond the Sinai; the Egyptian security apparatus kept the threat away from Cairo and the center of Egyptian political life. Terrorists and al Qaeda sympathizers are almost certainly present in the Sinai today, but they do not threaten the regime. More plots should be expected, however, as Zawahiri has announced a new alliance between al Qaeda and an Egyptian Islamic group led by the brother of Khalid al-Islambuli, the assassin of President Anwar al-Sadat.

Like bin Laden and Zawahiri, Zarqawi tried—and failed—to overthrow the leader of his home country, King Abdullah of Jordan. The Jordanian security forces foiled most of his plots. A plan to strike the headquarters of the General Intelligence Department, in Amman, with a chemical bomb in April 2004—Zarqawi's most ambitious effort in Jordan—ended with the GID seizing trucks with over 20 tons of chemical explosives. (Zarqawi took credit for the plot but claimed that the Jordanian authorities fabricated the presence of chemical weapons; as he put it, if his group possessed such a device, "we would not hesitate one second to use it on Israeli cities.") Al Qaeda was also responsible for the November 2005 bombing of the Radisson and two other hotels in Amman.

In Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, the governments have strengthened the secret police and given them carte blanche to strike al Qaeda and its sympathizers. The United States and its allies in Europe have also provided additional counterterrorism assistance to the targeted regimes and stepped up cooperation with their security forces. The lesson is clear: al Qaeda is still too weak to overthrow established governments equipped with effective security services; it needs failed states to thrive.

Can the War on Terror Be Won?

How to Fight the Right War

Philip H. Gordon

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Less than 12 hours after the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush proclaimed the start of a global war on terror. Ever since, there has been a vigorous debate about how to win it. Bush and his supporters stress the need to go on the offensive against terrorists, deploy U.S. military force, promote democracy in the Middle East, and give the commander in chief expansive wartime powers. His critics either challenge the very notion of a "war on terror" or focus on the need to fight it differently. Most leading Democrats accept the need to use force in some cases but argue that success will come through reestablishing the United States' moral authority and ideological appeal, conducting more and smarter diplomacy, and intensifying cooperation with key allies. They argue that Bush's approach to the war on terror has created more terrorists than it has eliminated—and that it will continue to do so unless the United States radically changes course.

Almost entirely missing from this debate is a concept of what "victory" in the war on terror would actually look like. The traditional notion of winning a war is fairly clear: defeating an enemy on the battlefield and forcing it to accept political terms. But what does vic-

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tory—or defeat—mean in a war on terror? Will this kind of war ever end? How long will it take? Would we see victory coming? Would we recognize it when it came?

It is essential to start thinking seriously about these questions, because it is impossible to win a war without knowing what its goal is. Considering possible outcomes of the war on terror makes clear that it can indeed be won, but only with the recognition that this is a new and different kind of war. Victory will come not when foreign leaders accept certain terms but when political changes erode and ultimately undermine support for the ideology and strategy of those determined to destroy the United States. It will come not when Washington and its allies kill or capture all terrorists or potential terrorists but when the ideology the terrorists espouse is discredited, when their tactics are seen to have failed, and when they come to find more promising paths to the dignity, respect, and opportunities they crave. It will mean not the complete elimination of any possible terrorist threat—pursuing that goal will almost certainly lead to more terrorism, not less—but rather the reduction of the risk of terrorism to such a level that it does not significantly affect average citizens' daily lives, preoccupy their thoughts, or provoke overreaction. At that point, even the terrorists will realize their violence is futile. Keeping this vision of victory in mind will not only avert considerable pain, expense, and trouble; it will also guide leaders toward the policies that will bring such a victory about.

THE LAST WAR

One of the few predictions that can be made about the war on terror with some confidence is that it will end—all wars eventually do. Such an observation might appear flip, but there is a serious point behind it: the factors that drive international politics are so numerous and so fluid that no political system or conflict can last forever. Thus, some wars end quickly (the Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896 famously lasted for 45 minutes), and others endure (the Hundred Years War lasted for 116 years). Some wars end relatively well (World War II laid the foundation for lasting peace and prosperity), and others lead to further catastrophe (World War I). But they all end, one way or another, and it behooves those living through them to imagine how their conclusions might be hastened and improved.

Where the war on terror is concerned, some of the most instructive lessons can be drawn from the experience of the Cold War, thus named

because, like the war on terror, it was not really a war at all. Although the current challenge is not identical to the Cold War, their similarities—as long-term, multidimensional struggles against insidious and violent ideologies—suggest that there is much to learn from this recent, and successful, experience. Just as the Cold War ended only when one side essentially gave up on a bankrupt ideology, the battle against Islamist terrorism will be won when the ideology that underpins it loses its appeal. The Cold War ended not with U.S. forces occupying the Kremlin but when the occupant of the Kremlin abandoned the fight; the people he governed had stopped believing in the ideology they were supposed to be fighting for.

The Cold War is also an excellent example of a war that ended at a time and in a way that most people living through it failed to foresee—and had even stopped trying to foresee. Whereas for the first decade or so the prospect of victory, defeat, or even nuclear war focused minds on how the Cold War might end, by the mid-1960s almost everyone, leaders and the public alike, had started to lose sight of an end as a possibility. Instead, they grudgingly began to focus on what became known as peaceful coexistence. The policy of détente, initiated in the 1960s and pursued throughout the 1970s, is sometimes retrospectively portrayed as a different strategy for bringing the Cold War to an end. But détente was in reality more a sign of resignation to the Cold War's expected endurance than an alternative way of concluding it. The primary objective was to make the Cold War less dangerous, not to bring it to an end. Ultimately, détente served to soften the image of the West in Soviet eyes, to civilize Soviet leaders through diplomatic interaction, and to lead Moscow into a dialogue about human rights that would end up undermining its legitimacy, all of which did contribute to the end of the Cold War. But this was not the main goal of the strategy.

Détente's critics were also caught by surprise by the end of the Cold War. President Ronald Reagan, it is true, denounced accommodation in the 1970s and 1980s and began to talk about defeating communism once and for all. But even Reagan's vision for burying communism was only a "plan and hope for the long term," as he told the British parliament in 1982. Reagan himself admitted that when he declared, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" in Berlin in June 1987, he "never dreamed that in less than three years the wall would come down." Reagan and his supporters, moreover, saw the Soviet Union of

the late 1970s and early 1980s not as a failing empire in its final stages but as a threatening superpower whose expansion had to be checked.

By the end of the 1980s, when signs of the Soviet Union's internal rot and external softening were finally starting to become apparent, it was those who later claimed to have foreseen the end of the Cold War who most steadfastly refused to accept that it was happening before their eyes. Even as the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev began to undertake the reforms that would lead to the end of the confrontation with the United States, Americans and others had become so used to the Cold War that they had trouble recognizing what was happening. As the historian John Lewis Gaddis wrote in a 1987 *Atlantic Monthly* essay, the Cold War had become such a "way of life" for more than two generations "that it simply does not occur to us to think about how it might end or, more to the point, how we would like it to end." Hardliners such as the Reagan administration defense official Richard Perle were warning that Gorbachev had "imperial ambitions and an abiding attachment to military power," while "realists" such as Brent Scowcroft, President George H. W. Bush's national security adviser, were "suspicious of [Gorbachev's] motives and skeptical about his prospects." As late as April 1989, the Central Intelligence Agency, whose job it was to identify important geopolitical trends, was still predicting that "for the foreseeable future, the USSR will remain the West's principal adversary," a view that was shared by the American public at large. When asked by pollsters in November 1989—just after the Berlin Wall fell—whether they thought the Cold War had ended, only 18 percent of respondents said that it had, while 73 percent said it had not. It was only when the vast majority of Americans had finally given up on ever seeing the end of the Cold War that it actually came to an end.

Is it possible to do any better anticipating how, when, and why the war on terror might end? The war on terror will probably also last for a considerable amount of time. But assuming that it will not go on forever, what will the end of that war look like when it comes? And what does a realistic assessment of what victory in the war on terror might look like say about the way it should be fought?

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

Just as it was once possible to imagine the Soviet Union winning the Cold War, one possibility to be considered today is the victory of al Qaeda. Those in the United States may not have an agreed theory of

victory or a path to get there, but Osama bin Laden and his cohorts certainly do. Bin Laden's goal, as he, his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and others have often articulated, is to drive the United States out of Muslim lands, topple the region's current rulers, and establish Islamic authority under a new caliphate. The path to this goal, they have made clear, is to "provoke and bait" the United States into "bleeding wars" on Muslim lands. Since Americans, the argument goes, do not have the stomach for a long and bloody fight, they will eventually give up and leave the Middle East to its fate. Once the autocratic regimes responsible for the humiliation of the Muslim world have been removed, it will be possible to return it to the idealized state of Arabia at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. A caliphate will be established from Morocco to Central Asia, sharia rule will prevail, Israel will be destroyed, oil prices will skyrocket, and the United States will recoil in humiliation and possibly even collapse—just as the Soviet Union did after the mujahideen defeated it in Afghanistan.

Bin Laden's version of the end of the war on terror is unlikely to be realized. It is based on an exaggeration of his role in bringing down the Soviet Union, a failure to appreciate the long-term strength and adaptability of U.S. society, and an underestimation of Muslim resistance to his extremist views. But if these scenarios are misguided, they are also worth understanding and keeping in mind. If bin Laden's adversaries fail to appreciate his vision of how the war on terror will end, they could end up playing into his hands—by, for example, being drawn into the very battles that bin Laden believes will ruin the United States and inspire Muslim support. This is the error that has led to the United States' unenviable position today in Iraq.

In the long run, the United States and its allies are far more likely to win this war than al Qaeda, not only because liberty is ultimately more appealing than a narrow and extremist interpretation of Islam but also because they learn from mistakes, while al Qaeda's increasingly desperate efforts will alienate even its potential supporters. But victory in the war on terror will not mean the end of terrorism, the end of tyranny, or the end of evil, utopian goals that have all been articulated at one time or another. Terrorism, after all (to say nothing of tyranny and evil), has been around for a long time and will never go away entirely. From the Zealots in the first century AD to the Red Brigades, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Irish Republican Army, the Tamil Tigers, and others in more recent times, terrorism

has been a tactic used by the weak in an effort to produce political change. Like violent crime, deadly disease, and other scourges, it can be reduced and contained. But it cannot be totally eliminated.

This is a critical point, because the goal of ending terrorism entirely is not only unrealistic but also counterproductive—just as is the pursuit of other utopian goals. Murder could be vastly reduced or eliminated from the streets of Washington, D.C., if several hundred thousand police officers were deployed and preventive detentions authorized. Traffic deaths could be almost eliminated in the United States by reducing the national speed limit to ten miles per hour. Illegal immigration from Mexico could be stopped by a vast electric fence along the entire border and a mandatory death penalty for undocumented workers. But no sensible person would propose any of these measures, because the consequences of the solutions would be less acceptable than the risks themselves.

Similarly, the risk of terrorism in the United States could be reduced if officials reallocated hundreds of billions of dollars per year in domestic spending to homeland security measures, significantly curtailed civil liberties to ensure that no potential terrorists were on the streets, and invaded and occupied countries that might one day support or sponsor terrorism. Pursuing that goal in this way, however, would have costs that would vastly outweigh the benefits of reaching the goal, even if reaching it were possible. In their book *An End to Evil*, David Frum and Richard Perle insist that there is "no middle ground" and that "Americans are not fighting this evil to minimize it or to manage it." The choice, they say, comes down to "victory or holocaust." Thinking in these terms is likely to lead the United States into a series of wars, abuses, and overreactions more likely to perpetuate the war on terror than to bring it to a successful end.

The United States and its allies will win the war only if they fight it in the right way—with the same sort of patience, strength, and resolve that helped win the Cold War and with policies designed to provide alternative hopes and dreams to potential enemies. The war on terror will end with the collapse of the violent ideology that caused it—when bin Laden's cause comes to be seen by its potential adherents as a failure, when they turn against it and adopt other goals and other means. Communism, too, once seemed vibrant and attractive to millions around the world, but over time it came to be seen as a failure. Just as Lenin's and Stalin's successors in the Kremlin in the mid-

1980s finally came to the realization that they would never accomplish their goals if they did not radically change course, it is not too fanciful to imagine the successors of bin Laden and Zawahiri reflecting on their movement's failures and coming to the same conclusion. The ideology will not have been destroyed by U.S. military power, but its adherents will have decided that the path they chose could never lead them where they wanted to go. Like communism today, extremist Islamism in the future will have a few adherents here and there. But as an organized ideology capable of taking over states or inspiring large numbers of people, it will have been effectively dismantled, discredited, and discarded. And like Lenin's, bin Laden's violent ideology will end up on the ash heap of history.

WHAT VICTORY WOULD LOOK LIKE

The world beyond the war on terror will have several other characteristics. Smaller, uncoordinated organizations capable of carrying out limited attacks might still exist, but the global al Qaeda organization that was able to inflict such destruction on September 11, 2001, will not. Its most important leaders will have been killed or captured, its sanctuaries destroyed, its financial sources blocked, its communications interrupted, and, most important, its supporters persuaded to find other ways to pursue their goals. Terrorism will not be over, but its central sponsor and most dangerous executor will be.

After the war on terror, U.S. society will be better able to deny the remaining terrorists the ability to reach their primary goal: terror. The risk of attack will still exist, but if an attack takes place, it will not lead to a foreign policy revolution, an erosion of respect for human rights or international law, or the restriction of civil liberties. Like in other societies that have faced terrorism (the model being the United Kingdom in its long struggle against the Irish Republican Army), life will go on and people will go about their daily business without inordinate fear. The terrorists will see that the result of any attack they carry out is not the overreaction they sought to provoke but rather the stoic denial of their ability to elicit a counterproductive response. Put in the hands of the U.S. legal system and locked away for years after due legal process, they will be seen as the heartless criminals they are rather than as the valiant soldiers they seek to be. Over time, the risk of terrorist attacks will diminish even further because they will no longer be serving their intended purpose.

After the war on terror, the nation's priorities will come back into balance. Preventing terrorism will remain an important goal, but it will no longer be the main driver of U.S. foreign policy. It will take its place as just one of several concerns, alongside health care, the environment, education, the economy. Budgets, speeches, elections, and policies will no longer revolve around the war on terror to the exclusion of other critical issues on which the nation's welfare depends.

That world is a long way off. The political and economic stagnation in the Middle East, the war in Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and other conflicts from Kashmir to Chechnya continue to produce the frustration and humiliation that cause terrorism, and with the right conditions, it only takes a small number of extremists to pose a serious threat. But although the end of the war on terror will not come tomorrow, the paths that could lead to it can already be seen. The destruction of the al Qaeda organization, for example, is already under way, and with determination and the right policies, it can be completed. Bin Laden and Zawahiri are now living like fugitives in caves rather than like presidents or military commanders in compounds in Afghanistan. Other al Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured, and the organization's ability to communicate globally and to finance major operations has been significantly reduced. Al Qaeda is trying to reconstitute itself along the Afghan-Pakistani border, but with so much of the world—now including the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan—sharing an interest in suppressing the group, it will have great difficulty becoming once again the global terrorist enterprise that was able to take the United States by surprise on 9/11.

There are also signs of a Muslim backlash against al Qaeda's use of wanton violence as a political tool—exactly the sort of development that will be critical in the long-term effort to discredit jihadism. After al Qaeda's suicide attacks at two hotels in Jordan in November 2005—which killed some 60 civilians, including 38 at a wedding party—Jordanians poured out into the streets to protest in record numbers. Subsequent public opinion polls showed that the proportion of Jordanian respondents who believed that violence against civilian targets to defend Islam is never justified jumped from 11 percent to 43 percent, while those expressing a lot of confidence in bin Laden to "do the right thing" plunged from 25 percent to less than one percent. Similar Muslim reactions have followed al Qaeda attacks in Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. In Iraq's Anbar Prov-

ince, there are also signs that locals are getting fed up with Islamist terrorists and turning against them. Sunni tribes from that region who once battled U.S. troops have now joined forces with the United States to challenge al Qaeda militants. Tribes that once welcomed al Qaeda support in the insurgency against U.S. forces are now battling al Qaeda with thousands of fighters and significant local support.

This is why Marc Sageman, a forensic psychiatrist and former CIA case officer who has studied Islamist terrorist movements, argues that support for jihadists will eventually erode just as it did for previous terrorist groups, such as the anarchists of nineteenth-century Europe. In the long term, Sageman argues, "the militants will keep pushing the envelope and committing more atrocities to the point that the dream will no longer be attractive to young people." The terrorism analyst Peter Bergen believes that violence that kills other Muslims will ultimately prove to be al Qaeda's Achilles' heel. Killing Muslims, he argues, is "doubly problematic for Al Qaeda, as the Koran forbids killing both civilians and fellow Muslims." After the 9/11 attacks, wide segments of the Arab public and the Arab media expressed sympathy with the victims, and prominent clerics (including Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Islamist firebrand with a wide following on satellite television) issued fatwas condemning the attacks as contrary to Islam and calling for the apprehension and punishment of the perpetrators. That type of response is what will have to happen if Islamist terrorism is to be discredited and discarded—and it is what will happen when the terrorists overreach and fail.

Fundamentalist Islamism also has poor long-term prospects as a broader political ideology. Indeed, far from representing a political system likely to attract increasing numbers of adherents, fundamentalist Islamism has failed everywhere it has been tried. In Afghanistan under the Taliban, in Iran under the mullahs, in Sudan under the National Islamic Front, different strains of Islamist rule have produced economic failure and public discontent. Indeed, the Taliban and the Iranian clerics are probably responsible for creating two of the most pro-U.S. populations in the greater Middle East. Opinion polls show that there is even less support for the kind of fundamentalist Islamic government proposed by bin Laden. "Many people would like bin Laden ... to hurt America," says the political scientist and pollster Shibley Telhami, "but they do not want bin Laden to rule their children." Asked in Telhami's survey what, if any, aspect of al Qaeda they

sympathized with, 33 percent of Muslim respondents said none, 33 percent said its confronting the United States, 14 percent said its support for Muslim causes such as the Palestinian movement, 11 percent said its methods of operation, and just 7 percent said its efforts to create an Islamic state. Fundamentalist Islamism has not yet run its course and cannot be expected to in less than a generation. Communism, after all, was a serious competitor to the capitalist West for more than a century and survived in the Soviet Union for more than 70 years, even after its failings became clear to those who once embraced it. In the long run, fundamentalist Islamism is likely to suffer a similarly slow but certain fate.

Finally, there are good reasons to believe that the forces of globalization and communication that have been unleashed by changing technology will eventually produce positive change in the Middle East. This will especially be true if there is successful promotion of economic development in the region, which would produce the middle classes that in other parts of the world have been the drivers of democratization. Even in the absence of rapid economic change, the increasingly open media environment created by the Internet and other communications technologies will prove to be powerful agents of change. Although only around ten percent of households in the Arab world have access to the Internet, that percentage is growing rapidly, having already risen fivefold since 2000. Even in Saudi Arabia, one of the most closed and conservative societies in the world, there are over 2,000 bloggers.

Cable news stations such as the independent Qatar-based al Jazeera and the Dubai-based al Arabiya reach tens of millions of households throughout the Arab world, often with information or perspectives the repressive governments in the region would rather not be heard. According to the Arab media expert Marc Lynch, "The conventional wisdom that the Arab media simply parrot the official line of the day no longer holds true. Al Jazeera has infuriated virtually every Arab government at one point or another, and its programming allows for criticism, and even mockery. Commentators regularly dismiss the existing Arab regimes as useless, self-interested, weak, compromised, corrupt, and worse." Lynch points out that one al Jazeera talk show addressed the issue "Have the existing Arab regimes become worse than colonialism?" The host, one of the guests, and 76 percent of callers said yes—"marking a degree of frustration and inwardly directed anger that presents an opening for progressive change."

That sort of progressive change is unlikely to take place in the near future, and it is true that the region's autocrats seem ever more determined to prevent it. But even if the priority for Middle Eastern leaders remains what it has been—to keep a grip on power—at some point it will become clear that the only way to hold on to power is to change. The next generation of leaders in Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria might conclude that in the absence of change, their regimes will fall to fundamentalists or their countries will be surpassed by regional rivals. There do not appear to be any Gorbachevs on the horizon at present, but that was also true for the Soviet Union as late as 1984. Gorbachev's two immediate predecessors, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, did not seem to be harbingers of radical change when they passed through the Kremlin, but that is exactly what they were. A new, dynamic, and determined leader of a major Arab country who opens up political space and embraces economic reform can—by providing prosperity, respect, and opportunity for his or her citizens—strike a greater blow in the fight against terrorism than anything the United States could ever do.

THE RIGHT WAR

This sort of victory in the war on terror may not come for quite a long time. On the calendar of the Cold War, which began in 1947, the sixth anniversary of 9/11 puts us in 1953—decades before its denouement and with plenty of setbacks, tragedies, mistakes, and risks still ahead.

The point of imagining the end of the war on terror is not to suggest that it is imminent but to keep the right goals in mind—so that leaders can adopt the policies most likely to achieve those goals. If they fall prey to the illusion that this is World War III—and that it can be won like a traditional war—they risk perpetuating the conflict. Even if Americans were somehow prepared, as in World War II, to mobilize 16 million troops, reinstate the draft, spend 40 percent of GDP on defense, and invade and occupy several major countries, such an effort would likely end up creating more terrorists and fueling the hatred that sustains them. It would unify the United States' enemies, squander its resources, and undermine the values that are a central tool in the struggle. Certainly, the U.S. experience in Iraq suggests the perils of trying to win the war on terror through the application of brute military force.

If, on the other hand, Americans accept that victory in the war on terror will come only when the ideology they are fighting loses sup-

port and when potential adherents see viable alternatives to it, then the United States would have to adopt a very different course. It would not overreact to threats but instead would demonstrate confidence in its values and its society—and the determination to preserve both. It would act decisively to reestablish its moral authority and the appeal of its society, which have been so badly damaged in recent years. It would strengthen its defenses against the terrorist threat while also realizing that a policy designed to prevent any conceivable attack will do more damage than a policy of defiantly refusing to allow terrorists to change its way of life. It would expand its efforts to promote education and political and economic change in the Middle East, which in the long run will help that region overcome the despair and humiliation that fuel the terrorist threat. It would launch a major program to wean itself from imported oil, freeing it from the dependence that constrains its foreign policy and obliging oil-dependent Arab autocracies to diversify their economies, more evenly distribute their wealth, and create jobs for their citizens. It would seek to end the large U.S. combat presence in Iraq, which has become more of a recruiting device for al Qaeda than a useful tool in the war on terror. It would stop pretending that the conflict between Israel and its neighbors has nothing to do with the problem of terrorism and launch a diplomatic offensive designed to bring an end to a conflict that is a key source of the resentment that motivates many terrorists. It would take seriously the views of its potential allies, recognize their legitimate interests, and seek to win their support and cooperation in confronting the common threat.

If the United States did all that, Americans would have good reason to be confident that in the long run they will prevail. Ultimately, extremist Islamism is not an ideology likely to win enduring support. Terrorism is not a strategy with which Muslims will forever want to be associated, and eventually it will create a backlash within Muslim societies. With time and experience—and if the United States and its allies make the right choices—Muslims themselves will turn against the extremists in their midst. Somewhere in the Muslim world, at some point possibly sooner than many realize, new Lech Walesas, Václav Havels, and Andrei Sakharovs will emerge to reclaim their people's future from those who have hijacked it. They will seek to put their civilization on a path toward restoring the glory of its greatest era—when the Muslim world was a multicultural zone of tolerance

and intellectual, artistic, and scientific achievement. The agents of change might come from above, like Gorbachev, who used his position at the top of the Soviet hierarchy to transform the Soviet Union and end the Cold War. Or they might rise up from below, like the protesters in 1989 in Budapest, Gdansk, and Leipzig, who stood up against tyranny and reclaimed their future. If the United States is strong, smart, and patient, they will come. And they, not the West, will transform their world—and ours.

September 11 in Retrospect

George W. Bush's Grand Strategy, Reconsidered

Melvyn P. Leffler

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Ten years after 9/11, we can begin to gain some perspective on the impact of that day's terrorist attacks on U.S. foreign policy. There was, and there remains, a natural tendency to say that the attacks changed everything. But a decade on, such conclusions seem unjustified. September 11 did alter the focus and foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration. But the administration's new approach, one that garnered so much praise and so much criticism, was less transformative than contemporaries thought. Much of it was consistent with long-term trends in U.S. foreign policy, and much has been continued by President Barack Obama. Some aspects merit the scorn often heaped on them; other aspects merit praise that was only grudging in the moment. Wherever one positions oneself, it is time to place the era in context and assess it as judiciously as possible.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Before 9/11, the Bush administration had focused its foreign policy attention on China and Russia; on determining whether a Middle East peace settlement was in the cards; on building a ballistic missile defense

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system; and on contemplating how to deal with "rogue" states such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. At many meetings of the National Security Council, officials debated the pros and cons of a new sanctions regime against Saddam Hussein's dictatorial government in Baghdad; they also discussed what would be done if U.S. planes enforcing the no-fly zones over Iraq were shot down. Little was agreed on.

Top officials did not consider terrorism or radical Islamism a high priority. Richard Clarke, the chief counterterrorism expert on the National Security Council staff, might hector them relentlessly about the imminence of the threat, and CIA Director George Tenet might say the lights were blinking red. But Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice were not convinced. Nor was Bush. In August 2001, he went to his ranch for a long vacation. Osama bin Laden was not his overriding concern.

Bush's foreign policy and defense advisers were trying to define a strategic framework and adapt U.S. armed forces to the so-called revolution in military affairs. The president himself was beginning to speak more about free trade and remaking U.S. foreign aid. During the presidential campaign, he had talked about both a humbler foreign policy and a reinvigorated defense establishment; how he was going to reconcile those goals was still unclear. But in truth, the president's focus was elsewhere, on the domestic arena—tax cuts, education reform, faith-based voluntarism, energy policy. And then, suddenly, disaster struck.

In response to the attacks, the administration launched a "global war on terror." It chose to focus not on al Qaeda alone but on the worldwide terrorist threat more generally. And it targeted not only deadly nonstate actors but also the regimes that harbored and succored them. To extract actionable intelligence, it resorted to detention, rendition, and, in a few cases, torture.

The administration announced that it was adopting a policy of anticipatory self-defense—essentially, preventive warfare. Bush declared that he would take action to preclude not only imminent threats but also gathering ones, and would act alone if necessary. This approach led eventually to war not only in Afghanistan but in Iraq as well.

The administration also emphasized democratization and the notion of a democratic peace. These became key ingredients of the Bush doctrine, especially after weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were

not found in Iraq. "We are led by events and common sense to one conclusion," Bush said in his second inaugural address, in January 2005. "The survival of liberty in our land depends on the success of liberty in other lands." Three years after that, as she was about to leave office, Rice also presented this position, saying that she and her colleagues had come to recognize "that democratic state-building is now an urgent component of our national interest."

After 9/11, there was an accelerated buildup of U.S. military and intelligence capabilities. Defense expenditures skyrocketed; counterinsurgency initiatives proliferated; new bases were constructed throughout Central and Southwest Asia; a new military command in Africa was established. The war on terror became the preoccupation of the Bush administration's national security policy.

Alongside its security policies, the administration embraced free markets, trade liberalization, and economic development. It reconfigured and hugely augmented the United States' foreign aid commitments, increasing economic assistance, for example, from about $13 billion in 2000 to about $34 billion in 2008. The administration fought disease, becoming the largest donor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It negotiated a deal reducing strategic warheads with Russia, reconfigured the United States' relationship with India, and smoothed over its rocky start with China. And it continued to try to thwart the proliferation of WMD while forging ahead with its work on a ballistic missile defense system. These efforts complemented each other, as the administration was intent on not allowing the proliferation of WMD to stymie its freedom of action in regions deemed important. Nor did it wish to risk the possibility that rogue states might give or sell WMD to terrorists.

Most of these policies—preemption (really prevention), unilateralism, military supremacy, democratization, free trade, economic growth, alliance cohesion, and great-power partnerships—were outlined in the administration's 2002 National Security Strategy, a document composed not in the Office of the Vice President or the Pentagon by neoconservatives but in the office of then National Security Adviser Rice, largely by Philip Zelikow, an outside consultant, and revised by Rice and her aides before being edited by Bush himself.

September 11, in short, galvanized the Bush administration and prompted it to shift its focus. Fear inspired action, as did a sense of U.S. power, a pride in national institutions and values, a feeling of

responsibility for the safety of the public, and a sense of guilt over having allowed the country to be struck. As the White House adviser Karl Rove would write, "We worked to numb ourselves to the fact of an attack on American soil that involved the death of thousands." Reshaping U.S. policy after 9/11 meant resolving the ambiguities and shattering the paralysis that had marked the first nine months of the administration. Before 9/11, the United States' primacy and security had been taken for granted; after 9/11, Washington had to make clear that it could protect the U.S. homeland, defend its allies, oversee an open world economy, and propagate its institutions.

AMERICA'S QUEST FOR PRIMACY

Some observers have compared the impact of 9/11 on U.S. policy to the impact on U.S. policy of North Korea's attack on South Korea in June 1950. Back then, the Truman administration had also been stunned. It had been pondering new initiatives, but the president was still waffling. He had approved the National Security Council report known as NSC-68 but was not quite ready to implement it. The dimensions of a coming U.S. military buildup were uncertain; the global nature of the Cold War still unclear; the ideological crusade still somewhat inchoate. But Dean Acheson, the secretary of state, and Paul Nitze, the director of policy planning at the State Department, knew they had to reconfirm the United States' preponderance of power, recently shattered by the Soviets' first nuclear test. They knew they had to increase the United States' military capabilities, regain the country's self-confidence, and avoid being self-deterred. They knew they had to take responsibility for the operation of global free trade and the reconstruction of the West German and Japanese economies (their successful resuscitation was still uncertain). They knew the United States' supremacy was being contested by a brutal and formidable rival with an ideology that had considerable appeal to impoverished peoples beginning to yearn for autonomy, equality, independence, and nationhood. In this context, the North Korean attack not only led to the Korean War but also unleashed a major expansion of U.S. global policy more generally.

Whether or not one thinks that such analogies are appropriate, it is incontestable that Bush and his advisers saw themselves as being locked in a similar struggle. And they, too, sought to preserve and reassert the primacy of the United States while they struggled to thwart any follow-

up attacks on U.S. citizens or U.S. territory. Like Acheson and Nitze, they were certain that they were protecting a way of life, that the configuration of power in the international arena and the mitigation of threats abroad were vital to the preservation of freedom at home.

More than Acheson and Nitze, Bush's advisers had trouble weaving the elements of their policy into a coherent strategy that could address the challenges they considered most urgent. It seems clear now that many of their foreign policy initiatives, along with their tax cuts and unwillingness to call for domestic sacrifices, undercut the very goals they were designed to achieve.

Thus, U.S. primacy was ultimately damaged by the failure to execute the occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq effectively and by the anti-Americanism that these flawed enterprises helped magnify. U.S. officials might declare the universal appeal of freedom and proclaim that history has demonstrated the viability of only one form of political economy, but opinion polls throughout the Muslim world have shown that the United States' actions in Iraq and support of Israel were a toxic combination. As liberation turned into occupation and counterinsurgency, the United States and its power were thrown into disrepute.

U.S. primacy was also damaged by the unexpected cost of the protracted wars, recently estimated by the Congressional Research Service to be $1.3 trillion and mounting. It was eroded by the debts that accrued as a result of tax cuts and increased domestic expenditures. Defense spending climbed from $304 billion in 2001 to $616 billion in 2008, even as the U.S. budget went from a surplus of $128 billion to a deficit of $458 billion. Federal debt as a percentage of GDP rose from 32.5 percent in 2001 to 53.5 percent in 2009. Meanwhile, the U.S. debt held by foreign governments climbed steadily, from about 13 percent at the end of the Cold War to close to 30 percent at the end of the Bush years. U.S. financial strength and flexibility had been seriously eroded.

Rather than preventing peer competitors from rising, the United States' interventions abroad and budgetary and economic woes at home put Washington at a growing disadvantage vis-à-vis its rivals, most notably Beijing. While U.S. forces were bogged down in Southwest Asia, China's growing military capabilities, especially its new class of submarines and its new cruise and ballistic missiles, endangered the United States' supremacy in East and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the U.S. trade deficit with China rose from $83 billion in

2001 to $273 billion in 2010, and total U.S. indebtedness to China rose from $78 billion in 2001 to over $1.1 trillion in 2011.

Rather than preserving regional balances, U.S. actions upset the balance in the region that U.S. officials cared most about, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East more generally. The United States' credibility in the region withered, Iraq was largely eliminated as a counterbalance to Iran, Iran's ability to meddle beyond its borders increased, and the United States' ability to mediate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations declined.

Rather than thwarting proliferation, U.S. interventions on behalf of regime change provided additional incentives for rogue nations to pursue WMD. Iranian and North Korean leaders seem to have calculated that, more than ever before, their countries' survival depended on possessing a WMD deterrent (a message that has probably been reinforced by the Obama administration's decision to intervene in Libya in 2011 following Libya's renunciation of its nuclear capability several years earlier).

Rather than promoting free markets, U.S. economic woes spurred protectionist impulses at home and complicated trade negotiations abroad. Efforts to expedite the Doha Round of trade talks faltered, and bilateral trade agreements with Colombia and South Korea stalled.

Rather than promoting liberty, the war on terror coexisted with democratic backsliding globally (at least until the recent Arab Spring). U.S. war fighting and counterterrorism nurtured Washington's unsavory relationships with some of the world's most illiberal regimes, such as those in Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. According to Freedom House's 2010 annual report on the state of global political rights and civil liberties, "2009 was the fourth straight year in which more countries saw declines in freedom than saw improvements, the longest continuous period of deterioration in the nearly forty year history of the report."

And rather than thwarting terrorism and radical Islamism, U.S. actions encouraged them. During the war on terror, the number of terrorist incidents rose, and possibly so did the number of jihadists. The U.S. government's own National Intelligence Estimate in 2007 acknowledged that the country lived in a heightened threat environment. A 2008 report on counterterrorism from a respected nonpartisan think tank, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, concluded, "Since 2002–3, the overall US position in the GWOT [global war on terror] has slipped." Although the United States had captured

and killed terrorist leaders and operatives, disrupted terrorist networks, seized assets, and built constructive partnerships with counterterrorist agencies abroad, it noted, the gains had been "offset by the metastasis of the al Qaeda organization into a global movement, the spread and intensification of Salafi-Jihadi ideology, the resurgence of Iranian regional influence, and the growth in the number and political influence of Islamic fundamentalist political parties throughout the world." It is possible that the recent killing of bin Laden will reverse these trends, but many leading experts are skeptical.

Criticism is, of course, easy in hindsight. After 9/11, U.S. officials confronted agonizing challenges and choices. In an atmosphere of extreme fear and real danger, their record included important accomplishments and admirable initiatives. They kept pressure on al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations and may well have prevented other attacks on U.S. soil and citizens. They pulled off a major nonproliferation success in getting Libya to abandon its nuclear program, formed a strong relationship with rising powers such as India, and kept relations with China and Russia from boiling over. They reformed and reinvigorated foreign aid, exerted global leadership in the fight against infectious diseases, tried to keep the Doha Round of trade talks moving forward, and raised the profile of democracy promotion and political reform in ways that may have resonated deeply and contributed to the current ferment across the Middle East.

These successes were outweighed by the administration's failure to achieve many of its most important goals. But critics are wrong to say that the policies that failed were radically new or surprising. They were rooted in the past.

9/11 IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Preemptive and preventive actions were not invented by Bush; his vice president, Dick Cheney; and Rumsfeld; they have a long history in the annals of U.S. foreign policy. A century earlier, President Theodore Roosevelt's "corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine was a policy of preventive intervention in the Americas, as were the subsequent U.S. military occupations of countries such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Later, President Franklin Roosevelt justified his resort to anticipatory self-defense against German ships in the Atlantic prior to the United States' entry into World War II by saying, "When you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck

before you crush him." Some 20 years on, President John F. Kennedy determined that he could not allow a Soviet deployment of offensive weapons about 90 miles from U.S. shores, and he unilaterally imposed a quarantine—essentially a blockade and an act of belligerency—around Cuba during the missile crisis. In Kennedy's view, this was a legitimate preventive step, notwithstanding the fact that it brought the country to the brink of nuclear war. Responding to the threat of terrorism in the mid-1990s, President Bill Clinton signed a national security directive declaring that "the United States shall pursue vigorously efforts to deter and preempt, apprehend and prosecute ... individuals who perpetrate or plan to perpetrate such attacks." The Roosevelts, Kennedy, and Clinton, along with most of their presidential colleagues, would have agreed with the statement in Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy, which could have been referring to any impending threat, that "history will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action."

Bush and his advisers, moreover, were hardly alone in seeking regime change abroad in the wake of 9/11. Two weeks after the president's "axis of evil" speech in January 2002, former Vice President Al Gore declared, "There really is something to be said for occasionally putting diplomacy aside and laying one's cards on the table. There is value in calling evil by its name." He continued, "Even if we give first priority to the destruction of terrorist networks, and even if we succeed, there are still governments that could bring great harm. And there is a clear case that one of those governments in particular represents a virulent threat in a class to itself: Iraq. . . . A final reckoning with that government should be on the table." A few days later, then Senator Joe Biden interrupted Powell as he was testifying before Congress. "One way or another," Biden said, "Saddam has got to go, and it is likely to be required to have U.S. force to have him go, and the question is how to do it in my view, not if to do it." Two days later, Sandy Berger, who had been Clinton's national security adviser, insisted in his own testimony that although each part of the axis of evil was an unmistakable danger, Saddam was especially pernicious and ominous, saying that he "was, is, and continues to be a menace to his people, to the region, and to us." Berger continued: "He cannot be accommodated. Our goal should be regime change. The question is not whether, but how and when." And Clinton himself subsequently

explained why he supported his successor's decision to invade Iraq: "There was a lot of stuff [WMD] unaccounted for. . . . You couldn't responsibly ignore [the possibility that] a tyrant had these stocks. I never really thought he'd [use them]. What I was far more worried about was that he'd sell this stuff or give it away."

Conventional wisdom says that Democratic officials might have acted differently after 9/11, and it seems likely that they would have worked more diligently to cooperate with allies in Europe. But the Bush administration's use of force to bring about regime change in countries perceived to be threatening in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks comported with what most Americans believed to be desirable at the time. The administration's military buildup, meanwhile, was neither especially bold nor unprecedented. Its quest to avoid peer competitors resembled the U.S. effort to preserve an atomic monopoly after World War II, achieve military preponderance in the wake of the Korean War, preserve military superiority during the Kennedy years, regain superiority during the Reagan years, and nurture unipolarity after the Soviet Union's collapse. Clinton's Joint Chiefs of Staff embraced the term "full-spectrum superiority" to describe the country's strategic intentions. It was during the Clinton years, not the Bush years, that the United States started spending more money on defense than virtually all other nations combined. Scholars and practitioners as varied as Andrew Bacevich, Eric Edelman, John Mearsheimer, and Paul Wolfowitz see more continuity than difference in the strategic goals and military practices of all the post–Cold War administrations.

The similarities extend to rhetorical tropes and ideological aspirations as well. It has become fashionable in some circles to excoriate the ideological fervor of the Bush team. But the affirmation of democratic values was hardly new. It was integral to the Wilsonian and Achesonian visions of the world, if not that of Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon. One should recall Kennedy addressing the people of Berlin or launching the Alliance for Progress, President Lyndon Johnson explaining U.S. actions in Vietnam, President Jimmy Carter talking about human rights, and President Ronald Reagan extolling the U.S. role in the world. Their rhetorical tropes resemble Bush's, as do Obama's in his recent speeches. And like his predecessors (and his successor), Bush had little trouble deviating from this message when it suited his administration's strategic or material interests.

Many argue that U.S. policy after 9/11 was distinguished by its unilateralism. But the instinct to act independently, and to lead the world while doing so, is consonant with the long history of U.S. diplomacy, dating back to President George Washington's Farewell Address and President Thomas Jefferson's first inaugural speech. During the Cold War, U.S. officials always reserved the right to act unilaterally, even while they nurtured alliances. Clinton's last National Security Strategy, and Obama's first, explicitly did the same. There is little doubt that Bush's advisers, inspired by fear and hubris as well as a sense of responsibility and pangs of guilt, had a greater propensity to act unilaterally than did their Democratic predecessors or successors. But at the same time, they also articulated a desire to strengthen alliances, a goal that was pursued to some good effect after 2005.

Bush is linked even more closely to those who came before and after by his embrace of the open door policy and global free trade. His 2002 National Security Strategy, famous for jettisoning containment and deterrence and embracing anticipatory self-defense, also contained long sections dealing with promoting global economic growth, nurturing free markets, opening societies, and building the infrastructure of democracy. These U.S. policies have a long heritage, dating back to the "open door notes" of Secretary of State John Hay, President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, and Franklin Roosevelt's Atlantic Charter, and they have been a staple of many more recent, if less memorable, statements by Clinton and Obama.

GRAPPLING WITH TRAGEDY

The long-term significance of 9/11 for U.S. foreign policy, therefore, should not be overestimated. The attacks that day were a terrible tragedy, an unwarranted assault on innocent civilians, and a provocation of monumental proportions. But they did not change the world or transform the long-term trajectory of U.S. grand strategy. The United States' quest for primacy, its desire to lead the world, its preference for an open door and free markets, its concern with military supremacy, its readiness to act unilaterally when deemed necessary, its eclectic merger of interests and values, its sense of indispensability—all these remained, and remain, unchanged.

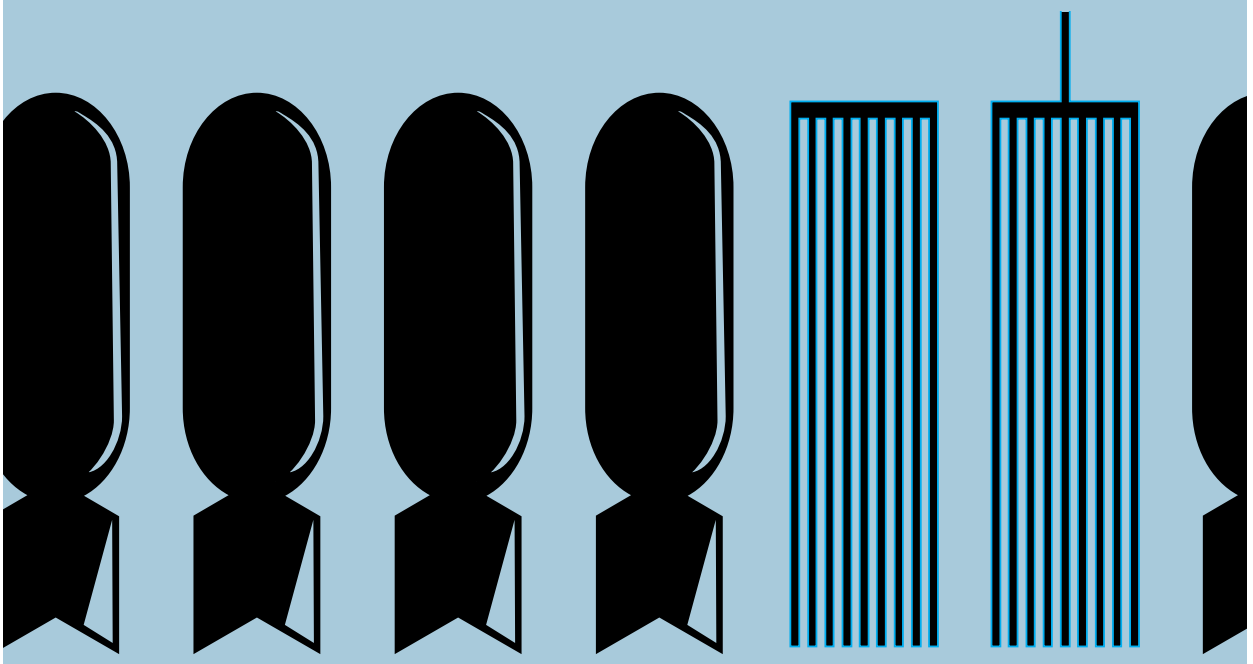
What the attacks did do was alter the United States' threat perception and highlight the global significance of nonstate actors and radical Islamism. They alerted the country to the fragility of its security

and the anger, bitterness, and resentment toward the United States residing elsewhere, particularly in parts of the Islamic world. But if 9/11 highlighted vulnerabilities, its aftermath illustrated how the mobilization of U.S. power, unless disciplined, calibrated, and done in conjunction with allies, has the potential to undermine the global commons as well as to protect them.

Rather than heaping blame or casting praise on the Bush administration, ten years after 9/11 it is time for Americans to reflect more deeply about their history and their values. Americans can affirm their core values yet recognize the hubris that inheres in them. They can identify the wanton brutality of others yet acknowledge that they themselves are the source of rage in many parts of the Arab world. Americans can agree that terrorism is a threat that must be addressed but realize that it is not an existential menace akin to the military and ideological challenges posed by German Nazism and Soviet communism. They can acknowledge that the practice of projecting solutions to their problems onto the outside world means that they seek to avoid difficult choices at home, such as paying higher taxes, accepting universal conscription, or implementing a realistic energy policy. Americans can recognize that there is evil in the world, as Obama reminded his Nobel audience in December 2009, and they can admit, as he did, that force has a vital role to play in the affairs of humankind. But they can also recognize that the exercise of power can grievously injure those whom they wish to help and can undercut the very goals they seek to achieve. Americans can acknowledge the continuities in their interests and values yet wrestle with the judgments and tradeoffs that are required to design a strategy that works in a post–Cold War era, where the threats are more varied, the enemies more elusive, and power more fungible.

The bitterness that has poisoned American public discourse in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the wars they triggered should be turned into sorrowful reflection about how fear, guilt, hubris, and power can do so much harm in the quest to do good. This remains the tragedy of American diplomacy that William Appleman Williams, the prominent historian, instructed Americans to confront a half century ago.

THE NEXT FIGHT



Al Qaeda's Challenge

The Jihadists' War With Islamist Democrats

William McCants

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

A May 1st update to the print story from the September/October 2011 issue: Al Qaeda leaders often compare the outcome of their jihad to that of a harvest. One year after the death of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda's crop seems mixed. The organization's central leadership, operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has nearly collapsed, but its offshoots are mounting full-blown insurgencies in Somalia and Yemen. The group's operatives have failed to carry out major strikes on U.S. or European soil, but its online supporters still excite fear among Western governments and media. And al Qaeda's argument against democracy has lost out in Arab nations where long-ruling autocrats have fallen, but its gospel of violence continues to resonate in those countries where dictators refuse to abdicate. Yet although some al Qaeda plots have continued to succeed, the organization has hardly experienced the bounty that it long expected.

Following the assassination of bin Laden and several of his most capable operatives in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al Qaeda has largely shifted its attention away from Central and South Asia to Somalia and Yemen. In Somalia, the militant group al Shabab, engaged in a long struggle to conquer the country, formally joined al Qaeda in Feb-

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ruary to staunch recent losses at the hands of intervening armies. Although it remains unclear whether the entire organization endorsed the merger, al Qaeda can now likely count large parts of Somalia as its own. Meanwhile, in Yemen, the front group of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Ansar al-Sharia, has exploited the country's political turmoil to capture territory in the south. The organization quickly began providing basic services to the inhabitants of captured areas, documenting its efforts as part of a savvy public relations campaign.

With its attention focused on its insurgencies around the Gulf of Aden and its top commanders imprisoned or killed, al Qaeda has proven unable to replicate the large-scale operations that it once conducted in the United States and Europe. Weakened and disorganized, the group has turned to calling on supporters to commit lone-wolf attacks—calls that have largely gone unanswered. Those few attacks that have succeeded, such as the recent shooting spree in Toulouse, France, did kill innocent civilians, but caused nowhere near the same carnage as the Madrid train bombings or September 11th. Nevertheless, Western governments and media remain worried that the propaganda activity of al Qaeda supporters on the Internet, such as images portraying New York City as a terrorist target or the Twitter activity of al Shabab, will translate into attacks on the homeland.

Al Qaeda has also struggled to respond to the Arab Spring. In Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, Islamists have rejected al Qaeda's model of autocratic governance through sharia law in favor of parliamentary politics. Even many of al Qaeda's theological fellow travelers, such as the ultraconservative Salafis in Egypt, have embraced the democratic process and formed political parties to compete in elections. Al Qaeda supporters in Egypt grapple over whether to remain loyal to the organization or embrace their local Salafi religious leaders, who have endorsed the party system. Some foreign Jihadi scholars popular on the Internet, to whom these al Qaeda adherents have turned, have conceded that although party politics is an unacceptable evil, it is at least better than dictatorship. But if al Qaeda has lost the ideological battle in countries that have overthrown their tyrants, its message remains potent in Syria, where Bashar al-Assad refuses to abdicate. Seizing the opening, a number of al Qaeda supporters have migrated to Syria to fight the regime and teach their trade to rebels willing to receive it.

Tallying its harvest, al Qaeda has victories to savor. It holds territory in two weak or collapsed states; it still provokes anxiety in the

United States and Europe; and its message resonates in some Muslim-majority countries undergoing violent transition. But the people of the Arab Spring, when allowed to choose their own destiny, have voted against the despotic political vision of al Qaeda. For the organization's leadership, which spent a generation sowing the seeds of its vision in the region, this is a bitter fruit to reap.

"Al Qaeda's Challenge" from the September/October 2011 issue:
The Arab Spring and the death of Osama bin Laden represent a moment of both promise and peril for the global jihadist movement. On the one hand, the overthrow of secular rulers in the heartland of the Muslim world gives jihadists an unprecedented opportunity to establish the Islamic states that they have long sought. On the other hand, jihadists can no longer rally behind their most charismatic leader, bin Laden. And the jihadist flagship that he founded, al Qaeda, may lose its relevance in the Muslim world to rival Islamist groups that are prepared to run in elections and take power through politics.

The last time jihadists faced such a crossroads was at the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent collapse emboldened jihadist strategists. Convinced that they had defeated a global superpower, they plotted to overthrow secular Arab governments and replace them with Islamic states, with the goal of eventually uniting them under a single caliphate. At the same time, however, the Soviet Union's demise opened up the Arab world to U.S. influence. Having been long constrained by the Soviet presence in the region, the United States quickly asserted itself by spearheading the coalition against the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, thus increasing its military presence in the Arab world. As a result, jihadists—and al Qaeda in particular—concluded that Washington now enjoyed virtually unchecked power in the Middle East and would use it to prevent the creation of the Islamic states they desired.

Several established Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, shared this belief with al Qaeda. But al Qaeda rejected the Brotherhood and like-minded groups because of their willingness to work within existing systems by voting for and participating in legislative bodies. Such tactics would fail to establish Islamic states, bin Laden and his comrades asserted, because they involved pragmatic political tradeoffs that would violate the principles of such future states and leave them susceptible to U.S. pressure. Only attacks

on the United States, al Qaeda argued, could reduce Washington's regional power and inspire the masses to revolt.

Two decades later, bin Laden's long-sought revolutions in the Arab world are finally happening, and the upheaval would seem to give al Qaeda a rare opportunity to start building Islamic states. But so far at least, the revolutions have defied bin Laden's expectations by empowering not jihadists but Islamist parliamentarians—Islamists who refuse to violently oppose U.S. hegemony in the region and who are willing to engage in parliamentary politics. In Tunisia, the Islamist Renaissance Party leads in the polls ahead of legislative elections in October. In Egypt, the Freedom and Justice Party, the new faction created by the Muslim Brotherhood, is likely to gain a large number of seats in parliament in elections this fall. Should countries that have experienced more violent revolutions also hold elections, such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen, Islamist parliamentarians are well positioned to compete in those nations as well.

Al Qaeda and its allies will not support these Islamists unless they reject parliamentary politics and establish governments that strictly implement Islamic law and are hostile to the United States. The Islamist parliamentarians are unlikely to do either. Having suffered under one-party rule for decades and wary of rival Islamist parties, the Arab world's Islamist parliamentarians (like their secular counterparts) will be unwilling to support such a system in the future. And although they will certainly seek to implement more conservative social laws, the Islamist parliamentarians will likely come to accept that their countries require the economic and military aid of the United States or its allies.

Unable to make progress in countries where Islamist parliamentarians hold sway, such as Egypt, al Qaeda will instead attempt to diminish Washington's clout by attacking the United States and focus on aiding rebels in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. But even in those countries, it will need to make compromises to work with existing rebel groups, and these groups, like their fellow Islamists elsewhere, may accept some level of U.S. support should they take power. What all this means is that despite the seemingly opportune moment, al Qaeda is unlikely to make much progress toward its ultimate goal of establishing Islamic states in the Arab world.

ISLAMISM RISES

Both al Qaeda and today's Islamist parliamentarians are outgrowths of the Islamism that arose in the nineteenth century as a response to

the colonial domination of Muslim lands. Islamists believed that Muslims' abandonment of their faith had made them vulnerable to foreign rule. In response, they advocated for independent Muslim rulers who would fully implement Islamic law, or sharia. A large number of these Islamists adhered to Salafism, a revivalist ideology that sought to purge Islam of Western influence and supposedly improper legal innovations by returning to the religious instruction of the first generations of Muslims, or *Salaf*. Pan-Islamic sentiment intensified after World War I, when France and the United Kingdom created colonies out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Sunni Muslims were further outraged when the new secular government in Turkey abolished the caliphate, a largely symbolic institution that nonetheless had represented the unity of the Muslim empire under a single leader (or caliph) in the religion's early days.

When nationalist movements succeeded in ending the direct rule of foreign powers in the Middle East, beginning when Egypt gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, Islamist activists sought to replace the secular laws and institutions governing the newly independent states with systems based on sharia. Perhaps the most famous of the Islamist organizations of this period was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in the 1920s. Yet when it tried to compete in Egypt's parliamentary elections in 1942, the Egyptian government, under British pressure, forced it to withdraw. Although they failed to achieve their aims through parliamentary politics, some Brotherhood activists turned to peaceful social activism, whereas others, such as Sayyid Qutb, who was one of the group's most prominent members, developed an ideology of violent revolution. Qutb rejected the idea of man-made legislation and held that Muslim-led governments that made their own law, as opposed to adopting sharia, were not truly Muslim. Qutb encouraged pious Muslims to rebel against such regimes; his writings have inspired generations of Sunni militants, including the founders of al Qaeda.

Islamists continued to focus on domestic matters until the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. In a burst of pan-Islamic spirit, thousands of young Arab men flooded into Pakistan hoping to battle the Soviets. Among them was bin Laden, who recruited men, procured equipment, and raised money for the cause. His training camps in Afghanistan, and others like it, gave jihadists of all backgrounds a shared identity and mission. In doing so, they served as

early incubators of global jihadism. When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan nearly a decade later, the jihadists believed that they had helped defeat a superpower.

Al Qaeda, which was created in 1988, grew out of those camps. Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian Islamist who merged his organization, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, with al Qaeda in 2001, explained al Qaeda's mission in 2010 as providing a "base for indoctrination, training, and incitement that gathered the capabilities of the *ummah* [universal Islamic community], trained them, raised their consciousness, improved their abilities, and gave them confidence in their religion and themselves." This base, Zawahiri said, involved "large amounts of participation in jihad, bearing the worries of the *ummah*, and seizing the initiative in the most urgent calamities confronting the *ummah*." In other words, al Qaeda envisioned itself as a revolutionary vanguard and special operations unit working to defend the Muslim world.

BIN LADEN'S DAYS OF PROMISE

Al Qaeda's early years seemed full of possibility. The collapse of the Soviet Union created new opportunities for radicals in the empire's former client states. Islamists took control of Sudan in 1989, and Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 galvanized Islamist political protests in Algeria, culminating in an Islamist victory in the country's elections the following year. When the secular Algerian military nullified the results and retained power, it only underscored the perceived need for a committed Muslim vanguard.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait turned al Qaeda's attention to the United States. Bin Laden offered to send al Qaeda operatives to Saudi Arabia to help protect the country from attack by Saddam. But the Saudis rejected his proposal and instead invited the U.S. military to lead an assault on Iraq from their territory. The decision insulted bin Laden and raised his fears about the growth of unchecked U.S. power in the Middle East. Bin Laden's concerns grew the following year, when the United States deployed peacekeeping troops to Somalia soon after he had moved al Qaeda's headquarters to Sudan—although he celebrated the U.S. withdrawal following the infamous "Black Hawk down" ambush (in which al Qaeda operatives claim to have participated). By 1993, al Qaeda members began identifying U.S. targets in East Africa, and in 1994 they sent explosives to Saudi Arabia to attack an unspecified U.S. facility.

Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in 1996 after Islamist-controlled Sudan expelled him at Washington's behest. He viewed his exile as further evidence that Arab Islamists could not build Islamic states until Western power in the region was diminished. In a public declaration that same year, he announced that he was turning his gaze from Africa to the Persian Gulf and urged Muslims to launch a guerrilla war against U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden not only resented the Saudis for refusing his help in the Gulf War and banning him from the kingdom but also could not tolerate the continued presence of U.S. forces in the country. If jihadists inflicted enough damage on the United States, he argued, the U.S. military would withdraw from Saudi soil, a move that would allow the Islamists to confront the deviant Saudi royal family directly. Although bin Laden did not have the resources to carry out his threat, his statement infuriated the Saudi government, which instructed its clients in Afghanistan, the ruling Taliban, to restrict his activities.

But bin Laden only escalated his rhetoric against the United States. In 1998, in a joint fatwa with the leaders of other militant organizations, he called on every Muslim to murder Americans. Soon thereafter, al Qaeda made good on this threat by bombing the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Bin Laden later described these attacks in his will and testament as the second of three "escalating strikes" against the United States—the first being Hezbollah's bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and the third being 9/11—all of which would "lead to the withdrawal [from the Middle East] of the United States and the infidel West, even if after dozens of years."

In fact, 9/11 did not mark the logical culmination of the Lebanon and Africa bombings, as bin Laden suggested. Instead, it represented a subtle but significant shift in al Qaeda's strategy. Before 9/11, al Qaeda had targeted U.S. citizens and institutions abroad, never attacking U.S. soil. The idea behind a mass-casualty attack against the U.S. homeland arose only after the Africa bombings. Two months before 9/11, Zawahiri, who had become al Qaeda's second-in-command, published *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*, which offers insight into why al Qaeda decided to attack the United States within its borders. In it, he stated that al Qaeda aimed to establish an Islamic state in the Arab world:

> Just as victory is not achieved for an army unless its foot soldiers occupy land, the mujahid Islamic movement will not achieve victory against the global infidel alliance unless it possesses a base in the

> heart of the Islamic world. Every plan and method we consider to rally and mobilize the *ummah* will be hanging in the air with no concrete result or tangible return unless it leads to the establishment of the caliphal state in the heart of the Islamic world.

Achieving this goal, Zawahiri explained elsewhere in the book, would require a global jihad:

> It is not possible to incite a conflict for the establishment of a Muslim state if it is a regional conflict. . . . The international Jewish-Crusader alliance, led by America, will not allow any Muslim force to obtain power in any of the Muslim lands. . . . It will impose sanctions on whomever helps it, even if it does not declare war against them altogether. Therefore, to adjust to this new reality, we must prepare ourselves for a battle that is not confined to a single region but rather includes the apostate domestic enemy and the Jewish-Crusader external enemy.

To confront this insidious alliance, Zawahiri argued, al Qaeda had to first root out U.S. influence in the region, which it could best accomplish by attacking targets on U.S. soil. Zawahiri predicted that the United States would react either by waging war against Muslims worldwide or by pulling back its forces from Muslim lands. In other words, the United States would either fight or flee. A successful direct strike against U.S. centers of power, he believed, would force this choice on the United States and allow al Qaeda to overcome the obstacles preventing it from rallying the Muslim masses and ending U.S. hegemony in the Middle East: a lack of leadership, the lack of a clear enemy, and a lack of confidence among Muslims. Al Qaeda would soon test that theory on 9/11.

JIHADIST STATE BUILDING

From an operational perspective, the 9/11 attacks succeeded far beyond bin Laden's imagination, killing more than 3,000 civilians and unexpectedly destroying the World Trade Center. But to al Qaeda's dismay, 9/11 did not rally Muslims to its cause. Indeed, the organization lost legitimacy when bin Laden, hoping to avoid angering his Taliban hosts, initially denied responsibility for the attacks. And when the United States retaliated against al Qaeda in Afghanistan, it did so without providing the group with the kind of clear enemy—a large "Crusader" army—the militant Islamists had hoped for. The United

States kept its footprint small, using overwhelming airpower and deploying special operations forces and CIA agents to work with allied tribes to depose the Taliban and destroy al Qaeda's base of operations.

Although the U.S. military failed to capture bin Laden, it quickly overran the Taliban and toppled what many jihadists considered the only authentic Islamic state. Afghanistan's fall thus represented a huge blow to al Qaeda, whose professed goal, of course, was to establish such states. The majority of al Qaeda's Shura Council had reportedly counseled bin Laden against attacking the United States for fear of precisely this outcome.

Having failed to rally Muslims to his cause or bog down the U.S. military in a protracted ground war, bin Laden fled to Pakistan and refocused his efforts on the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia had been at the forefront of bin Laden's thoughts since 1994, and he now had the resources to launch a major offensive against the U.S. presence in the kingdom. In early 2002, he sent hundreds of jihadists to Saudi Arabia to organize attacks on U.S. military and civilian personnel in the country. After a year of preparation, bin Laden and Zawahiri impatiently launched these attacks over objections from their Saudi branch that it was not ready. The campaign was a disaster. Although al Qaeda attempted to strike only U.S. targets, it killed many Arab Muslims in the process, turning the Saudi public against the group. In one particularly disastrous example, an al Qaeda attack on a residential compound in Riyadh in November 2003 killed mainly Arabs and Muslims, many of whom were children. After a two-year battle, Saudi forces had stamped out the organization's presence in the kingdom.

Yet al Qaeda's targeting miscalculations were not the only reason for its failure in Saudi Arabia. Despite a series of spectacular attacks, the organization could not compete for attention with the battle in Iraq. The U.S. invasion of that country in 2003 inflamed Muslim opinion worldwide and had finally given jihadists the clear battle they craved. Bin Laden and Zawahiri seized the opportunity to recover from their strategic blunders in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia and to spark an all-consuming battle between the United States and the Islamic world. They hoped that this struggle would rally Muslims to al Qaeda's cause and, most important, bleed the United States of its resources. As U.S. casualties mounted in Iraq, al Qaeda strategists began citing the lessons of Vietnam and quoting the U.S. historian Paul Kennedy on the consequences of "imperial overstretch." By the end of 2004, bin Laden

had begun publicly referring to al Qaeda's "war of attrition" against the United States.

Al Qaeda hoped that Iraq would be the first Islamic state to rise after the loss of Afghanistan. In a 2005 letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a leader of the Iraqi insurgency who eventually joined al Qaeda and formed the subsidiary group al Qaeda in Iraq, Zawahiri asserted that victory would come when "a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world. . . . The center would be in the Levant and Egypt." Zawahiri argued that to expel the United States and establish an Islamic state, jihadists needed "popular support from the Muslim masses in Iraq, and the surrounding Muslim countries." Zawahiri told Zarqawi that gaining this support would be easier while U.S. forces continued to occupy Iraq. But to preserve their legitimacy after a U.S. retreat, Zawahiri said, jihadists would need to avoid alienating the public through sectarianism or gratuitous violence. They had to cooperate with Muslims of all ideological and theological stripes as long as they shared the desire for a state dedicated to sharia. Zawahiri warned Zarqawi that if he declared an Islamic state before al Qaeda had built an effective coalition of Muslim groups and garnered popular approval in Iraq, the state would fail and the jihadists' secular and Islamist opponents would take power.

Zarqawi's followers did not heed Zawahiri's advice. Al Qaeda in Iraq declared the founding of an Islamic state soon after Zarqawi was killed in an air strike in 2006, and, as Zawahiri had warned, the group ended up alienating more moderate Sunnis through its brutal implementation of Islamic law and its relentless assault on Iraq's Shiites. It also lost many of its allies in the insurgency by demanding their obedience and then targeting them and their constituencies if they refused to cooperate. Additionally, the fact that al Qaeda in Iraq's so-called Islamic state controlled so little territory earned the scorn of fellow Sunni militants in Iraq and abroad. Al Qaeda had botched its first real attempt at state building. Even if it had followed Zawahiri's counsel, however, al Qaeda in Iraq, as well as the larger organization, would have faced a new threat on the horizon: Islamist parties with the desire and know-how to enter the political system.

THE ISLAMISTS WHO VOTE

Whereas al Qaeda's brutal, sectarian tactics turned the Iraqi populace against it, the Sunni forces willing to engage in parliamentary politics

gained the most power. Chief among them was the Muslim Brotherhood, whose Iraqi Islamic Party dominates Sunni politics in Iraq today and regularly supplies one of the country's two vice presidents.

The jihadists, of course, reject this success. Zawahiri has been particularly critical of Abdel Moneim Abou el-Fatouh, a one-time member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's leadership council who is now an independent candidate for president in Egypt. Abou el-Fatouh stated before the Arab revolutions that the Brotherhood would respect the results of any popular election in Egypt and remain in loyal opposition should its opponents win. This idea was anathema to Zawahiri, who argued that a government's legitimacy derives not from the ballot box but from its enforcement of Islamic law. "Any government established on the basis of a constitution that is secular, atheist, or contradictory to Islam cannot be a respected government because it is un-Islamic and not according to sharia," he wrote in a revision of *Knights* published in 2010. "It is unacceptable that a leader in the Brotherhood evinces respect for such a government, even if it comes about through fair elections."

To be clear, Zawahiri does not oppose all elections; for example, he supports elections for the rulers of Islamic states and for representatives on leadership councils, which would ensure that these governments implemented Islamic law properly. But he opposes any system in which elections empower legislators to make laws of their own choosing. In the second edition of *Knights*, Zawahiri outlined al Qaeda's vision for the proper Islamic state:

> We demand . . . the government of the rightly guiding caliphate, which is established on the basis of the sovereignty of sharia and not on the whims of the majority. Its *ummah* chooses its rulers. . . . If they deviate, the *ummah* brings them to account and removes them. The *ummah* participates in producing that government's decisions and determining its direction. . . . [The caliphal state] commands the right and forbids the wrong and engages in jihad to liberate Muslim lands and to free all humanity from all oppression and ignorance.

Bin Laden agreed with Zawahiri's take on elections, stating in January 2009 that once foreign influence and local tyrants have been removed from Islamic countries, true Muslims can elect their own presidents. And like Zawahiri, bin Laden argued that elections should not create parliaments that allow Muslims and non-Muslims to collaborate on making laws.

Although al Qaeda's leaders concurred on elections, they differed on the utility of using nonviolent protest to achieve Islamist goals. In bin Laden's January 2009 remarks, he claimed that demonstrations without weapons are useless. This contradicted a statement made by Zawahiri a week earlier, in which he called on Egyptian Muslims to go on strike in protest of then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's blockade of the Gaza Strip. Now that Zawahiri has replaced bin Laden as the leader of al Qaeda, his openness to nonviolent tactics may help the organization navigate the revolutions sweeping the Arab world. Even so, his hostility toward parliamentary politics cedes the real levers of power to the Islamist parliamentarians.

SPRINGTIME FOR THE PARLIAMENTARIANS

Al Qaeda now stands at a precipice. The Arab Spring and the success of Islamist parliamentarians throughout the Middle East have challenged its core vision just as the group has lost its founder. Al Qaeda has also lost access to bin Laden's personal connections in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Persian Gulf, which had long provided it with resources and protection. Bin Laden's death has deprived al Qaeda of its most media-savvy icon; and most important, al Qaeda has lost its commander in chief. The raid that killed bin Laden revealed that he had not been reduced to a figurehead, as many Western analysts had suspected; he had continued to direct the operations of al Qaeda and its franchises. Yet the documents seized from bin Laden's home in Abbottabad, Pakistan, reveal how weak al Qaeda had become even under his ongoing leadership. Correspondence found in the raid shows bin Laden and his lieutenants lamenting al Qaeda's lack of funds and the constant casualties from U.S. drone strikes. These papers have made the organization even more vulnerable by exposing its general command structure, putting al Qaeda's leadership at greater risk of extinction than ever before.

Al Qaeda has elected Zawahiri as its new chief, at least for now. But the transition will not be seamless. Some members of al Qaeda's old guard feel little loyalty to Zawahiri, whom they view as a relative newcomer. Al Qaeda's members from the Persian Gulf, for their part, may feel alienated by having an Egyptian at their helm, especially if Zawahiri chooses another Egyptian as his deputy.

Despite these potential sources of friction, al Qaeda is not likely to split under Zawahiri's reign. Its senior leadership will still want to unite jihadist groups under its banner, and its franchises will have

little reason to relinquish the recognition and resources that come with al Qaeda affiliation. Yet those affiliates cannot offer al Qaeda's senior commanders shelter. Indeed, should Pakistan become too dangerous a refuge for the organization's leaders, they will find themselves with few other options. The Islamic governments that previously protected and assisted al Qaeda, such as those in Afghanistan and Sudan in the 1990s, either no longer exist or are inhospitable (although Somalia might become a candidate if the militant group al Shabab consolidates its hold there).

In the midst of grappling with all these challenges, al Qaeda must also decide how to respond to the uprisings in the Arab world. Thus far, its leaders have indicated that they want to support Islamist insurgents in unstable revolutionary countries and lay the groundwork for the creation of Islamic states once the existing regimes have fallen, similar to what they attempted in Iraq. But al Qaeda's true strategic dilemma lies in Egypt and Tunisia. In these countries, local tyrants have been ousted, but parliamentary elections will be held soon, and the United States remains influential.

The outcome in Egypt is particularly personal for Zawahiri, who began his fight to depose the Egyptian government as a teenager. Zawahiri also understands that Egypt, given its geostrategic importance and its status as the leading Arab nation, is the grand prize in the contest between al Qaeda and the United States. In his recent six-part message to the Egyptian people and in his eulogy for bin Laden, Zawahiri suggested that absent outside interference, the Egyptians and the Tunisians would establish Islamic states that would be hostile to Western interests. But the United States, he said, will likely work to ensure that friendly political forces, including secularists and moderate Islamists, win Egypt's upcoming elections. And even if the Islamists succeed in establishing an Islamic state there, Zawahiri argued, the United States will retain enough leverage to keep it in line. To prevent such an outcome, Zawahiri called on Islamist activists in Egypt and Tunisia to start a popular (presumably nonviolent) campaign to implement sharia as the sole source of legislation and to pressure the transitional governments to end their cooperation with Washington.

Yet Zawahiri's attempt to sway local Islamists is unlikely to succeed. Although some Islamists in the two countries rhetorically support al Qaeda, many, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, are now

organizing for their countries' upcoming elections—that is, they are becoming Islamist parliamentarians. Even Egyptian Salafists, who share Zawahiri's distaste for parliamentary politics, are forming their own political parties. Most ominous for Zawahiri's agenda, the Egyptian Islamist organization al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group), parts of which were once allied with al Qaeda, has forsworn violence and recently announced that it was creating a political party to compete in Egypt's parliamentary elections. Al Qaeda, then, is losing sway even among its natural allies.

This dynamic limits Zawahiri's options. For fear of alienating the Egyptian people, he is not likely to end his efforts to reach out to Egypt's Islamist parliamentarians or to break with them by calling for attacks in the country before the elections. Instead, he will continue urging the Islamists to advocate for sharia and to try to limit U.S. influence.

In the meantime, Zawahiri will continue trying to attack the United States and continue exploiting less stable postrevolutionary countries, such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen, which may prove more susceptible to al Qaeda's influence. Yet to operate in these countries, al Qaeda will need to subordinate its political agenda to those of the insurgents there or risk destroying itself, as Zarqawi's group did in Iraq. If those insurgents take power, they will likely refuse to offer al Qaeda safe haven for fear of alienating the United States or its allies in the region.

Thanks to the continued predominance of the United States and the growing appeal of Islamist parliamentarians in the Muslim world, even supporters of al Qaeda now doubt that it will be able to replace existing regimes with Islamic states anytime soon. In a recent joint statement, several jihadist online forums expressed concern that if Muammar al-Qaddafi is defeated in Libya, the Islamists there will participate in U.S.-backed elections, ending any chance of establishing a true Islamic state.

As a result of all these forces, al Qaeda is no longer the vanguard of the Islamist movement in the Arab world. Having defined the terms of Islamist politics for the last decade by raising fears about Islamic political parties and giving Arab rulers a pretext to limit their activity or shut them down, al Qaeda's goal of removing those rulers is now being fulfilled by others who are unlikely to share its political vision. Should these revolutions fail and al Qaeda survives, it will be ready to reclaim the mantle of Islamist resistance. But for now, the forces best positioned to capitalize on the Arab Spring are the Islamist parliamentarians, who, unlike al Qaeda, are willing and able to engage in the messy business of politics.

ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group

Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat

Audrey Kurth Cronin

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After 9/11, many within the U.S. national security establishment worried that, following decades of preparation for confronting conventional enemies, Washington was unready for the challenge posed by an unconventional adversary such as al Qaeda. So over the next decade, the United States built an elaborate bureaucratic structure to fight the jihadist organization, adapting its military and its intelligence and law enforcement agencies to the tasks of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

Now, however, a different group, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), which also calls itself the Islamic State, has supplanted al Qaeda as the jihadist threat of greatest concern. ISIS' ideology, rhetoric, and long-term goals are similar to al Qaeda's, and the two groups were once formally allied. So many observers assume that the current challenge is simply to refocus Washington's now-formidable counterterrorism apparatus on a new target.

But ISIS is not al Qaeda. It is not an outgrowth or a part of the older radical Islamist organization, nor does it represent the next phase in its evolution. Although al Qaeda remains dangerous—especially its

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affiliates in North Africa and Yemen—ISIS is its successor. ISIS represents the post–al Qaeda jihadist threat.

In a nationally televised speech last September explaining his plan to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS, U.S. President Barack Obama drew a straight line between the group and al Qaeda and claimed that ISIS is "a terrorist organization, pure and simple." This was mistaken; ISIS hardly fits that description, and indeed, although it uses terrorism as a tactic, it is not really a terrorist organization at all. Terrorist networks, such as al Qaeda, generally have only dozens or hundreds of members, attack civilians, do not hold territory, and cannot directly confront military forces. ISIS, on the other hand, boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communication, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in sophisticated military operations. If ISIS is purely and simply anything, it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army. And that is why the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies that greatly diminished the threat from al Qaeda will not work against ISIS.

Washington has been slow to adapt its policies in Iraq and Syria to the true nature of the threat from ISIS. In Syria, U.S. counterterrorism has mostly prioritized the bombing of al Qaeda affiliates, which has given an edge to ISIS and has also provided the Assad regime with the opportunity to crush U.S.-allied moderate Syrian rebels. In Iraq, Washington continues to rely on a form of counterinsurgency, depending on the central government in Baghdad to regain its lost legitimacy, unite the country, and build indigenous forces to defeat ISIS. These approaches were developed to meet a different threat, and they have been overtaken by events. What's needed now is a strategy of "offensive containment": a combination of limited military tactics and a broad diplomatic strategy to halt ISIS' expansion, isolate the group, and degrade its capabilities.

DIFFERENT STROKES

The differences between al Qaeda and ISIS are partly rooted in their histories. Al Qaeda came into being in the aftermath of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Its leaders' worldviews and strategic thinking were shaped by the ten-year war against Soviet occupation, when thousands of Muslim militants, including Osama bin Laden, converged on the country. As the organization coalesced, it took the form of a global network focused on carrying out spectacular attacks against Western

or Western-allied targets, with the goal of rallying Muslims to join a global confrontation with secular powers near and far.

Isis came into being thanks to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. In its earliest incarnation, it was just one of a number of Sunni extremist groups fighting U.S. forces and attacking Shiite civilians in an attempt to foment a sectarian civil war. At that time, it was called al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and its leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, had pledged allegiance to bin Laden. Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. air strike in 2006, and soon after, AQI was nearly wiped out when Sunni tribes decided to partner with the Americans to confront the jihadists. But the defeat was temporary; AQI renewed itself inside U.S.-run prisons in Iraq, where insurgents and terrorist operatives connected and formed networks—and where the group's current chief and self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, first distinguished himself as a leader.

In 2011, as a revolt against the Assad regime in Syria expanded into a full-blown civil war, the group took advantage of the chaos, seizing territory in Syria's northeast, establishing a base of operations, and rebranding itself as ISIS. In Iraq, the group continued to capitalize on the weakness of the central state and to exploit the country's sectarian strife, which intensified after U.S. combat forces withdrew. With the Americans gone, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki pursued a hard-line pro-Shiite agenda, further alienating Sunni Arabs throughout the country. Isis now counts among its members Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders, former anti-U.S. insurgents, and even secular former Iraqi military officers who seek to regain the power and security they enjoyed during the Saddam Hussein era.

The group's territorial conquest in Iraq came as a shock. When ISIS captured Fallujah and Ramadi in January 2014, most analysts predicted that the U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces would contain the threat. But in June, amid mass desertions from the Iraqi army, ISIS moved toward Baghdad, capturing Mosul, Tikrit, al-Qaim, and numerous other Iraqi towns. By the end of the month, ISIS had renamed itself the Islamic State and had proclaimed the territory under its control to be a new caliphate. Meanwhile, according to U.S. intelligence estimates, some 15,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries flocked to the region to join ISIS, at the rate of around 1,000 per month. Although most of these recruits came from Muslim-majority countries, such as Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, some also hailed from Australia, China, Russia, and western European countries. Isis has

even managed to attract some American teenagers, boys and girls alike, from ordinary middle-class homes in Denver, Minneapolis, and the suburbs of Chicago.

As ISIS has grown, its goals and intentions have become clearer. Al Qaeda conceived of itself as the vanguard of a global insurgency mobilizing Muslim communities against secular rule. ISIS, in contrast, seeks to control territory and create a "pure" Sunni Islamist state governed by a brutal interpretation of sharia; to immediately obliterate the political borders of the Middle East that were created by Western powers in the twentieth century; and to position itself as the sole political, religious, and military authority over all of the world's Muslims.

NOT THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Since ISIS' origins and goals differ markedly from al Qaeda's, the two groups operate in completely different ways. That is why a U.S. counterterrorism strategy custom-made to fight al Qaeda does not fit the struggle against ISIS.

In the post-9/11 era, the United States has built up a trillion-dollar infrastructure of intelligence, law enforcement, and military operations aimed at al Qaeda and its affiliates. According to a 2010 investigation by *The Washington Post*, some 263 U.S. government organizations were created or reorganized in response to the 9/11 attacks, including the Department of Homeland Security, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Transportation Security Administration. Each year, U.S. intelligence agencies produce some 50,000 reports on terrorism. Fifty-one U.S. federal organizations and military commands track the flow of money to and from terrorist networks. This structure has helped make terrorist attacks on U.S. soil exceedingly rare. In that sense, the system has worked. But it is not well suited for dealing with ISIS, which presents a different sort of challenge.

Consider first the tremendous U.S. military and intelligence campaign to capture or kill al Qaeda's core leadership through drone strikes and Special Forces raids. Some 75 percent of the leaders of the core al Qaeda group have been killed by raids and armed drones, a technology well suited to the task of going after targets hiding in rural areas, where the risk of accidentally killing civilians is lower.

Such tactics, however, don't hold much promise for combating ISIS. The group's fighters and leaders cluster in urban areas, where they are

well integrated into civilian populations and usually surrounded by buildings, making drone strikes and raids much harder to carry out. And simply killing ISIS' leaders would not cripple the organization. They govern a functioning pseudo-state with a complex administrative structure. At the top of the military command is the emirate, which consists of Baghdadi and two deputies, both of whom formerly served as generals in the Saddam-era Iraqi army: Abu Ali al-Anbari, who controls ISIS' operations in Syria, and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, who controls operations in Iraq. ISIS' civilian bureaucracy is supervised by 12 administrators who govern territories in Iraq and Syria, overseeing councils that handle matters such as finances, media, and religious affairs. Although it is hardly the model government depicted in ISIS' propaganda videos, this pseudo-state would carry on quite ably without Baghdadi or his closest lieutenants.

ISIS also poses a daunting challenge to traditional U.S. counterterrorism tactics that take aim at jihadist financing, propaganda, and recruitment. Cutting off al Qaeda's funding has been one of U.S. counterterrorism's most impressive success stories. Soon after the 9/11 attacks, the FBI and the CIA began to coordinate closely on financial intelligence, and they were soon joined by the Department of Defense. FBI agents embedded with U.S. military units during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and debriefed suspected terrorists detained at the U.S. facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In 2004, the U.S. Treasury Department established the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, which has cut deeply into al Qaeda's ability to profit from money laundering and receive funds under the cover of charitable giving. A global network for countering terrorist financing has also emerged, backed by the UN, the EU, and hundreds of cooperating governments. The result has been a serious squeeze on al Qaeda's financing; by 2011, the Treasury Department reported that al Qaeda was "struggling to secure steady financing to plan and execute terrorist attacks."

But such tools contribute little to the fight against ISIS, because ISIS does not need outside funding. Holding territory has allowed the group to build a self-sustaining financial model unthinkable for most terrorist groups. Beginning in 2012, ISIS gradually took over key oil assets in eastern Syria; it now controls an estimated 60 percent of the country's oil production capacity. Meanwhile, during its push into Iraq last summer, ISIS also seized seven oil-producing operations in that country. The group manages to sell some of this oil on the black

market in Iraq and Syria—including, according to some reports, to the Assad regime itself. ISIS also smuggles oil out of Iraq and Syria into Jordan and Turkey, where it finds plenty of buyers happy to pay below-market prices for illicit crude. All told, ISIS' revenue from oil is estimated to be between $1 million and $3 million per day.

And oil is only one element in the group's financial portfolio. Last June, when ISIS seized control of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, it looted the provincial central bank and other smaller banks and plundered antiquities to sell on the black market. It steals jewelry, cars, machinery, and livestock from conquered residents. The group also controls major transportation arteries in western Iraq, allowing it to tax the movement of goods and charge tolls. It even earns revenue from cotton and wheat grown in Raqqa, the breadbasket of Syria.

Of course, like terrorist groups, ISIS also takes hostages, demanding tens of millions of dollars in ransom payments. But more important to the group's finances is a wide-ranging extortion racket that targets owners and producers in ISIS territory, taxing everything from small family farms to large enterprises such as cell-phone service providers, water delivery companies, and electric utilities. The enterprise is so complex that the U.S. Treasury has declined to estimate ISIS' total assets and revenues, but ISIS is clearly a highly diversified enterprise whose wealth dwarfs that of any terrorist organization. And there is little evidence that Washington has succeeded in reducing the group's coffers.

SEX AND THE SINGLE JIHADIST

Another aspect of U.S. counterterrorism that has worked well against al Qaeda is the effort to delegitimize the group by publicizing its targeting errors and violent excesses—or by helping U.S. allies do so. Al Qaeda's attacks frequently kill Muslims, and the group's leaders are highly sensitive to the risk this poses to their image as the vanguard of a mass Muslim movement. Attacks in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey in 2003; Spain in 2004; and Jordan and the United Kingdom in 2005 all resulted in Muslim casualties that outraged members of Islamic communities everywhere and reduced support for al Qaeda across the Muslim world. The group has steadily lost popular support since around 2007; today, al Qaeda is widely reviled in the Muslim world. The Pew Research Center surveyed nearly 9,000 Muslims in 11 countries in 2013 and found a high median level of disapproval of al Qaeda: 57 percent. In many countries, the number was far higher: 96 percent

of Muslims polled in Lebanon, 81 percent in Jordan, 73 percent in Turkey, and 69 percent in Egypt held an unfavorable view of al Qaeda.

Isis, however, seems impervious to the risk of a backlash. In proclaiming himself the caliph, Baghdadi made a bold (if absurd) claim to religious authority. But isis' core message is about raw power and revenge, not legitimacy. Its brutality—videotaped beheadings, mass executions—is designed to intimidate foes and suppress dissent. Revulsion among Muslims at such cruelty might eventually undermine isis. But for the time being, Washington's focus on isis' savagery only helps the group augment its aura of strength.

For similar reasons, it has proved difficult for the United States and its partners to combat the recruitment efforts that have attracted so many young Muslims to isis' ranks. The core al Qaeda group attracted followers with religious arguments and a pseudo-scholarly message of altruism for the sake of the *ummah*, the global Muslim community. Bin Laden and his longtime second-in-command and successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, carefully constructed an image of religious legitimacy and piety. In their propaganda videos, the men appeared as ascetic warriors, sitting on the ground in caves, studying in libraries, or taking refuge in remote camps. Although some of al Qaeda's affiliates have better recruiting pitches, the core group cast the establishment of a caliphate as a long-term, almost utopian goal: educating and mobilizing the *ummah* came first. In al Qaeda, there is no place for alcohol or women. In this sense, al Qaeda's image is deeply unsexy; indeed, for the young al Qaeda recruit, sex itself comes only after marriage—or martyrdom.

Even for the angriest young Muslim man, this might be a bit of a hard sell. Al Qaeda's leaders' attempts to depict themselves as moral—even moralistic—figures have limited their appeal. Successful deradicalization programs in places such as Indonesia and Singapore have zeroed in on the mismatch between what al Qaeda offers and what most young people are really interested in, encouraging militants to reintegrate into society, where their more prosaic hopes and desires might be fulfilled more readily.

Isis, in contrast, offers a very different message for young men, and sometimes women. The group attracts followers yearning for not only religious righteousness but also adventure, personal power, and a sense of self and community. And, of course, some people just want to kill—and isis welcomes them, too. The group's brutal violence attracts attention, demonstrates dominance, and draws people to the action.

Isis operates in urban settings and offers recruits immediate opportunities to fight. It advertises by distributing exhilarating podcasts produced by individual fighters on the frontlines. The group also procures sexual partners for its male recruits; some of these women volunteer for this role, but most of them are coerced or even enslaved. The group barely bothers to justify this behavior in religious terms; its sales pitch is conquest in all its forms, including the sexual kind. And it has already established a self-styled caliphate, with Baghdadi as the caliph, thus making present (if only in a limited way, for now) what al Qaeda generally held out as something more akin to a utopian future.

In short, ISIS offers short-term, primitive gratification. It does not radicalize people in ways that can be countered by appeals to logic. Teenagers are attracted to the group without even understanding what it is, and older fighters just want to be associated with ISIS' success. Compared with fighting al Qaeda's relatively austere message, Washington has found it much harder to counter ISIS' more visceral appeal, perhaps for a very simple reason: a desire for power, agency, and instant results also pervades American culture.

2015 ≠ 2006

Counterterrorism wasn't the only element of national security practice that Washington rediscovered and reinvigorated after 9/11; counterinsurgency also enjoyed a renaissance. As chaos erupted in Iraq in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion and occupation of 2003, the U.S. military grudgingly starting thinking about counterinsurgency, a subject that had fallen out of favor in the national security establishment after the Vietnam War. The most successful application of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine was the 2007 "surge" in Iraq, overseen by General David Petraeus. In 2006, as violence peaked in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province, U.S. officials concluded that the United States was losing the war. In response, President George W. Bush decided to send an additional 20,000 U.S. troops to Iraq. General John Allen, then serving as deputy commander of the multinational forces in Anbar, cultivated relationships with local Sunni tribes and nurtured the so-called Sunni Awakening, in which some 40 Sunni tribes or subtribes essentially switched sides and decided to fight with the newly augmented U.S. forces against AQI. By the summer of 2008, the number of insurgent attacks had fallen by more than 80 percent.

Looking at the extent of ISIS' recent gains in Sunni areas of Iraq, which have undone much of the progress made in the surge, some have argued that Washington should respond with a second application of the Iraq war's counterinsurgency strategy. And the White House seems at least partly persuaded by this line of thinking: last year, Obama asked Allen to act as a special envoy for building an anti-ISIS coalition in the region. There is a certain logic to this approach, since ISIS draws support from many of the same insurgent groups that the surge and the Sunni Awakening neutralized—groups that have reemerged as threats thanks to the vacuum created by the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2011 and Maliki's sectarian rule in Baghdad.

But vast differences exist between the situation today and the one that Washington faced in 2006, and the logic of U.S. counterinsurgency does not suit the struggle against ISIS. The United States cannot win the hearts and minds of Iraq's Sunni Arabs, because the Maliki government has already lost them. The Shiite-dominated Iraqi government has so badly undercut its own political legitimacy that it might be impossible to restore it. Moreover, the United States no longer occupies Iraq. Washington can send in more troops, but it cannot lend legitimacy to a government it no longer controls. ISIS is less an insurgent group fighting against an established government than one party in a conventional civil war between a breakaway territory and a weak central state.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER?

The United States has relied on counterinsurgency strategy not only to reverse Iraq's slide into state failure but also to serve as a model for how to combat the wider jihadist movement. Al Qaeda expanded by persuading Muslim militant groups all over the world to turn their more narrowly targeted nationalist campaigns into nodes in al Qaeda's global jihad—and, sometimes, to convert themselves into al Qaeda affiliates. But there was little commonality in the visions pursued by Chechen, Filipino, Indonesian, Kashmiri, Palestinian, and Uighur militants, all of whom bin Laden tried to draw into al Qaeda's tent, and al Qaeda often had trouble fully reconciling its own goals with the interests of its far-flung affiliates.

That created a vulnerability, and the United States and its allies sought to exploit it. Governments in Indonesia and the Philippines won dramatic victories against al Qaeda affiliates in their countries by combining

counterterrorism operations with relationship building in local communities, instituting deradicalization programs, providing religious training in prisons, using rehabilitated former terrorist operatives as government spokespeople, and sometimes negotiating over local grievances.

Some observers have called for Washington to apply the same strategy to ISIS by attempting to expose the fault lines between the group's secular former Iraqi army officers, Sunni tribal leaders, and Sunni resistance fighters, on the one hand, and its veteran jihadists, on the other. But it's too late for that approach to work. ISIS is now led by well-trained, capable former Iraqi military leaders who know U.S. techniques and habits because Washington helped train them. And after routing Iraqi army units and taking their U.S.-supplied equipment, ISIS is now armed with American tanks, artillery, armored Humvees, and mine-resistant vehicles.

Perhaps ISIS' harsh religious fanaticism will eventually prove too much for their secular former Baathist allies. But for now, the Saddam-era officers are far from reluctant warriors for ISIS: rather, they are leading the charge. In their hands, ISIS has developed a sophisticated light-infantry army, brandishing American weapons.

Of course, this opens up a third possible approach to ISIS, besides counterterrorism and counterinsurgency: a full-on conventional war against the group, waged with the goal of completely destroying it. Such a war would be folly. After experiencing more than a decade of continuous war, the American public simply would not support the long-term occupation and intense fighting that would be required to obliterate ISIS. The pursuit of a full-fledged military campaign would exhaust U.S. resources and offer little hope of obtaining the objective. Wars pursued at odds with political reality cannot be won.

CONTAINING THE THREAT

The sobering fact is that the United States has no good military options in its fight against ISIS. Neither counterterrorism, nor counterinsurgency, nor conventional warfare is likely to afford Washington a clear-cut victory against the group. For the time being, at least, the policy that best matches ends and means and that has the best chance of securing U.S. interests is one of offensive containment: combining a limited military campaign with a major diplomatic and economic effort to weaken ISIS and align the interests of the many countries that are threatened by the group's advance.

ISIS is not merely an American problem. The wars in Iraq and Syria involve not only regional players but also major global actors, such as Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states. Washington must stop behaving as if it can fix the region's problems with military force and instead resurrect its role as a diplomatic superpower.

Of course, U.S. military force would be an important part of an offensive containment policy. Air strikes can pin ISIS down, and cutting off its supply of technology, weapons, and ammunition by choking off smuggling routes would further weaken the group. Meanwhile, the United States should continue to advise and support the Iraqi military, assist regional forces such as the Kurdish Pesh Merga, and provide humanitarian assistance to civilians fleeing ISIS' territory. Washington should also expand its assistance to neighboring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, which are struggling to contend with the massive flow of refugees from Syria. But putting more U.S. troops on the ground would be counterproductive, entangling the United States in an unwinnable war that could go on for decades. The United States cannot rebuild the Iraqi state or determine the outcome of the Syrian civil war. Frustrating as it might be to some, when it comes to military action, Washington should stick to a realistic course that recognizes the limitations of U.S. military force as a long-term solution.

The Obama administration's recently convened "summit on countering violent extremism"—which brought world leaders to Washington to discuss how to combat radical jihadism—was a valuable exercise. But although it highlighted the existing threat posed by al Qaeda's regional affiliates, it also reinforced the idea that ISIS is primarily a counterterrorism challenge. In fact, ISIS poses a much greater risk: it seeks to challenge the current international order, and, unlike the greatly diminished core al Qaeda organization, it is coming closer to actually achieving that goal. The United States cannot single-handedly defend the region and the world from an aggressive revisionist theocratic state—nor should it. The major powers must develop a common diplomatic, economic, and military approach to ensure that this pseudo-state is tightly contained and treated as a global pariah. The good news is that no government supports ISIS; the group has managed to make itself an enemy of every state in the region—and, indeed, the world. To exploit that fact, Washington should pursue a more aggressive, top-level diplomatic agenda with major powers and regional players, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, the United

Kingdom, Russia, and even China, as well as Iraq's and Syria's neighbors, to design a unified response to ISIS.

That response must go beyond making a mutual commitment to prevent the radicalization and recruitment of would-be jihadists and beyond the regional military coalition that the United States has built. The major powers and regional players must agree to stiffen the international arms embargo currently imposed on ISIS, enact more vigorous sanctions against the group, conduct joint border patrols, provide more aid for displaced persons and refugees, and strengthen UN peacekeeping missions in countries that border Iraq and Syria. Although some of these tools overlap with counterterrorism, they should be put in the service of a strategy for fighting an enemy more akin to a state actor: ISIS is not a nuclear power, but the group represents a threat to international stability equivalent to that posed by North Korea. It should be treated no less seriously.

Given that political posturing over U.S. foreign policy will only intensify as the 2016 U.S. presidential election approaches, the White House would likely face numerous attacks on a containment approach that would satisfy neither the hawkish nor the anti-interventionist camp within the U.S. national security establishment. In the face of such criticism, the United States must stay committed to fighting ISIS over the long term in a manner that matches ends with means, calibrating and improving U.S. efforts to contain the group by moving past outmoded forms of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency while also resisting pressure to cross the threshold into full-fledged war. Over time, the successful containment of ISIS might open up better policy options. But for the foreseeable future, containment is the best policy that the United States can pursue.

Preventing the Next Attack

A Strategy for the War on Terrorism

Lisa Monaco

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In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the United States' resolve was clear: never again. Never again would it let shadowy networks of jihadists, acting in the name of a perverted version of Islam, carry out a catastrophic attack on American soil. And so, in fits and starts, the George W. Bush administration and then the Obama administration developed a strategy for fighting what became known as "the global war on terror." Washington sought to disrupt plots wherever they emerged and deny terrorists safe havens wherever they existed. When possible, it would rely on local partners to prosecute the fight. But when necessary, it would act alone to disrupt plots and kill or capture terrorist operatives and leaders, including with drone strikes and daring special operations raids such as the one that killed Osama bin Laden.

Today, the terrorist threat looks much different than it did right before 9/11. The U.S. counterterrorism community has dramatically ramped up its intelligence capabilities. Determined to "connect the dots" in the future, the U.S. government created new agencies and instituted a new paradigm for intelligence—share by rule, withhold by exception—and set up a slew of "fusion centers" and joint task

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forces to foster interagency cooperation. Borders were hardened, cockpit doors reinforced, and watch lists created. In Afghanistan, the United States overthrew the Taliban regime, which was hosting al Qaeda. Today, despite recent Taliban gains, al Qaeda still does not enjoy free rein in the country. In Iraq and Syria, al Qaeda's offshoot, the Islamic State (or ISIS), is on the run, thanks to the work of a global coalition assembled in 2014 and U.S.-led air strikes and special operations raids. The group's Iraqi capital of Mosul fell in July, and its Syrian stronghold in Raqqa is almost certain to follow. Owing to the relentless pressure that the United States and its allies have placed on terrorists' safe havens, the threat of a complex and catastrophic attack emanating from abroad—although not gone—has diminished.

At the same time, however, the threat from homegrown and so called lone-wolf terrorism has increased. This kind of terrorism is not new, nor is it confined to Islamic terrorism (in fact, according to one study by the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, from 2000 to 2016, white supremacists killed more people in the United States than any other group of domestic extremists). But these threats have taken on new urgency as ISIS in particular has harnessed the power of social media to inspire mostly young men to commit violence. In 2014, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, ISIS' now deceased media spokesperson, urged followers to be resourceful when confronted with the opportunity to murder an unbeliever: "Kill him in any manner or way however it may be: smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car."

People were listening: one study, by Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone, and Eva Entenmann, identified 51 attacks between June 2014 and June 2017 by terrorists who had heeded the call to act locally in Europe and North America, with 16 of those carried out in the United States. The 2016 mass shooting in Orlando and bombings in New York City and New Jersey likely resulted from a mix of jihadist inspirations, but in both cases, the killers had no known external direction or training. The common theme: consuming a variety of extremist content online. A threat that began with an attack planned by a small group of veteran terrorists in Afghanistan has transformed into a diffuse movement of recently radicalized individuals planning pop-up attacks across the globe.

What is the right strategy for this new phase of the war on terrorism? The answer is one that confronts three main challenges: physical safe havens from which terrorists continue to plot attacks, virtual safe havens through which ISIS and other groups mobilize

individuals to commit violence, and a global and domestic environment increasingly hospitable to terrorists.

NO PLACE TO HIDE

Although the likelihood of another 9/11 has diminished, it is far from zero. Indeed, it appears that al Qaeda is passing the mantle to a new generation, with bin Laden's son Hamza releasing several audio recordings since 2015 calling on followers to commit violence. Moreover, the group's various offshoots are busy plotting attacks. The most dangerous elements of its largest affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra—more accurately described as al Qaeda in Syria—are still intent on attacking the United States. So is al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, al Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate, which has proved persistently focused on attacking airliners.

ISIS, for its part, faces almost certain defeat in Iraq and Syria, but it seeks to sustain its brand with no fewer than eight global branches, from Afghanistan to Libya. And it has not been satisfied with merely amassing territory. Its affiliate in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula brought down a Russian passenger plane in 2015. And in August 2017, Australian police announced that they had foiled a sophisticated plot by ISIS to blow up a passenger jet. In separate shipments, an ISIS commander in Syria had sent followers in Sydney the parts for an explosive device that could be assembled in country—an approach that the analyst Paul Cruickshank has called "an IKEA model of terror." Although authorities have said that airport screening would have detected the device, ISIS is testing ways to defeat such defenses, and it's easy to imagine it succeeding. The lesson here is that the United States cannot take its eye off the threat of a massive, sophisticated attack.

One of the most reliable strategies for preventing such attacks has been depriving terrorist groups of the ungoverned spaces they use to train and plan, from Afghanistan to North Africa. Although territory is no longer the sine qua non it once was—the rise of virtual safe havens and encrypted communications has given terrorists new ways to covertly plan attacks—there is still no substitute for it. Physical territory not only provides terrorists with room to plot but also offers reliable revenue from taxation and, often, oil sales, as well as human resources through forced conscription. And so the United States must continue to put relentless pressure on safe havens.

In practice, especially as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have wound down, this has meant adopting a "light footprint" counter-

terrorism strategy, premised on training and enabling local partners to take the fight to terrorists and, failing that, doing so directly through air strikes (both manned and unmanned) and special operations raids. This strategy has been successful at eliminating dangerous operatives, but it has had its downsides. At times, U.S. air and ground operations have generated backlash among locals, and unfortunate instances of civilian casualties from these operations have further fueled terrorists' propaganda and recruitment efforts.

U.S. drone operations, widely seen as the hallmark of this light-footprint strategy, have proved particularly controversial. Pointing to the problems with using force against targets outside of traditional battlefields, critics have called for more transparency regarding targeting decisions and civilian casualties. In an effort to enhance the legitimacy of these operations, answer questions about who is targeted, and check others' use of drones as the technology proliferates, the Obama administration developed a set of standards to guide the United States' employment of drones. These policies included a requirement for near certainty—the highest achievable standard—that no civilian would be injured or killed in the strikes. President Barack Obama also issued an executive order requiring the director of national intelligence to provide an annual report on civilian casualties from U.S. strikes undertaken outside traditional battlefields.

But a light-footprint approach alone is not always sufficient. In some places, such as Libya and Yemen, the lack of stable governance and capable partners on the ground has made it impossible to sustain military gains. And of course, no amount of drone strikes or raids can counter distantly inspired violence. Ultimately, the administration's light-footprint strategy to combat ISIS and al Qaeda in Iraq and Syria gave way to what the political scientists Peter Feaver and Hal Brands have described in this magazine as the "counter-ISIS plus" approach. The Obama administration stepped up operations in Iraq and Syria, increasing the number of troops and advisers there and launching a more aggressive air campaign and a series of special operations raids. In Libya in late 2016, the U.S. military conducted air strikes in support of Libya's interim government to rout ISIS from its nascent safe haven in Sirte. These operations were guided by certain criteria: the United States would work in support of local forces except to counter an imminent threat that its partner could not or would not respond to, and it would seek to lend these opera-

tions legitimacy by sending thought-out public and diplomatic messages about their nature and purpose.

To deal lasting blows to ISIS and al Qaeda, and to keep others from seizing new safe havens, the United States will need to continue some variant of this stepped-up strategy. So far, President Donald Trump's plan to defeat ISIS closely resembles that of his predecessor—albeit with the additional element of delegating greater authority to commanders in the field. But military operations will always be half measures if they are not paired with a strategy to make U.S. partners more viable—security assistance and diplomatic engagement aimed at getting countries to govern inclusively, bolster their security sectors, and reform their economies. That's why the Trump administration's proposed budget cuts to the State Department—at a time when military leaders regularly call for increases in foreign aid—are so worrisome.

HIGH-TECH TERRORISTS

Pressure on safe havens will merely keep a lid on a threat from terrorists who are growing more creative by the day. As technology advances, so do terrorists' capabilities to exploit it. Consider the next generation of aviation threats. From AQAP's 2010 plan to stow printer cartridges filled with explosives in airplane cargo holds to ISIS' recent plot in Australia, terrorists have shown a determination to overcome the post-9/11 security obstacles to bringing down airliners. The Trump administration has wisely put an emphasis on aviation security. In March, for example, it issued a temporary ban on the use of laptops in the passenger cabin on flights originating from certain airports. The administration threatened to extend the ban to all U.S.-bound flights, prompting some international carriers to improve their security measures. The government should continue to focus on aviation security, but it should go further and partner with the private sector to generate innovative methods of detecting new explosive materials.

Terrorists, of course, are doing their own innovation, and some of them have even experimented with drones. In 2013, for instance, Iraqi officials announced that they had thwarted a plot in which al Qaeda operatives intended to use toy planes to deliver sarin and mustard gas. Adding to the danger, more and more devices are going online as part of "the Internet of things," creating new vulnerabilities that ISIS and others could exploit. That's why the Trump administration should heed the call from the 2016 report of the Commission on Enhancing

National Cybersecurity to work with the private sector to build security features into new technology at the design stage, rather than play catch up with terrorists' attempts to commandeer such devices. The United States' future safety demands that it, and not its adversaries, dominate the technological domain.

The innovation that has benefited terrorists the most, however, is social media. Lone wolves are never truly alone; they deliberately search for and find communities online. To draw in vulnerable youth, ISIS has created a sophisticated media machine that pumps out professionally produced videos, multilingual tweets, a glossy magazine, and Instagram posts, all serving up an intoxicating narrative that followers can belong to a cause greater than themselves. Other groups, including al Qaeda, are now mimicking ISIS' tactics. Gone are the amateur videos of al Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri sitting cross-legged before a drab backdrop; those rare releases are now dwarfed by al Qaeda's Syrian branch's steady stream of slick videos and magazines.

The U.S. government has struggled to beat terrorists at the social media game, but Silicon Valley is taking promising steps. In June, a group of technology companies created the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, a consortium devoted to making their platforms less hospitable to extremists. Facebook, which boasts more than two billion active monthly users, is employing artificial intelligence and image-matching technology to stop known terrorist content from proliferating. Twitter, for its part, has suspended more than 375,000 accounts promoting terrorism. Deleting by hand after the fact will not suffice, however, and so social media platforms will need to train their algorithms to detect extremist content—international and domestic—and banish it immediately.

At the same time, companies will need to ramp up their support for legitimate voices that rebut terrorists' narratives. Jigsaw, a think tank created by Google, has developed the Redirect Method, a project that targets online users who have been identified as susceptible to ISIS' messaging and serves them alternative content that subtly debunks terrorist propaganda. The government can play a role, too—not as the messenger but as a partner to the private sector. In 2016, the State Department launched the Global Engagement Center, an office dedicated to supporting voices that rebut terrorists' messaging. But so far, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has refused to spend the $80 million already earmarked for the center, which currently lacks a director and

is losing some of the private-sector talent recruited last year. The Trump administration should support, not sideline, its work.

OUT OF ORDER

What may most influence the future terrorist threat, however, is not the flourishing of physical and virtual safe havens per se but the breakdown in order that is sure to spawn more of both. Today, old and new powers are seeking to redraw the map. Across the Gulf and the Levant, and even in Afghanistan, Iran and its proxies are promoting and taking advantage of instability. Russia is doing the same in eastern Europe, and it has worked hard to protect its client in Syria and create a new one in Libya. The future threat will be defined by these areas of chaos—the safe havens presented by them, the foreign fighters drawn to them, and the violence inspired by them.

So there is a dangerous irony in Trump's invocation of "America first," a message that has caused U.S. allies to wonder whether they can still count on Washington to continue as a partner in—if not the guarantor of—their security. If the United States pulls up the drawbridge in the name of protection, it may deny itself counterterrorism tools that are essential to the country's safety. By banning the travel of all citizens from certain countries, rather than tailoring screening to specific threats, the United States risks alienating the very partners it needs to fight today's terrorists and fueling the "clash of civilizations" narrative that ISIS uses to recruit future ones.

As the campaign against ISIS has laid bare, partnerships with local allies are the key to successfully taking back territory from terrorists. The same is true when it comes to interdicting foreign fighters. In the past, the United States has taken the lead on working with foreign governments to share watch lists, improve border security, and impose new criminal penalties on foreign fighters. Experts have warned that as ISIS' territory in Iraq and Syria shrinks, some 40,000 fighters who came from more than 120 countries to fight for ISIS could start to return home. But given that some of these fighters have spent years perfecting their violent craft on the battlefield, the greater concern may now be "not so much one of quantity as one of quality," as Nicholas Rasmussen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, put it earlier this year.

Europe will continue to face an immediate threat from skilled returnees of the type that participated in the 2015 Paris attacks and the 2016 Brussels bombings. Unfortunately, however, the continent has

yet to experience the kind of sea change that occurred in the United States, which radically rethought its practices for sharing information among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. In many European capitals, the wall impeding such sharing is far too high. And since the Atlantic Ocean is not a perfect buffer, what happens in Europe matters for the security of the United States. So rather than confusing U.S. allies with travel bans and mixed messages about the value of NATO, the United States should expand its counterterrorism cooperation with its European partners. For example, it should press its partners to more rapidly share airline passenger data and intelligence gleaned from investigations. And it should resume the dialogue begun by James Clapper, the former director of national intelligence, on promoting intelligence sharing with and among European countries.

It would be a mistake, however, to look only outward, ignoring the growing terrorist threat at home. The hit-and-run murder of a peaceful protester in Charlottesville, Virginia, by an avowed white supremacist is only the most recent reminder that the United States has a terrorism problem unrelated to violent jihadism. The challenge that bedeviled both the Bush and the Obama administrations—building trust between communities and their government to address extremism in all its forms—seems harder than ever. And lately, this important work has suffered from neglect. The Trump administration has proposed a budget that zeroes out funding for a Department of Homeland Security program aimed at countering violent extremism and has already withdrawn a grant for a group dedicated to combating domestic hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.

Sixteen years after 9/11, many Americans are weary of the war on terrorism. Having built up its defenses, the United States should no longer go abroad in search of monsters to destroy, some contend. Instead, they say, it should stick to keeping the bad guys out and adjust to a new normal in which some attacks are inevitable. But it would be a grave mistake to confuse a mitigated threat with a weak one. Rather than resignation, Americans will have to demonstrate resilience—just as New York, Fort Hood, Boston, Charleston, San Bernardino, Orlando, Portland, and Charlottesville have done in the face of hate and violence. To date, the United States' strategy has succeeded in preventing another 9/11-type attack, largely because it built a net designed to do just that. But for the next phase in the war on terrorism, the country will need a new net. It cannot afford to operate without one.

The Long Shadow of 9/11

How Counterterrorism Warps U.S. Foreign Policy

Robert Malley and Jon Finer

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When it comes to political orientation, worldview, life experience, and temperament, the past three presidents of the United States could hardly be more different. Yet each ended up devoting much of his tenure to the same goal: countering terrorism.

Upon entering office, President George W. Bush initially downplayed the terrorist threat, casting aside warnings from the outgoing administration about al Qaeda plots. But in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, his presidency came to be defined by what his administration termed "the global war on terrorism," an undertaking that involved the torture of detainees, the incarceration of suspects in "black sites" and at a prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, the warrantless surveillance of U.S. citizens, and prolonged and costly military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Barack Obama's political rise was fueled by his early opposition to Bush's excesses. He was clear-eyed about the nature of the terrorist

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threat and aware of the risks of overstating its costs. Once in office, he established clearer guidelines for the use of force and increased transparency about civilian casualties. But he also expanded the fight against terrorists to new theaters, dramatically increased the use of drone strikes, and devoted the later years of his presidency to the struggle against the Islamic State (also known as ISIS).

As for Donald Trump, he helped incite a wave of fear about terrorism and then rode it to an unlikely electoral victory, vowing to ban Muslims from entering the United States and to ruthlessly target terrorists wherever they were found. In office, Trump has escalated counterterrorism operations around the world, significantly loosened the rules of engagement, and continued to play up the terrorist threat with alarmist rhetoric.

In short, in an era of persistent political polarization, countering terrorism has become the area of greatest bipartisan consensus. Not since Democrats and Republicans rallied around containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War has there been such broad agreement on a foreign policy priority. Counterterrorism was a paramount concern for a president avenging the deaths of almost 3,000 Americans, and for his successor, who aspired to change the world's (and especially the Muslim world's) perception of the United States—and now it is also for his successor's successor, who is guided not by conviction or ideology but by impulse and instinct.

Many compelling reasons explain why U.S. policymakers have made the fight against terrorism a priority and why that fight often has taken on the character of a military campaign. But there are costs to this singular preoccupation and approach that are seldom acknowledged. An excessive focus on this issue disfigures American politics, distorts U.S. policies, and in the long run will undermine national security. The question is not whether fighting terrorists ought to be a key U.S. foreign policy objective—of course it should. But the pendulum has swung too far at the expense of other interests and of a more rational conversation about terrorism and how to fight it.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

The first and most obvious reason why several consecutive administrations have devoted so much attention to fighting terrorism is that guarding the safety of citizens should be any government's primary duty. Those privy to the constant stream of threat information gener-

ated by U.S. intelligence services—as we were during the Obama administration—can attest to the relentlessness and inventiveness with which terrorist organizations target Americans at home and abroad. They likewise can attest to the determination and resourcefulness required of public servants to thwart them.

Second, unlike most other foreign policy issues, terrorism matters to Americans. They may have an exaggerated sense of the threat or misunderstand it, and their political leaders might manipulate or exploit their concerns. But politicians need to be responsive to the demands of their constituents, who consistently rank terrorism among the greatest threats the country faces.

A third reason is that, by the most easily comprehensible metrics, most U.S. counterterrorism efforts appear to have immediately and palpably succeeded. No group or individual has been able to repeat anything close to the devastating scale of the 9/11 attacks in the United States or against U.S. citizens abroad, owing to the remarkable efforts of U.S. authorities, who have disrupted myriad active plots and demolished many terrorist cells and organizations. What is more, when compared with other, longer-term, more abstract, and often quixotic policy priorities—such as spreading democracy, resurrecting failed states, or making peace among foreign belligerents—counterterrorism has a narrower objective over which the U.S. government has greater control, and its results can be more easily measured. In the Middle East, in particular, Washington's loftier pursuits have tended to backfire or collapse. Focusing on counterterrorism can discipline U.S. foreign policy and force policymakers to concentrate on a few tasks that are well defined and realistic.

Finally, in an age of covert special operations and unmanned drones, the targeted killing of suspected terrorists appears relatively precise, clean, and low risk. For a commander in chief such as Obama, who worried about straining the U.S. military and causing counterproductive civilian casualties, the illusory notion that one could wage war with clean hands proved tantalizing.

The combination of these factors helps explain why such dissimilar presidents have been so similar in this one respect. It also explains why, since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has been engaged in a seemingly endless confrontation with a metastasizing set of militant groups. And it explains why, by tacit consensus, American society has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism, such that any ad-

ministration on whose watch an attack were to occur would immediately face relentless political recrimination. The United States has become captive to a national security paradigm that ends up magnifying the very fears from which it was born.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

For evidence of how this toxic cycle distorts American politics, one need look no further than Trump's rise, which cannot be dissociated from the emotional and at times irrational fears of terrorism that he simultaneously took advantage of and fueled. Trump, more blatantly than most, married those sentiments to nativistic, bigoted feelings about immigrants and Muslims. In December 2015, he proposed a simple but drastic step to eliminate the danger: "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." As a policy, this was absurd, but as demagoguery, it proved highly effective: several months prior to the 2016 presidential election, some polls showed that a majority of Americans approved of the idea, despite the fact that they were less likely to fall victim to a terrorist attack by a refugee than be hit by lightning, eaten by a shark, or struck by an asteroid.

But Trump is hardly the only one who has hyped the threat of terrorism for political gain; indeed, doing so has become a national—and bipartisan—tradition. It has become exceedingly rare for an elected official or candidate to offer a sober, dispassionate assessment of the threat posed by foreign terrorists. Obama tried to do so, but critics charged that at times of near panic, such rational pronouncements came across as cold and aloof. After the 2015 terrorist shooting in San Bernardino, California, took the lives of 14 people, he became all the more aware of the pernicious impact another attack could have—prompting baseless anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment, proposals for the curtailment of civil liberties, and calls for foreign military adventures. So Obama intensified his own and his administration's counterterrorism rhetoric and actions. It's hard to ignore the irony of overreacting to terrorism in order to avoid an even greater overreaction to terrorism.

This dilemma reflects the peculiar nature of terrorism. For an American, the risk of being injured or killed in a terrorist attack is close to zero. But unlike truly random events, terrorism is perpetrated by people intentionally seeking bloodshed and working hard to achieve it. The combination of seeming randomness of the target and the de-

liberateness of the offender helps explains why terrorism inspires a level of dread unjustified by the actual risk. At any given time and place, a terrorist attack is extremely unlikely to occur—and yet, when one does happen, it's because someone wanted it to.

But that only goes so far in explaining why Americans remain so concerned about terrorism even though other sources of danger pose much higher risks. The fact is that many U.S. political leaders, members of the media, consultants, and academics play a role in hyping the threat. Together, they form what might be described as a counterterrorism-industrial complex—one that, deliberately or not, and for a variety of reasons, fuels the cycle of fear and overreaction.

TERROR TALK

But it's not just American politics that suffers from an overemphasis on counterterrorism; the country's policies do, too. An administration can do more than one thing at once, but it can't prioritize everything at the same time. The time spent by senior officials and the resources invested by the government in finding, chasing, and killing terrorists invariably come at the expense of other tasks: for example, addressing the challenges of a rising China, a nuclear North Korea, and a resurgent Russia.

The United States' counterterrorism posture also affects how Washington deals with other governments—and how other governments deal with it. When Washington works directly with other governments in fighting terrorists or seeks their approval for launching drone strikes, it inevitably has to adjust aspects of its policies. Washington's willingness and ability to criticize or pressure the governments of Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, among others, is hindered by the fact that the United States depends on them to take action against terrorist groups or to allow U.S. forces to use their territory to do so. More broadly, leaders in such countries have learned that in order to extract concessions from American policymakers, it helps to raise the prospect of opening up (or shutting down) U.S. military bases or granting (or withdrawing) the right to use their airspace. And they have learned that in order to nudge the United States to get involved in their own battles with local insurgents, it helps to cater to Washington's concerns by painting such groups (rightly or wrongly) as internationally minded jihadists.

The United States also risks guilt by association when its counterterrorism partners ignore the laws of armed conflict or lack the capac-

ity for precision targeting. And other governments have become quick to cite Washington's fight against its enemies to justify their own more brutal tactics and more blatant violations of international law. It is seldom easy for U.S. officials to press other governments to moderate their policies, restrain their militaries, or consider the unintended consequences of repression. But it is infinitely harder when those other states can justify their actions by pointing to Washington's own practices—even when the comparison is inaccurate or unfair.

These policy distortions are reinforced and exacerbated by a lopsided interagency policymaking process that emerged after the 9/11 attacks. In most areas, the process of making national security policy tends to be highly regimented. It involves the president's National Security Council staff; deputy cabinet secretaries; and, for the most contentious, sensitive, or consequential decisions, the cabinet itself, chaired by either the national security adviser or the president. But since the Bush administration, counterterrorism has been run through a largely separate process, led by the president's homeland security adviser (who is technically a deputy to the national security adviser) and involving a disparate group of officials and agencies. The result in many cases is two parallel processes—one for terrorism, another for everything else—which can result in different, even conflicting, recommendations before an ultimate decision is made.

In one example from our time in government, in 2016, officials taking part in the more specialized counterterrorism side of the process debated whether to kill or capture a particular militant leader even as those involved in the parallel interagency process considered whether to initiate political discussions with him. That same year, those involved in the counterterrorism process recommended launching a major strike against ISIS leaders in Libya even as other officials working on that country worried that overt U.S. military action would undermine Libya's fledgling government.

It's true that once the most difficult decisions reach the president and his cabinet, the two processes converge, and a single set of players makes the final call. But the bifurcated bureaucratic structure and the focus on terrorism at the lower levels mean that by the time senior officials consider the issue, momentum typically will have grown in favor of direct action targeting a terrorist suspect, with less consideration given to other matters. Even when there is greater coordination of the two processes, as there was for the counter-ISIS campaign, the

special attention given to terrorist threats shapes policy decisions, making it more difficult to raise potentially countervailing interests, such as resolving broader political conflicts or helping stabilize the fragile states that can give rise to those threats in the first place.

That policy distortion has produced an unhealthy tendency among policymakers to formulate their arguments in counterterrorism terms, thereby downplaying or suppressing other serious issues. Officials quickly learn that they stand a better chance of being heard and carrying the day if they can argue that their ideas offer the most effective way to defeat terrorists. The Obama administration produced several examples of that dynamic. Officials held different views about how closely to work with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who took power in a coup in 2013, and whether to condition U.S. assistance to Egypt on political reforms. In essence, the debate pitted those who believed that the United States could not endorse, let alone bankroll, the Sisi regime's authoritarian practices against those who argued that relations with Egypt mattered too much to risk alienating its leader. This debate raised difficult questions about the utility of U.S. military aid and the effectiveness of making it conditional, about the importance of Egypt and the Middle East to Washington's security posture, and about the priority that U.S. policymakers ought to place on American values when formulating foreign policy. Yet policymakers often chose to frame the debate in different terms: those in the first camp insisted that Sisi's disregard for human rights would produce more terrorists than he could kill, whereas those in the second camp highlighted the need to work with Sisi against already existing terrorists in the Sinai Peninsula.

In 2014, a similar pattern emerged when it came to policy discussions about the civil war in Syria. Once again, senior officials faced a situation that tested their core assumptions and values: on the one hand, the conviction that the United States had a moral responsibility to intervene to halt mass atrocities, and on the other, a fear that U.S. forces would get bogged down in yet another military adventure in the Middle East. But in front of the president, officials regularly spoke a different language. Those who felt that Washington should try to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad asserted that he was a "magnet" for terrorist groups that could be eliminated only through Assad's removal. Meanwhile, officials who opposed intervention argued that the conflict itself was generating the vacuum that resulted in ISIS' rise

and that the goal therefore ought to be to de-escalate it; they also pointed out that many of the opposition groups asking for U.S. support had ties to al Qaeda.

But those examples and the often highly defensible decisions they produced are less important than the larger pattern they reflect. When officials package every argument as a variation on a single theme—how to more effectively combat terrorists—they are likely to downplay broader questions that they ought to squarely confront regarding the United States' role in the world, the country's responsibility to intervene (or not) on humanitarian grounds, and the relative importance of defending human rights or democracy.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Paradoxically, fixating on counterterrorism can make it harder to actually fight terrorism. The intense pressure to immediately address terrorist threats leads to a focus on symptoms over causes and to an at times counterproductive reliance on the use of force. Washington has become addicted to quick military fixes for what are too often portrayed as imminent life-and-death threats, or officials focus too much on tangible but frequently misleading metrics of success, such as the decimation of leadership structures, body counts, or the number of arrests or sorties. Of course, when it comes to an organization such as ISIS, it is hard to imagine any solution other than defeating the group militarily. But when dealing with the Afghan Taliban, for example, or violent groups elsewhere that have local roots and whose fighters are motivated by local grievances, it is hard to imagine any military solution at all.

Sometimes what's needed is a far broader approach that would entail, where possible, engaging such groups in dialogue and addressing factors such as a lack of education or employment opportunities, ethnic or religious discrimination, the absence of state services, and local government repression. These problems are hard to assess and require political, as opposed to military, solutions—diplomacy rather than warfare. That approach takes longer, and it's harder to know whether the effort is paying off. For a policymaker, and particularly for political appointees serving fixed terms, it's almost always preferable to choose immediate and predictable gratification over delayed and uncertain satisfaction.

But as the war on terrorism nears its third decade, and despite the elimination of countless terrorist leaders and foot soldiers, there are

now almost certainly more terrorist groups around the world and far more terrorists seeking to target the United States and its interests than there were in 2001. The United States is engaged in more military operations, in more places, against more such groups than ever before: in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Niger, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and the Sahel region, to name a few. The spread of such groups is hardly the result of U.S. policy failings alone. Still, it ought to encourage humility and prompt Washington to consider doing things differently. Instead, it has been used to justify doing more of the same.

One possible explanation for the resilience of the terrorist threat is that an overly militarized approach aggravates the very conditions on which terrorist recruitment thrives. The destruction of entire cities and the unintentional killing of civilians, in addition to being tragic, serve as powerful propaganda tools for jihadists. Such incidents feed resentment, grievances, and anti-Americanism. Not everyone who is resentful, grieving, or anti-American will turn to violence. The vast majority will not. But invariably, some will.

The Obama administration sought to improve the protection of civilians by establishing detailed constraints on counterterrorism strikes and unprecedented standards for transparency about civilian casualties. That approach proved easier to establish than to implement. Outside analysts argued that the administration did not go far enough, and journalists revealed troubling disparities in the way casualties were counted. But things have gotten far worse under Trump. In the name of unshackling the military and halting what Trump administration officials have disparaged as Obama-era "micromanagement" of the military's operations, Trump has loosened the rules governing the targeting of presumed terrorists, diminished the vetting of strikes, and delegated increased authority to the Pentagon. Not surprisingly, the number of drone strikes has significantly grown as a result; in the case of Yemen, the Trump administration carried out more airstrikes during its first 100 days than the Obama administration did in all of 2015 and 2016.

Today, the public knows little about what standards the military must follow before launching a strike, but there is little doubt that they have been relaxed. Nor is there much doubt that the rate of civilian casualties has increased. But it's hard to know for sure because the White House has weakened the transparency rules that Obama imposed at the end of his term. In a sense, such changes represent a

natural progression. They are an outgrowth of a discourse that presents terrorism as an existential threat, its elimination as a goal worthy of virtually any means, and secrecy as an essential tool.

Trump represents the culmination of that discourse. During the campaign, he blithely asserted that his approach to ISIS would be to "bomb the shit out of" the group's members and suggested that the United States should also "take out their families." *The Washington Post* recently reported that after he became president, Trump watched a recording of a U.S. strike during which a drone operator waited to fire until the target was away from his family. When the video was over, Trump asked, "Why did you wait?"

AVOIDING THE TERRORISM TRAP

There must be a better way to allocate U.S. resources, define national security priorities, and talk to the American public about terrorism. But it's hardly a mystery why a better path has been so difficult to find: few politicians are willing to challenge the dominant perspective, hint that the danger has been exaggerated, or advocate a less militarized approach. Fuzzy thinking mars even well-intentioned efforts at change. Senator Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee, and Senator Tim Kaine, a Democrat from Virginia, have proposed an update to the legislation that has governed most counterterrorism policy since 2001. Their bill seeks to rein in operations, put them on a sounder legal footing, and reassert Congress' long-neglected role. But if passed, the bill would end up codifying the notion that the United States is engaged in an open-ended war against an ever-growing number of groups.

Still, a window of opportunity might be opening. Despite its missteps on counterterrorism, Trump's national security team has declared that the biggest threats facing the United States result from great-power politics and aggressive "revisionist" states, such as China and Russia. Whatever one thinks of that assessment, it could at least help put terrorism in proper perspective. Moreover, the fight against ISIS appears to be winding down, at least for now, in Iraq and Syria. According to some polls, the U.S. public presently ranks international terrorism as only the third most critical threat to U.S. vital interests, behind North Korea's nuclear program and cyberwarfare. There is also growing awareness of the considerable portion of the U.S. budget currently devoted to counterterrorism. And Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont—and a once and possibly future presidential contender—re-

cently broke with orthodoxy by condemning the war on terrorism as a disaster for American leadership and the American people.

All of this amounts to just a small crack, but a crack nonetheless. It will take more to overcome the political trap that discourages officials from risking their futures by speaking more candidly. For example, Congress could create a bipartisan panel to dispassionately assess the terrorist threat and how best to meet it. Members of the policy community and the media could acknowledge the problem and initiate a more open conversation about the danger terrorism poses, whether U.S. military operations have successfully tackled it, and how much the global fight against terrorism has cost.

Future officeholders could rethink Washington's bureaucratic organization and the preeminent place granted to counterterrorism officials and agencies, insist on greater transparency regarding civilian casualties caused by U.S. military action, tighten the constraints loosened by the Trump administration, and press harder on allies and partners to act in accordance with international law. Finally, since sloppy language and bad policy are often mutually reinforcing, news organizations could impose on themselves greater discipline when covering terrorism. This would entail eschewing highly emotional wall-to-wall coverage of every attack (or even potential attack).

Washington's militarized counterterrorism culture, born in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, has tended to conflate the government's primary responsibility to protect citizens with a global fight against an ill-defined and ever-growing list of violent groups. This distortion has taken years to develop and will take years to undo. But that process will have to start somewhere, and it ought to start now.