

POLICY PAPER  
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# STRATEGIC COUNTERTERRORISM

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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

To achieve our long-term objective we must go beyond narrow counterterrorism policies to embed counterterrorism in an overarching national security strategy designed to restore American leadership and respect in the world. This leadership must be based on a strong commitment to our values and to building the structures of international cooperation that are needed not only to fight terrorists, but also to meet other key challenges of our time: proliferation; climate change and energy security; the danger of

pandemic disease; and the need to sustain a vibrant global economy that lifts the lives of people everywhere. We need to demonstrate that the model of liberty and tolerance embodied by the United States offer the best hope of a better life for people everywhere and that the terrorists, not the United States, are the enemy of these universal ambitions. We must pursue an integrated set of policies—on non-proliferation, energy and climate, global public health and economic development—which reflect a recognition that in an interdependent world, the American people can be safe and prosperous only if others too share in these blessings. Our policies must demonstrate a respect for differences of history, culture and tradition, while remaining true to the principles of liberty embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This kind of enlightened self-interest led others to rally to American leadership in the Cold War and offers the best hope for sustaining our leadership in the future.

## THE THREAT

The world is filled with terrorist organizations. While the State Department’s list of designated groups includes almost four dozen, numerous well-known ones are still omitted because of issues related to the designation process.<sup>1</sup> Yet of the many organizations, only one subset currently poses a serious and sustained threat to the United States and its allies: the Sunni jihadist organization known by the shorthand

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<sup>1</sup> “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.” U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 8 Apr. 2008. <<http://www.state.gov/sct/rls/fs/08/103392.htm>>.

“al Qaeda”. The group merits this special status because it is the only terrorist organization with the ambition and the capability to inflict genuinely catastrophic damage, which can provisionally be defined as attacks that claim casualties in the four digits or higher. The group is also unique in that it may eventually be able—if it is not already—to carry out a campaign of repeated attacks that would have a paralyzing effect on American life and institutions. Its ability to foil fundamental U.S. strategic goals—as it did in Iraq and as it threatens to do together with the Taliban in Afghanistan—has been amply demonstrated. As the turmoil in Pakistan has demonstrated, its capacity for upsetting the geopolitics of major regions of the world today is also unrivaled among non-state actors. The evidence provided by September 11, 2001 is sufficient to demonstrate the group’s capability and its determination. Unlike most terrorist groups, it eschews incremental gains and seeks no part of a negotiation process; it seeks to achieve its primary ends, including mobilization of a large number of Muslims, through violence.

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

How great is the threat? Was 9/11 a one-off? The questions allow for no certain answer. In a series of National Intelligence Estimates and briefings, the intelligence community has made clear its belief that the aggregate threat is growing.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it has become common to hear critics say that the terrorist threat is not existential, and some argue that even including the casualties from 9/11, the likelihood of an

American dying from terrorist attack is minuscule—less than it would be from slipping in the shower, for example. But much the same could have been said of the chance of dying in a nuclear attack at the height of the Cold War. Terrorism is not an existential threat in the sense that 150 million Americans could be wiped out in an afternoon. But the possibility of a devastating attack or series of attacks—perhaps including WMD—is real. (We should not lose sight of the fact that al Qaeda has aggressively sought nuclear materials since its earliest days and biological weapons since the late 1990s.) Such an event would have profound consequences for the United States in terms of the lives lost and shaken confidence in our political system.

## FRAMING THE RESPONSE

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, “National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland.” The Director of National Intelligence, July 2007. <[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070717\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf)>. and “Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate. Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States.” April 2006 <[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf)>.

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



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

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

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

Can we make that case? One frequently heard counter-argument is that we cannot—that the structure of attitudes among most Muslims is so hardened that any effort to change “hearts and minds” will fail, and that any U.S. action will be reinterpreted into the framework of Muslim grievance. Unfortunately, this

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

is not a frivolous objection. Among some Muslims, it is accepted that the U.S. stood secretly behind the killing in Bosnia and Kosovo and only intervened when events threatened to get out of hand; that the 1991 Gulf War was not about liberating Kuwaitis and safeguarding other neighbors of Iraq so much as humiliating the one country in the region that stood up to Washington—and so on.

But there is no evidence that a sustained American effort to rehabilitate its image would bear no fruit—and surely much would depend on how the case was made.<sup>4</sup> The fact remains that America was once viewed as the great anti-colonial power in the Middle East and elsewhere, and just a few years ago, polls showed Muslims enamored of American freedoms and American society. Moreover, the degrading conditions in many Muslim countries as depicted, for example, in the Arab Human Development Report, together with the projected demographics of the region, mediocre economic performance and environmental decay, suggest that the pressure for change will only grow, and the inclination to blame the United States for the current situation may increase.

## PREREQUISITES FOR REPOSITIONING

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

1. **Iraq:** The United States needs to draw down its forces in Iraq. So long as it is seen as an occupier, any kind of constructive engagement with most Muslim societies will be extremely difficult.

The departure of U.S. troops should not be precipitous, but it also should not be held

hostage to moderate fluctuations in the level of violence. Ideally, the withdrawals will be carried out in the context of a broader political agreement involving the parties within Iraq and Iraq's neighbors, though this too cannot be a hard requirement for removing troops. A limited troop presence with the specific mission of conducting counterterrorism operations—so long as it agreed to by the Iraqi government—should be acceptable and desirable.

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

2. **The Middle East Peace Process and Support for the Palestinians:** The United States must launch a sustained effort to restart the Middle East peace process and ameliorate the plight of the Palestinians. No issue is higher on the list of concerns for Muslims.<sup>5</sup> Six years of

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

<sup>5</sup> Telhami, Shibley. “2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll: Survey of the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland.” Available at: <[http://www.brookings.edu/topics/-/media/Files/events/2008/0414\\_middle\\_east/0414\\_middle\\_east\\_telhami.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/topics/-/media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf)>. See also Esposito, John L., and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. Gallup Press, 2008.

neglect of the peace process have done enormous harm to America's standing in the region, and the efforts that emerged from hastily assembled Annapolis Conference have hardly mitigated that damage.

Given the extraordinary decay in the socio-economic conditions in the Palestinian Territories, more will also be required. The fact of a Hamas-controlled Gaza complicates matters greatly, but the United States must work to change the perception that it is indifferent to the sufferings of the Palestinians. As a concomitant to reenergized negotiations, an economic package that strengthens job growth, infrastructure, and education in the West Bank—and, if Hamas makes appropriate concessions, in Gaza—is essential.

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

**3. Revalidate America's Moral Character:** The international community, and Muslims in particular, requires a revalidation of America's moral character and mission.<sup>6</sup> Before any deeper engagement is possible, those who are on the fence about America's global role need to be convinced that the U.S. has not forsaken the rule of law and, following Vice President Dick Cheney's famous remark about needing "to work...the dark side," has not made torture and other human rights violations a permanent part of the struggle against terror. This will require at a minimum affirmative declarations by the next president that America does not torture, investigations to clarify what was done, the closing of Guantanamo military

prison and any remaining "black sites," a clear and sustainable policy on rendition and compensation to those who have been mistreated. These inquiries must be carried out in a sensitive and depoliticized manner—requirements that suggest that either a 9/11-type commission or a "truth and reconciliation" effort be created. It is essential that such an undertaking not become another incitement to partisanship, but, at the same time, there are doubtless numerous stories such as those of the destroyed interrogation tapes waiting to come to light. A comprehensive effort is required to deal with this chapter in American history, bring other such episodes to light and help establish the nation's post-Bush ethical standards. It bears emphasizing that whatever benefit this may have for our international standing, it is even more vital that we do it for our own moral wellbeing.

## A POSITIVE AGENDA

The United States must re-establish global trust in its leadership, and, clearly, different approaches are required for different regions. Given the U.S. reaction to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the need is particularly acute for policies with a special salience for Muslims.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Esposito, John L., and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. Gallup Press, 2008. See also "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other." Pew Global Attitudes Project. 22 June 2006. Available at: <<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?reportid=253>>.



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

Making progress with such an agenda will take many years. It will cost a great deal of money.<sup>7</sup> It will be difficult to manage, not least because modernization itself is widely viewed in less developed countries with wariness and even antipathy, and it will be rejected if the changes that are sought are seen as “Westernization” and a conspiracy against local cultures. But if the West does the necessary groundwork to demonstrate that it genuinely seeks the peaceful and culturally respectful modernization of Muslim countries—and sees such a development as being a global priority—a major symbolic victory will have been achieved. It is worth mentioning a few rules of the road for such a project:

- A measure of success will only be possible if the United States and its allies, especially the wealthy countries of Europe, achieve a remarkably higher level of coordination. U.S. credibility—not to mention financial resources—is so depleted that it could not hope to push such an effort by itself. This must be a genuinely broad-based project.
- To the extent possible, ownership of reform should be located in these countries.

Indeed, the paradox here is that successful reform will advance the process through which Muslim nations are declaring their independence of the West. Over the long-term, that should also be in the United States’ interest.

- There must be an understanding that a reform agenda will not diminish terrorist violence any time soon. If the former is hostage to the latter, it will fail.

It is reasonable to ask whether any of this is possible, and it must be conceded that there is not a lot of basis for optimism. As if the obstacles posed by entrenched autocracies were not sufficiently forbidding, the political obstacles United States and the European leaders would face in building domestic support for a deeper and costlier engagement in the Muslim world are daunting. One can, however, counter this pessimism by noting the successes of a comparable engagement in the second half of the twentieth century in Asian countries such as South Korea and in post-war Western Europe.

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

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

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

Although there have been signs of hope in the last few years, many developing nations, including most Muslim countries, suffer from sclerotic, undiversified economies with woefully inadequate job creation. The development of the middle class lags, reducing hope for the emergence of viable democracies. Some countries, of course, need no financial help—the oil monarchies. Improving the situation for the rest will require a number of different tools: financial assistance, trade deals, and technical assistance. There is no cookie-cutter approach, but the relative roles of each must be weighed carefully.

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

Deciding how democratization fits into this scheme will be challenging. In most Muslim countries there is a genuine rage at appalling governance and corruption—a central grievance of jihadists, who speak of the “apostate” rulers, thus translating the anger into a religious idiom. As mentioned earlier, even if the U.S. and Europe did not create these autocratic regimes, anger is directed against us because we are seen as the prop that has kept the autocrats in power.

Consequently, it is essential that democratization be an element of American policy and that the U.S. and its allies are seen by Muslim (and especially Arab) populaces as being on the right side of this issue.

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

Room for maneuver is limited. U.S. policy will need to combine a steady rhetorical support for democracy and its advocates with an effort to increase our leverage through increased assistance that is granted with significant conditionality. Where possible, the United States and its allies should work to win the trust of

<sup>8</sup> Wittes, Tamara C. *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy*. New York: Brookings Institution, 2008. Heydemann, Steven. “Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World.” Saban Center Analysis Paper, Brookings Institution. 2007. Available at: <<http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/10arabworld.aspx>>.

one or more Muslim national leaders and help them open up their countries' political system. To build a constituency for change, the United States must do the same with religious leaders and other appropriate national prominences.

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

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

#### **A Varied Threat and the Need for Varied Responses:**

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

Some countries require particular attention. Pakistan, for example, represents the most difficult problem

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

#### **REGIONAL MILITARY POSTURE/USE OF FORCE**

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

While the U.S. military engagement in the region thus remains essential, it is important to recognize the disadvantages of using the military tool in counterterrorism. In this respect, the nation needs to readjust its understanding of what works. Faced with a powerful threat, our instinct is to wheel out our most powerful response: the armed forces. Yet the large majority of counterterrorism work depends on action in the realms of intelligence and law enforcement, in part because most of the places where terrorist activity

occurs are within functioning states. Most of these states are our friends, or, at a minimum, not states we want to attack. It may seem obvious, but we need to use less kinetic means in these cases.

At times, military action will be appropriate, as it was in 2001-2002 in Afghanistan, the world's first terrorist-sponsored state. In Afghanistan today, military force remains necessary because of the continued threat from the Taliban and the specter of the country becoming again a safe haven for al Qaeda. Indeed, Afghanistan will remain a must-win for the U.S., though many will debate what winning means. There will likely be a call for the use of force in some other areas, including possibly Lebanon, Somalia, Yemen, and Gaza. Ultimately, in Afghanistan and perhaps in areas such as these, a mix of special operations forces and conventional units from some outside power is needed to chip away at these insurgencies. But even when military force is used, the model of warfare won't be so much the early years of the Iraq occupation but the classic counter-insurgency campaigns devised by Gallieni in French Indochina or Sir Robert Thompson in British-run Malaya. This kind of warfare is 90 percent civil action and 10 percent "kinetic"—guns and bombs. It can only succeed if it is carried out in the name of a government that is perceived as relatively legitimate and can tap large numbers of civilian experts to win loyalty through the provision of vital services to an immiserated population.

Even with the wisest of policies, however, our experience in Iraq has clearly illustrated how problematic the instrument of military force is for fighting terror, especially against an ideologically driven foe like the jihadist movement. The downsides of a military response against jihadists are manifold. First, as we learned in Vietnam and elsewhere, occupations—or any large-scale presence of foreign troops—arouse resistance. We must avoid spurring recruitment through unwise deployments—and as the influx of foreign fighters in Iraq has shown, the presence of a non-Muslim military on Muslim soil can radicalize young men from neighboring and distant countries.

Second, a policy of relying on ground troops to fight militants plays into the terrorists' game: they are happy to have the targets brought closer to them for easier

attack. This allows them to demonstrate their bona fides to their audience by striking at the perceived occupiers—thus relieving them of the harder job of mounting long-distance terrorist attacks. Ground troops operating in an alien environment may eventually get the upper hand, especially if they have local proxies to work with, but the terrorists are likely to enjoy significant recruitment gains first.

In part, that is true because of a third problem with confronting terrorists with military force: it has the effect of glamorizing the enemy. That is, the terrorists can then plausibly portray themselves as the true standard-bearers of Muslim dignity and the only actors who are prepared to confront a hated occupier. The tableau of these fighters in action, taking up arms against the world's most powerful military force, has had a galvanizing effect on radicals around the world. This has been especially true because of the broad distribution on the internet of videos of al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and allied groups in action. The insurgents understand the value of these videos. They often deploy two or more camera crews to film the action, recognizing that the presentation of the act is at least as important as the killing itself. Caches of these videos have been found in the possessions of innumerable terrorist cells, including many that have carried out attacks. (In addition to denying its opponents the subject matter for such videos, the United States also must study how to turn the internet and modern communications technologies to its benefit in the struggle against radicalism.)

Large-scale military efforts to deal with terrorists typically leads to other benefits for our opponents, as we have seen in Iraq and elsewhere. They gain critical experience in tactics, create new networks of support as well as the social bonds among disparate groups that will enable future collaboration. It also gives them opportunities to raise more funds, acquire weapons and the like. Finally, the use of military force against terrorists is frequently unwise because it is inevitably indiscriminate and often results in the alienation of exactly those individuals in a given community who we do not want radicalized. Military action against terrorist targets often causes the deaths of innocents, no matter how much care is taken. With scores and

perhaps hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths during the years of the U.S. presence, many Iraqis have come to blame the tragedies that have befallen their families and communities on the United States.

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

## TACTICAL COUNTERTERRORISM

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

The large majority of tactical counterterrorism work involves intelligence and law enforcement because most of the places where terrorist activity occurs are within functioning states. Most of these states are our friends, or, at a minimum, not states we wish to attack. For the most part, we have the fundamental tools necessary for the job, though we will continually need to improve our performance if the threat persists and the terrorists gain greater knowledge of our methods. To maintain progress, the U.S. will need to sustain a high level of investment in technology—especially signals intelligence—and we need to have a less-politicized, serious discussion about our surveillance needs abroad and at home. We will also need to improve the quality of intelligence analysis, which has been uneven in recent years, and we will need to untangle some of the mess caused by the recent rounds of intelligence reform. Reorganization has created additional layers of bureaucracy and not, as intended, dramatically reduced turf battles or improved intelligence sharing. Further reorganization, however, would be a mistake, consuming time and resources better devoted elsewhere. It would be more useful to implement small fixes and redirect energies into counterterrorism instead of wire-diagram revisions. To put it another way, the intelligence community cannot afford another round of surgery.

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

Cutting the flow of resources to terrorists must remain a high priority. It is not possible to bring terrorist activity to an end through financial interdiction—terrorism is too cheap, and the possibilities for funding too abundant. But it is nonetheless essential to continue taking steps that make it more difficult for terrorists to operate. Thus far, cutting terrorist financing has been one of the more successful areas of counterterrorism activity. Work to stop terrorist financing has a salutary effect in terms of elucidating

financial byways and illuminating the origin of some terrorist resources. It has also helped deter some radical sympathizers into reducing their support of terror for fear of having their assets seized.

One of the fundamental reasons for the tactical successes of recent years has been the high degree of international cooperation in the fight against terror—the unsung success of the post-9/11 period. We should not take for granted that this cooperation might decay or that there is not room for improvement. As the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on “The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland,” noted, “We are concerned, however, that this level of international cooperation may wane as 9/11 becomes a more distant memory and perceptions of the threat diverge.”<sup>9</sup>

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

However eager national leaders and top civil servants are to maintain their countries’ relationships with the U.S. intelligence community, it cannot be ruled out that further revelations of human rights abuses will trigger popular moves to limit cooperation with the United States, especially in Europe. This could have severe consequences for our counterterrorism work. Whoever occupies the Oval Office in January 2009 must affirm that the United States does not engage in

or condone torture in any way and that the struggle against terror will be conducted in accordance with traditional respect for the rule of law. A new administration should not shy away from investigations of the misdeeds of the last six years (perhaps a bipartisan “truth and reconciliation” commission approach), and it should seek a return to the tradition of serious bipartisan oversight of intelligence activities.

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

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

These are among the most important kind of counterterrorism missions. Highly mobile, highly lethal counterterrorism operations are clearly possible. Israel scored victories with raids in Entebbe, Uganda; Tunis; and Beirut, Lebanon, in the 1970s and 1980s. The September 2007 operation against a Syrian nuclear target is another such achievement in the realm of counter-proliferation. Other countries have carried out similar operations, like Germany’s Mogadishu raid of 1977, which freed passengers on a Lufthansa plane hijacked to Somalia by the Baader-Meinhof gang. Because the Pentagon has shown that it cannot

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<sup>9</sup> Director of National Intelligence. “National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland.” July 2007. <[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070717\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf)>.

carry them out, it may be time to ask the CIA to perform them. (The Agency, to be sure, had its own risk aversion issues before 9/11, but its culture seems considerably more amenable to such undertakings than the military's.) This is a capability the U.S. needs.

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

By doing this, the United States can fulfill the strategic imperative of shaping the battlefield. We already have considerable experience in this area through the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program and other more general law enforcement and intelligence assistance programs administered by the State Department and other federal agencies. What has been lacking is a comprehensive approach. Taken all together, spending on ATA and related non-military programs has run to less than \$1 billion. A program that was significantly enlarged and better coordinated, within the U.S., and with other donors and in the recipient countries, could produce competent intelligence officers, border security authorities, financial investigators, prosecutors and judges. There will be considerable challenges in dealing with capacity-building in the areas of intelligence and law enforcement in countries that have few democratic safeguards—and that will be a limiting condition. Ultimately, though, the United States should be as energetic in this area as possible without compromising our fundamental values. The nation has a strong interest in integrating others into the counterterrorism effort because we cannot defend everywhere all the time by ourselves. We should do so, moreover, with the explicit goal of helping others deal with the terrorist threats that confront them, too. For numerous countries, al Qaeda is but one of many threats, and often not the

most pressing one. The United States has squandered much political capital by paying insufficient attention to the threats others face—Turkey's perception that it was not receiving adequate support for its campaign against the PKK, which precipitated a crisis in bilateral relations in late 2007, was the outstanding example—and by focusing exclusively on al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Bush administration helped promote the impression that the war on terror is solely about safety for Americans and hostility to Muslims.

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

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

Although numerous international organizations now take counterterrorism issues into consideration in their work, no single institution focuses primarily on the issue. The U.S. should back the establishment of an international organization to raise global norms of behavior by states to ensure that terrorists find it more difficult to act within any country or region. The creation of such an organization would have the further virtue of removing the perceived "made in America"

label from the struggle against terror, which has been a disincentive to cooperation for some states.<sup>10</sup>

## MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

One Muslim population deserves special attention: America's. A key reason why the U.S. has not been struck again is that American Muslims have shown little interest in the global jihad. They are, as a group, highly diverse and well-integrated. While generally critical of U.S. foreign policy, most American Muslims are deeply rooted in the United States. Any actions that single out an ethnic or religious community in the U.S.—even for affirmative treatment—are fraught with peril. At the same time, America's Muslims must also be the nation's first line of defense, since they are likely to encounter radicals, whether homegrown or imported, before anyone else. Their trust in and cooperation with U.S. law enforcement is going to be critically important.<sup>11</sup>

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

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

Officials should denounce incidents of anti-Muslim sentiment quickly and vigorously.

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

## HOMELAND DEFENSE

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

Hence, it is vital that the U.S. government skillfully manages the consequences of an attack and ensures that, for example, a stricken city is back on its feet as soon as possible. Americans—and the enemy—must see the U.S. government responding swiftly, calmly and effectively to the crisis. Both prevention and ef-

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<sup>10</sup> The agenda of such an organization should include:

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

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



fective consequence management are essential to limiting the terrorists' "profits" from an attack.

We cannot harden every potential target against conventional attack. We need to evaluate what is most critical and how we can ensure that critical services are maintained despite attacks. The belief that fighting "them" in Iraq would mean that we would not have to fight them at home, combined with a negligent attitude toward the hard work of governing, has meant our homeland security programs have suffered drift at a critical time. We have squandered the years since 9/11, again, largely through excessive reorganization and an unwillingness to match the resources to needs. One only need look at the devastation and continued mess caused by Hurricane Katrina to recognize how far the United States is from having effective consequence management. No place in the nation has sufficient hospital capacity for the serious burns that a sizable terrorist attack would cause, a disruption at a major point could have a choking effect on the economy, and the threat of shoulder-fired missiles could ground air traffic indefinitely. The technical literature is overflowing with critical unmet needs in the area of homeland security, and no further recitation is required here. For the most part, the prioritization of requirements is best left to homeland security specialists.<sup>12</sup>

### **Preventing a Terrorist Attack with WMD.**

Two threats, however, have a strategic quality that requires addressing: biological and nuclear terrorism.

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

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

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<sup>12</sup> Clarke, Richard A. *Your Government Failed You: Breaking the Cycle of National Security Disasters*. Hopewell: Ecco, 2008. CRS Report RL30153 "Critical Infrastructures: Background, Policy, and Implementation," by John D. Moteff, updated March 13, 2007. Available at: <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/RL30153.pdf>>. CRS Report RL34455 "Nuclear Power Plant Security and Vulnerabilities," Mark Holt and Anthony Andrews, January 18, 2008. CRS Report RL33787, "Maritime Security: Potential Security Attacks and Protection Priorities," by Paul W. Parfomak and John Frittelli, January 9, 2007. CRS Report Code RS22393, "State and Urban Area Homeland Security Plans and Exercises: Issues for the 109th Congress," Shawn Reese, March 3, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> On the agenda of such a policy, the following steps are essential:

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

## PUBLIC POSTURE/PUBLIC EDUCATION: DEMobilizing the POPULACE, IMPROVING THE GOVERNMENT'S MOBILIZATION

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

The U.S. needs to develop an broadly accepted understanding of how the terrorist phenomenon can be managed and reduced, and it needs to acquire an understanding—as, for example, some European nations have—that most attacks have limited consequences. Terrorism is going to be a fact of life for the foreseeable future. In the case of jihadist terror, the ideology is durable and has, for some Muslims, a compelling authenticity because of its appropriation of canonic Muslim texts. To a significant extent, the ideology cannot be disproven, though repeated setbacks may convince followers that it is a dead end. The rise of jihadism is part of a deeper set of tectonic changes within Islam associated with a crisis of authority within the religion. How long violence and anti-Western sentiment will be a central issue in the redefinition of Islam is impossible to predict. Moreover, the fuse that was lit in Iraq with the invasion and resulting insurgency may not burn down for

some time. Roughly a decade intervened between the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan and the scattering of the victorious mujahedin and, later, al Qaeda's presentation of itself on the world stage. It is therefore difficult to predict when the consequences of Iraq will be fully felt.

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

## THE THREATS OF TOMORROW

Creating a new attitude toward terrorism—along with getting the right mix of law enforcement and intelligence policies—is all the more important because the danger will not cease once jihadism is brought under control. The relentless advance of technology means that the barriers to entry for those wishing to commit violence are falling. There are many different ways the phenomenon could evolve—the spread of religiously motivated terror to other traditions, anti-globalization violence, radical environmentalist violence, the list is long. With the United States military vastly stronger than all other conventional competitors, military analysts expect asymmetrical warfare to be the norm for a long time to come; that may well involve the rise of terrorist networks that operate semi- or fully independently of countries whose “cause” they share. “The privatization of violence,” is a phrase that has been much used to describe the rise of the new terror. The expression needs to be understood as an historic dynamic. Because of the accessibility of dangerous technologies, violence will be privatized into the possession of ever smaller, “more private” units. The

power that will soon be at the disposal of very limited groups and even individuals will be considerable—think about how few people it might take to create a biological weapon. Such a development would extend the paradigm shift in warfare that became evident on 9/11 and that could determine the essential nature of security for decades to come.

This is not a reason for despair. The societies of the developed nations, with their enormous research es-

tablishments, will devise technological remedies and countermeasures. But it will take great ingenuity, vision and determination to keep ahead of those drawn to terrorist violence. This will require the continued deployment of government and private sector resources, and it will demand that government is organized and mobilized to meet the danger. For meeting this challenge, the essential element will be leadership that is focused and determined to impart to the nation a sober understanding of the threat.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**DANIEL BENJAMIN** was named director of the Center on the United States and Europe and a senior fellow in Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution in December 2006. His scholarly interests include American foreign policy, European affairs, terrorism, the Middle East and South Asia.

Prior to joining Brookings, Benjamin spent six years as a senior fellow in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. From 1994 to 1999, Daniel Benjamin served on the National Security Council staff. As director for transnational threats in 1998-1999, he was responsible for keeping the President and the National Security Advisor briefed and prepared with policy options regarding terrorism and for helping manage interagency counterterrorism coordination. From 1994-1997, he served as foreign policy speechwriter and special assistant to President Clinton. Before entering government service, he was a

foreign correspondent for *TIME* Magazine and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Together with Steven Simon, Daniel Benjamin has written two books. *The Age of Sacred Terror* was published by Random House in 2002 and documents the rise of religiously motivated terrorism and American efforts to combat it. *The Age of Sacred Terror* was named a New York Times Notable Book of 2002 and was given the Arthur Ross Book Award of the Council on Foreign Relations, the largest U.S. prize for a book on international affairs. *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting it Right*, was published by Holt/Times Books in 2005 and named a Washington Post “Best Book” of 2005. He also edited *America and the World in the Age of Terror: A New Landscape of in International Relations* (CSIS, 2005).

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