



**THE MILITARY CONFLICT INSTITUTE (TMCI)**  
*TO FOSTER PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF MILITARY CONFLICT*

## **War on Terrorists**

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The Military Conflict Institute (TMCI) is a non-profit, public service organization with the goal of fostering public understanding of the nature of military conflict. Its members are a diverse group of professionals from the United States and other nations who are and have been deeply involved in conflicts and national security. This paper (1) lays out some theoretical foundations of our discussions to provide an understanding of "war" and (2) assesses the continuing conflict in light of both theory and reality.

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## **FOREWORD**

The Military Conflict Institute (TMCI) is a non-profit, public service organization with the goal of fostering public understanding of the nature of military conflict. Its members are a diverse group of professionals from the United States and other nations who are and have been deeply involved in conflicts and national security. TMCI was founded in 1979 and initially focused on providing a structured theoretical basis for modeling combat within the general hierarchy of combat, campaigns, wars, and military conflict, all of which exist within the broader context of human conflict. Some of the results of our work, including *A Concise Theory of Combat*, may be viewed at our web site: <http://www.militaryconflict.org/>.

Our research, past reports, and on-going work seek to identify and describe those fundamental characteristics of military conflict, war, and combat that apply to all times, all places, and all cultures, recognizing that there are many differences in wars throughout the ages. But the important point is that there are many common aspects that provide insights into the principles, axioms, and processes of war. Our current work focuses on preparing *A Philosophy of War* that describes war in the context of military operations combined with human, economic, political, social, and cultural factors in the furtherance of political goals and objectives.

In October 2001, as an exception to our normally broad historical and theoretical presentations and discussions, several members of the institute devoted a major portion of the 30<sup>th</sup> General Working Meeting at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, to discuss the current conflict, popularly known as the “War on Terrorism.” Members had studied the emerging situation from the time of the attacks on September 11, recalled precursor events, drew on their experience and information about other wars and conflicts, and came to several conclusions at that meeting. Additional research since the meeting in October has added to our knowledge about the “War on Terrorists.”

This paper (1) lays out some theoretical foundations of our discussions to provide an understanding of “war” and (2) assesses the continuing conflict in light of both theory and reality. Contributors include Wayne Hughes, Itzhak Ravid, Ted DuBois, Greg Wilcox, Frank Benedict, Larry Low, and Russ Vane; we appreciate and have studied the professional analyses and background papers published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Strategic Forecasting Incorporated, and many other public sources of information and commentary. It is written early in the War on Terrorists, and ongoing progress of the war may overcome or change some of the conclusions reached in November 2001.

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## **WAR ON TERRORISTS**

### ***Background***

On September 11, 2001, the world was shocked by the violent terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon buildings and by the crash of a fourth commercial airliner in Pennsylvania. In an era of instant news coverage, many of us witnessed the events in real time. Quickly, public and governmental reactions drew peoples of all nations into the horror and emotions of the situation. Gradually, as the shock diminished and information emerged, United States and international responses sought to explain and counter future terrorist threats and to retaliate against those whose actions had caused the attacks. Subsequent threats and attacks (e.g., cyber attacks, threat to damage California's bridges) might be parts of a complex, well-orchestrated series of campaigns in a war that we don't fully understand.<sup>1</sup>

### **Can we fight an "ism"?**

The political slogan, "War on Terrorism," has gained popularity, and it is similar to other labels, such as the War on Poverty or the War on Drugs. But we need to examine some fundamentals about both war and terrorism before adopting the slogan as a label for the current situation.

### ***War—the theory***

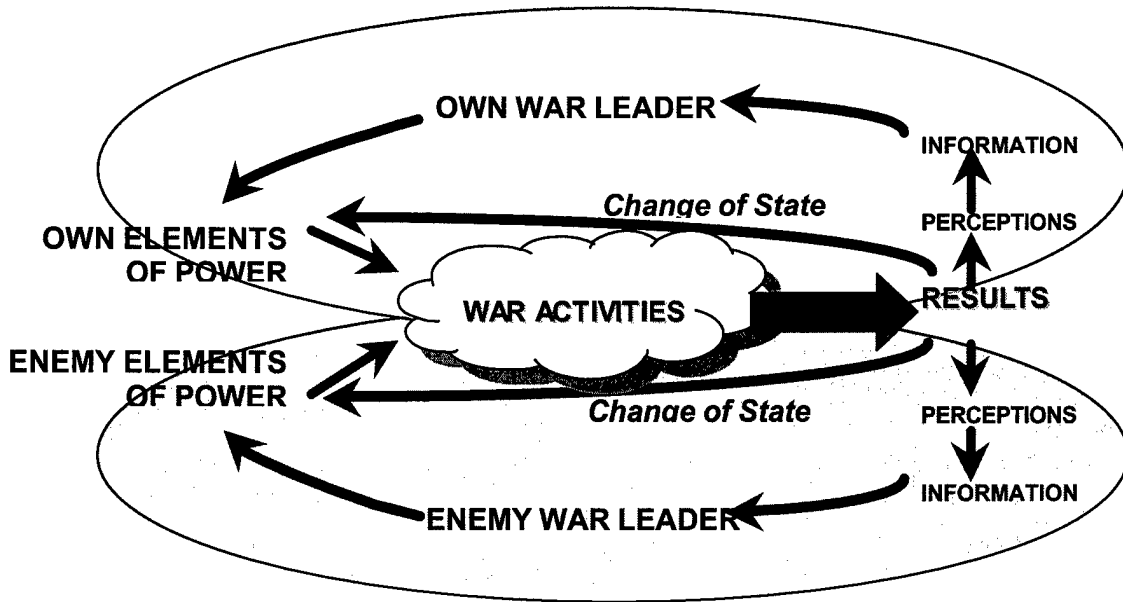
War is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will, a state of open and declared armed hostile conflict between political units such as states or nations, a violent clash between hostile forces to accomplish political purposes that have value to that political entity. The governments or groups involved normally employ all of their elements of power (e.g., economic, military, diplomatic, religious, cultural, political, public will) to achieve their war aims and objectives. And that is done by changing the state of our elements of power (strengthening them) and changing the state of the enemy's elements of power (to make them less effective), thereby achieving a relatively more favorable balance of power favoring our side.

### **Changing the state of elements of power**

Once the war is engaged, each war leader assesses the information at hand and directs his own myriad elements of power to conduct activities against the opponent to change the state of both friendly and enemy elements of power. The results have both actual effects (real changes) and apparent effects (perceptions of the results that are converted to information to the war leaders). Even the actual changes in one's own elements of power can become misperceived and distorted in the reporting, so that both opposing war leaders base their decisions on perceptions of the changed state of friendly and enemy elements of power that are communicated as information. Based on that perceived information, each war leader will continue to direct his own elements of power, seeking to achieve the established or revised war aims. The basic concept is shown in the following graphic.

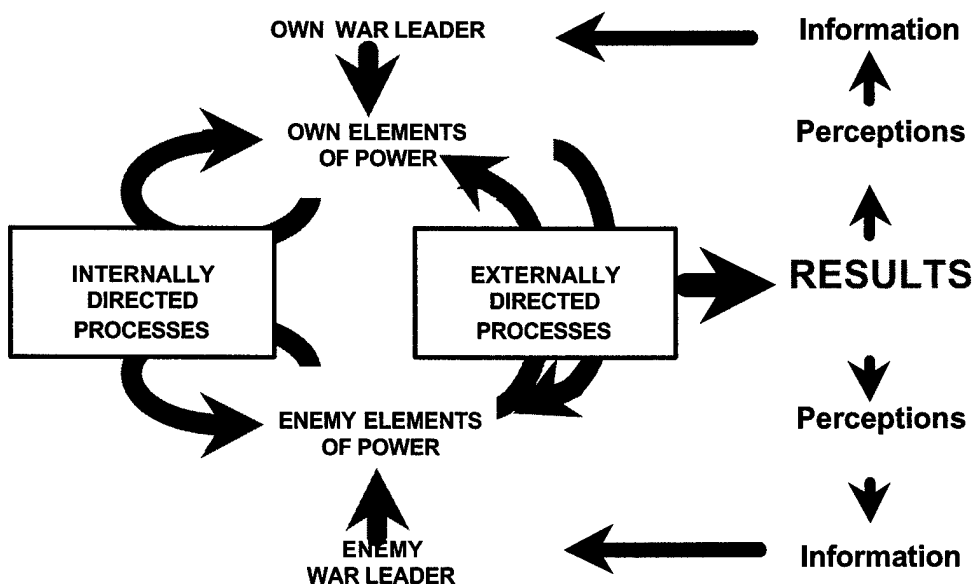
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<sup>1</sup> Some people believe that this is "Fourth Generation Warfare," not "merely" terrorism. See [www.d-n-i.net](http://www.d-n-i.net).



**Processes of war and dynamics**

War leaders seek to change the state of their own and their opponent's elements of power by applying the processes of war, both internally and externally, that are contained above in the collective term "war activities." Again, each war leader directs his own elements of power by applying internal processes to increase the potential of his own elements of power and directing external processes of war to decrease the enemy's potential as illustrated below.



**Internal processes**

There are several things that we want to do to bolster our own war potential—internally directed processes that change the state of (increase, improve) the war potential of our own elements of power. These include:

- Command and control. The exercise of authority by war leaders to direct and coordinate all of the other processes.
- Motivation. The infusing of patriotism and support of the war effort by the citizenry and wielders of the elements of power, not just military forces.
- Sustainment. The resources and materiel to support the war effort over protracted periods of time, including national will, natural resources, industrial or manufacturing might, and wealth.
- Movement. The transportation, physical repositioning, and electronic transfers of people, things, and intangibles in support of the war effort.
- Protection. In anticipation of an enemy's reaction, preemption, or natural catastrophe, war leaders must provide security and preserve the means of conducting a war.
- Information Acquisition. Without understandable data, information, and knowledge, a society is virtually helpless in deciding to go to war, preparing for war, and conducting wartime operations.
- Communication. The complex processes that enable all of the rest of the processes; the flow of information supporting every process of war.

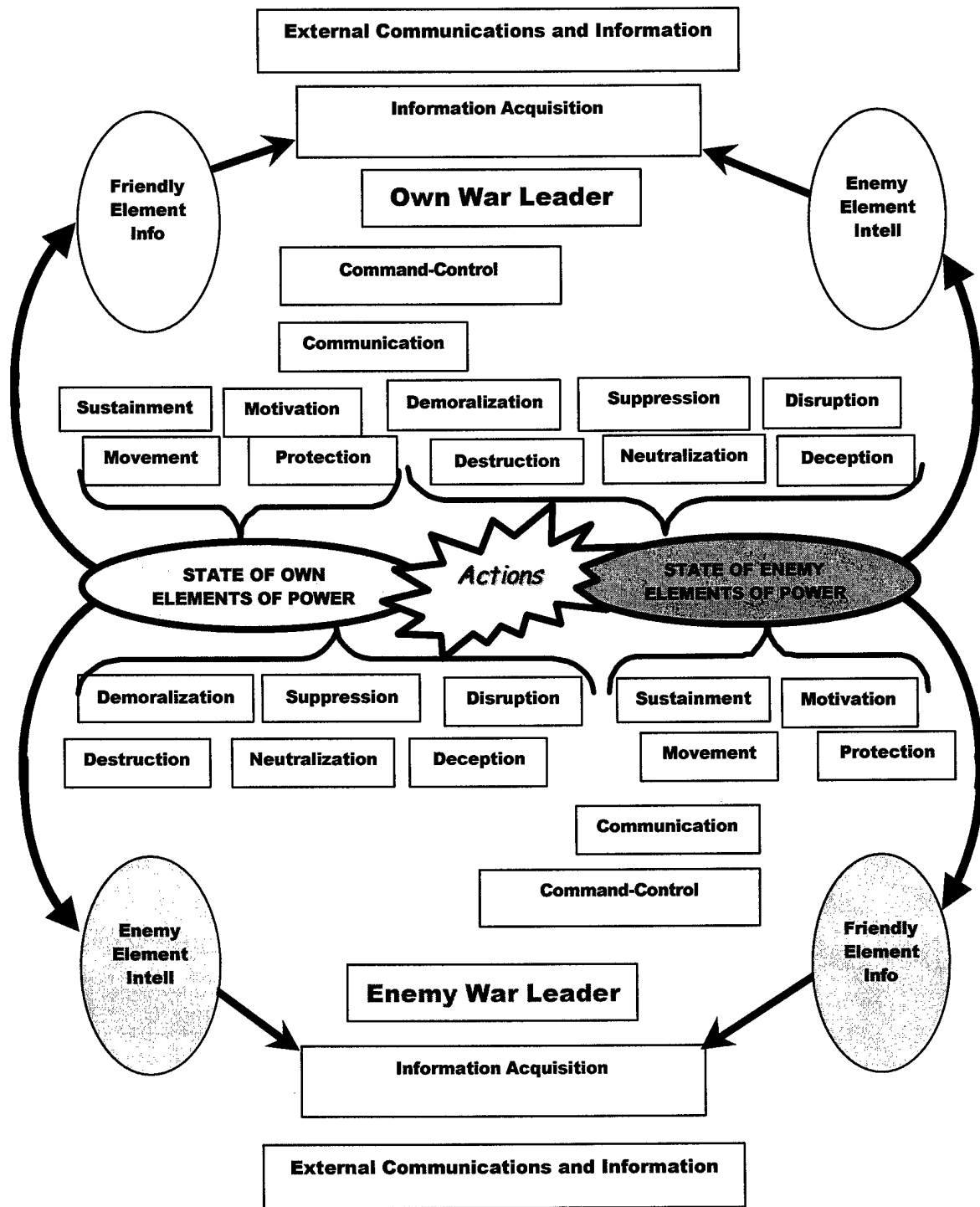
**External processes**

We also want to decrease our opponent's war potential and power by applying these externally directed processes against his elements of power—to change the state of (eliminate or decrease) the enemy's elements of power. These include:

- Demoralization. Destroying the motivation and will of an enemy society and its people, especially those who exercise their elements of power.
- Suppression. Primarily a military process, suppression keeps an opponent from using his military forces, economic might, diplomatic skills, and other war-supporting resources.
- Disruption. The process of interfering with, interrupting, distracting, or disrupting an opponent's activities to decrease effectiveness.
- Destruction. The (usually) violent obliteration, annihilation, or devastation of an enemy's resource base, facilities, military forces, economic structure, or people.
- Neutralization. Activities undertaken to eliminate, eradicate, or significantly diminish an opponent's resources, forces, or effective elements of power; to render critical capabilities useless.
- Deception. Misleading, tricking, or otherwise tricking or hiding one's own capabilities and intentions from an opponent.

**Overall processes of war**

The internally and externally directed processes of war are generally under the control and decision authority of the war leaders. In addition, there is the mass of information communicated in the fully external world—neutrals, allies, trading partners, and others who have varying interests in the direct and dominant war processes. These are illustrated below.





**Understanding war**

The simplified structures and graphics above provide a basic understanding of what war is, how it should operate, and the core processes that political entities (e.g., governments, rebel groups, alliances, coalitions) use to achieve their political objectives. The list of processes isn't comprehensive or definitive, but students of war can include just about all historic war activities under one or more of the 13 processes. For example, negotiation is a subcategory of neutralization and communications. Economic sanctions could be included in demoralization, disruption, and motivation. Deterrence is a subcategory of neutralization. The point is that these 13 war processes provide a relatively short but fairly complete array of what each war leader seeks to do to increase the potential of his own elements of power, to decrease the potential of the enemy's elements of power, and to collectively achieve his political war aims—changing the state of relevant friendly and enemy elements of power to favor his own side and achieve his political objectives.

**Terrorism**

Next, let's examine the term terrorism from the victims' viewpoint (supporters of terrorist activities might view those violent actions as justifiably restoring or maintaining their cultural belief system—like “freedom fighters”). Everybody knows it when they see it or read about it, but there are many organizations that practice terrorism in different ways and to different degrees. The IRA, Ku Klux Klan, Basque separatists, FARC, Hamas, and the other scores of politically-driven factions are unlike in their political goals. But they are much alike in their characteristics. Terrorists are fanatically committed to strong beliefs, sometimes exploited by their leaders. Their leaders are charismatic, proven in combat and war, and dedicated.

Terrorists may or may not be state-sponsored, but are seldom a part of organized armed forces of a government or nation.<sup>2</sup> Their long term goals and persistence in trying to achieve those are usually to restore or establish “just” and proper traditions, ways of life, governance, and cultural environment—often, their long term commitment outlasts that of their opponents. Terrorist acts are violent, surprising, shocking, and usually targeted on civilians.

Terrorism is politically-driven with a psychological twist, but the goals might not be ascribed to a legitimate government. Terrorists are seldom territorially impaired and sometimes tribally oriented, with elements in adjacent countries or provinces. Although there may be a centrally controlled policy and planning involved, individual cells are often almost autonomous in carrying out the approved policies toward political goals. Some terrorist organizations have most of these characteristics, some have only a few in common. But no one, especially the Government of the United States and its allies, can fight a belief system directly—our contrived political slogan of “War on Terrorism” is attractive to the media and the public.

But our war is more accurately a “War on Terrorists”—identifying real enemies and waging a multi-faceted war against people.

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<sup>2</sup> Some nations use military “death squads” as part of their internal defense program to control their own citizens.

**Definitions**

There are scores of definitions of terrorism in use by media, governments, and commentators.

**Terrorism**

The definitions below are in common use; we'll generally use the first definition.

- **The intentional and indiscriminate use of violence by a radical or fanatical group to inflict wide-spread casualties on innocent citizens (and government officials and military members) to demoralize, intimidate, induce psychological fear, compel submission, and subjugate them—used as a political weapon.**
- **A strategy to cause and use violent events to stimulate a feeling of fear in the citizens of a polity leading to a belief in the powerlessness of their government to protect them from future violence and to undermine political will.**
- **The intentional, indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians for political, religious, economic, and other purposes.**

**Terrorist**

Having built a working definition of terrorism, it is pretty easy to define terrorists as those fanatics, radicals, and some elements of military forces who intentionally commit violence against civilians to achieve political objectives.

***Moving from theory to reality***

The sections above summarize some of the theoretical thoughts about war and the general scope of terrorism. Now we can focus on the events that occurred on September 11, 2001; preceding yet related events; and perhaps the future. What happened on September 11 was clearly an act of war, and those attacks have been treated as such. But is it, as Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld declared, a new kind of war? Not really.

Terrorism has been a part of warfare throughout history (e.g., Mongols, Nazis, Alexander the Great on occasion, the Christian Crusades). The value of inducing fear into the minds of a population, causing them to surrender or pay tribute, was recognized as a preferred way of achieving political goals rather than resorting to combat in battle.

**The current enemy**

Past attacks (e.g., USS Cole, Khobar Towers, 1998 embassy bombings, 1993 World Trade Center bombing) and repeated threats by radical, militant, fundamentalist, Islamic religious extremists<sup>3</sup> have been blamed on al Qaeda (an Arabic term meaning “the base” or “the source”), led by Osama bin Laden.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Some analysts refer to these groups as Islamists, a derogatory term offensive to moderate Muslims.

<sup>4</sup> Spellings of Arabic and other words differ; transliteration between two dissimilar languages often has flexible rules. For example, al Qaeda is also al-Qa'ida. And a reliable source notes that Osama should be spelled Usama. This paper generally adopts the more prevalent spellings (al Qaeda, Osama).

More recent intelligence confirms that Osama, al Qaeda, and the harboring Taliban “government”<sup>5</sup> of Afghanistan are our enemies in the current war on terrorism.

### Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda (or the emerging al Qaeda Jadid—the “new base”) encompasses loose-knit, semi-autonomous groups of militant Islamic fundamentalists technologically tied together by global networks, using and threatening use of sophisticated weapons—not the traditional form of terrorist actions. Al Qaeda is led by Osama bin Laden, two principal deputies (Ayman al Zawahri and Mohammed Atef), several other lieutenants and staff committees (e.g., finance, planning, logistics). Operating cells of those with similar beliefs support the political, economic, military, and religious goals of al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is neither a government nor a nation...although Osama and his staff are protected by the Taliban government of Afghanistan. Cells exist in 60-80 countries, and their policy-coordinated operations have common goals in general. As with other terrorist organizations over the centuries, al Qaeda and its affiliated groups use asymmetric means and untraditional methods in executing their strategies.<sup>6</sup> But that isn’t new either—war leaders seek to exploit their opponent’s vulnerabilities in innovative ways; al Qaeda is showing great skill in surprising us with their attacks.

Unlike many terrorist groups, al Qaeda grew from economic growth and advantage, from upward mobility, not from poverty.<sup>7</sup> Most terrorist groups are disadvantaged in one way or another, oppressed, and desperate. But, as Adam Garfinkle points out, economically developed nations’ demands for oil infused Saudi Arabia with great wealth, which contributed to the export and support of fundamentalist Islamic beliefs, as discussed below. Where did al Qaeda come from? What are its roots?

### Islam

The religion of Islam (to surrender to the will or law of God) was founded by the Prophet Mohammed (ca. 570-632) beginning in 610 based on revelations from Allah (The God in Arabic) via the angel Gabriel and recorded in the Koran. Muslims, those who follow the Koran, exported their religion widely and forcefully over the next century, conquering more territory in

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<sup>5</sup> The long civil war in Afghanistan is among competing tribes (e.g., Uzbeks, Turcomen, Tajiks, Pashtuns, Heratis, Hazaras) and differing religious foundations. The Taliban, meaning “students of Islam,” has a debased Deobandist fundamentalist Islamic base; the city of Herat has a tolerant Sunni Islam, cosmopolitan heritage. The civil war has destroyed governmental abilities to even look like a nation. The traditional tribal homelands overlap the artificial map boundaries that describe Afghanistan. The Taliban’s declared aims are (1) to restore peace, (2) to disarm the population, (3) to enforce fundamentalist Sharia law, and (4) to defend the integrity and good [meaning fundamentalist] Islamic character of Afghanistan. The Taliban government in Kabul is powerless; Mullah Mohammed Omar makes all major decisions. Omar named himself Amir-ul Momineen (Commander of the Faithful) and Emir of Afghanistan on April 6, 1996, while wearing the sacred Cloak of the Prophet Mohammed. Omar is a religious supreme power, but not the President or Premier of Afghanistan. Afghanistan, under the Taliban, has become the largest Opium Cartel in the world.

See Ahmed Rashid’s very insightful book, *Taliban*, published in 2001 by Yale University Press.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Dr. Itzhak Ravid’s excellent paper, *Theater Ballistic Missiles and Asymmetric War*, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, August 21, 2001. This paper and his presentation at the 30<sup>th</sup> General Working Meeting at the Naval Postgraduate School introduce concepts of STRONG (and rich) and WEAK (and poor) opponents, their power and tolerances for inflicting and sustaining casualties.

<sup>7</sup> This difference and the use of technologically sophisticated tools of warfare (e.g., global communications networks, innovative tactics) are key to understanding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century terrorists.

a shorter time than any other previous conqueror (Genghis Khan surpassed that record, but later). Traditional Muslim-ruled territories spread across the mid-East, north Africa, into Spain and France, into the Balkans and up to Vienna, and well into Asia. Over time, Islam moderated in many ways, relaxing some religious restrictions and practices as Muslims encountered and did business with other cultures—the existence of diverse Islamic sects (e.g., Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili, Sufi) looks much like the rise, proliferation, and diversification of Protestant Christian churches after the Reformation. But relaxation of standards was not universally accepted or desired.

### **Wahhabism**

Muhammad ibn Abdul al-Wahhab (1703-1792) was an Arabian religious firebrand who sought to restore fundamental, pure religious Islamic laws and practices to those basic tenets of the Koran, without the moderating influences of other, less rigorous Islamic groups. His faith and fervor were based on the Koran and the Hadith (the body of traditions based on what the Prophet said or did regarding various issues), as well as formulations by Mohammed and the first three Caliphs who led the Islamic believers after Mohammed's death. Al-Wahhab, as a fundamentalist, instituted a radical form of Islam that was an austere, strict, and unsullied interpretation based on original source documentation and beliefs.

Wahhabism didn't spread far or quickly, and it still has its strongest adherents in Saudi Arabia. It did find favor in British India as Deobandism, a form of Sunni Hanafi Islamic practices, and mutated into fundamentalist teachings in Pakistan, where it became the form of Islam taught to Mujahedin students (Taliban). Wahhabism preaches the subordination of spiritual concerns to political-legal concerns, taking on a more governmental tone, although it demands that believers practice the five "pillars of faith" (profession of faith, prayer, giving alms, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca) and other teachings of the Koran and Hadith. Wahhabism captured the religious minds of many Arabs, but it wasn't until the massive influx of wealth from oil-consuming corporations and nations that it began to spread.

With the growing economy and wealth in Saudi Arabia, wealthier Wahhabists encouraged the proselytization and economic support of their brand of religion within the Kingdom and other nations. In recent years, approximately \$10 billion has been spent annually to export the Wahhabist belief system—first to Pakistan among the Pashtun tribal elements (especially the Durannis) and thence to Pashtuns in Afghanistan, especially to the Pashtun-dominated Taliban (translates as "students of Islam"). Osama bin Laden had already converted his followers to essentially Wahhabists fundamentalist Islamic beliefs throughout the al Qaeda organization.

### **Osama bin Laden**

The central leader of al Qaeda is the 17<sup>th</sup> of 24 male children in his family. His father sired 54 children with a total of 11 wives (only four at a time, divorcing one to marry another). He was the sole offspring of his Syrian-born mother, and she was the only Syrian wife—the other 10 were Arabs or Egyptians. Osama and his mother were ostracized, and his half-siblings kept close ties based on matriarchal bonds—Osama was a loner. He was more religious than most of his siblings and was attracted to Wahhabism at an early age. His father's wealth, based on construction or renovation of mosques and government buildings, created a large estate; Osama inherited \$300 million, most of which has been spent in supporting the war efforts of the Mujahedin against the invading Soviet forces in the 1980s and in promoting Wahhabism.

Osama is a respected war chief, enduring hardships in terrible weather, treacherous terrain, and dangerous military operations during the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He led and leads by example and is deeply committed to his cause, dedicated, charismatic, and heroic in the eyes of most Afghans and Pakistanis.

His principal deputy, Ayman al-Zawahri, is the former leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad<sup>8</sup> who was sentenced *in absentia* to death for his part in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. Al-Zawahri, the other deputies (Mohammed Atef is the second principle deputy), and lieutenants loyal to Osama bin Laden provide an experienced pool of potential leaders of al Qaeda should bin Laden be killed in ongoing military operations. Al-Zawahri may be leading the strategic planning effort, with extensive staff assistance, of the series of attacks that confront the United States and other opponents of al Qaeda.

### Al Qaeda's war aims

No one can be sure of the political,<sup>9</sup> economic, and military goals and objectives that convinced al Qaeda to go to war through terrorist attacks on the United States, but one can postulate a wide range of diverse, yet connected, war aims. The potential causes for going to war and the possible war aims are directly related, so the following set of causes and aims are posed to imply the causes by suggesting the war aims in several areas, each with the goals of changing the state of elements of power of the United States.

### Political

Al Qaeda and others in the Muslim world see the increased influences of the United States, economically developed nations, Christians, and Israel as attacks on their traditional, religion-based political systems. From the time of the Crusades, such "invasions" have threatened the fundamental foundations of Islamic societies and nations—both political and religious. There is the Islamic extremist view that US bureaucratic incompetence (e.g., failing to establish a rational energy policy that is less reliant on oil, contradictory commercial and diplomatic strategies, attacking Muslims in Bosnia while supporting Muslims later in Kosovo) has created the chaotic situation facing Islam. In addition, some Muslims believe that the United States has an arrogant disregard for the nations and peoples whom they choose to exploit—a mantra of being the "indispensable nation" among the powers in the mid-East and throughout traditionally Muslim territory. The consumer society appetite of developed nations for oil brought both great wealth and terrible corruption, especially in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam and Wahhabism. Some fundamentalist Muslims believe that the continued presence of thousands of US military troops, including *women*<sup>10</sup> soldiers following the US "invasion" of Saudi Arabia (in lieu of adopting Muslim self-defense by Osama bin Laden's offer of proven warriors) in 1990 reflects a complete breakdown of the Kingdom's capability to lead the Arab and Muslim world. But al

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<sup>8</sup> Jihad (the struggle) has two meanings. One is the inner struggle of moral discipline and commitment to Islam and political action; the other is external and involves conflict (not necessarily violence) with other faiths and religions—the struggle to convert others to Islam.

<sup>9</sup> The political aspects of a fundamentalist Islamic organization may look more like religion, in that religion is the foundation for the group's structure and belief system—what other groups would call political bases.

<sup>10</sup> Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and similar fundamentalist Islamic extremists subjugate women and see women in uniform (in other societies) as a severe weakness, cultural cowardice, and lack of male courage in that society.

Qaeda probably does not consider US policies regarding the Israeli-Palestinian situation as a major cause—perhaps part of the general war aims to reduce or eliminate “foreign” influences and “purify” Islam. Therefore, al Qaeda probably has the following political war aims (and probably more):

- Motivate and unify the people of Islam and Muslim nations.
- Neutralize US propaganda efforts.
- Demoralize the US public and moderate allied support.
- Disrupt additional segments of the US economy and way of life.
- Destroy decadent, commercial economically developed national (and eventually Israeli) influence in historically Muslim territories.
- Expel all infidels from traditional Muslim governed territory.

### **Religious**

Al Qaeda, spurred primarily by Osama bin Laden, adheres to fundamentalist Islamic teachings of Wahhabism—preaching the return to original religious teachings of the Prophet. In parallel, the spread of Deobandism (a fundamentalist form of Islam created in British India in the 1800s) into Pakistan through education of Afghan students in *madrassas* (Islamic schools) in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan complemented the religious fundamentalist tendencies of many Pashtuns (in Pakistan and Afghanistan) and those brought in twenty years ago by Osama bin Laden and his Arabs. Several reinforcing factors led to the establishment of the minority fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan and their support of bin Laden and al Qaeda.<sup>11</sup> With the disappearance of schools in Afghanistan, the increasingly illiterate and untaught youth inducted into both al Qaeda and Taliban military forces have only the strong militant, fundamentalist Islamic beliefs pounded into them by the Mullahs to guide their lives. The religious causes of this war range from the historical (getting even for the Christian Crusades) to the modern (e.g., countering invasive Christian proselytizing efforts, eliminating Jewish influences, restoring fundamental Islam). The resultant religious war aims include:

- Destroy, neutralize, and eliminate Christian influence in Muslim territories.
- Remove the US military presence desecrating the holy land of Saudi Arabia.
- Sustain and increase fundamentalist Muslim fervor.
- Extend the spread of Wahhabism to all Muslims, just as it was spread from Arabia to Pakistan to Afghanistan through the building of mosques and *madrassas* over the last twenty years.

### **Economic**

Al Qaeda did not grow out of poverty and economic envy; the oil-fed funding of religious proselytization flowed from Saudi Arabian wealth.<sup>12</sup> Osama bin Laden’s personal wealth came from inheriting \$300 million from the massive construction profits accrued by his father’s huge corporations, again funded by Saudi governmental and Islamic projects based on oil sales. Without this enormously successful economic base and the Saudi-Islamic commitment to spend those profits in support of fundamentalist Islamic expansion, al Qaeda would have disappeared

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Osama built the home where Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban leader, lives. Osama also provided construction funding for many major projects in Afghanistan.

<sup>12</sup> Unlike terrorist organizations in other parts of the world that rise from poverty and want, take hostages for ransom to finance their activities (and enrich their leaders), and loot the local citizenry and commercial facilities indiscriminately as a primary objective to pay for weapons and sustainment.

many years ago, as did many equally committed bands of Mujahedin during and after the Afghan-Soviet war. Again, the failed US energy policy and developed nation dependence on mid-East oil could be seen as self-inflicted causes of the war. Al Qaeda's economic war aims are probably less important than political and religious aims; they include:

- Disrupt the US and economically developed nations' economy.
- Restore natural resource controls and commercial ventures to Islamic control.
- Retain and distribute oil profits to improve the standard of living of all Muslims, not just the ruling elites.

### **Cultural**

Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and other militant fundamentalist Islamic groups around the world see the United States and its people as decadent, immoral, arrogant, cowardly, and weak—and worse. Historically, the United States has either supported or tolerated Islam (e.g., in Kosovo) or confronted Islam (e.g., in Bosnia, as a supporter of Israel). And those who support the United States are undeserving of respect as well.

On the other hand, al Qaeda and others see their cultural superiority in many ways—preserving knowledge of the ancients as Christian Rome fell and the Dark Ages descended, maintaining cultural traditions in the face of “progress,” centuries-old beliefs versus economically developed nations' flitting, military successes (e.g., driving out Soviet invaders versus the still unresolved Gulf War conflict). Fundamentalist Muslims see themselves as courageous—and that has been shown many times. They are committed and dedicated traditionalists—and worse. They have a strong macho honor, seeing women as temptresses to be kept in *burkhas*<sup>13</sup> and at home while the macho warriors do battle with the infidel, the *kafir* (unbeliever). There may be only a few cultural war aims in the current war:

- Sustain and strengthen traditional cultural and religious standards and behavior.
- Destroy or neutralize undesirable economically developed nations' cultural distractions and evil influences.

### **Military**

In this current campaign in the war on terrorists, there probably are only a few al Qaeda military war aims:

- Protect Osama bin Laden and his deputies.
- Deceive US and other intelligence sources as to the location of Osama bin Laden.
- Sustain al Qaeda military forces in the region.
- Motivate al Qaeda's soldiers to continue the fight.

But there are some relevant military underpinnings that provide insights. United States military failures in the last 50 years (e.g., US forces in Korea, Viet Nam, Gulf War without closure, Bosnia, Kosovo) are seen by al Qaeda and others as signs of military weakness. Even our political resolve is in question, since our largest recent war against a Muslim military force in the Gulf War failed to supplant Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athi influence in Iraq. Additionally and more recently, the United States didn't retaliate in an effective military manner to the bombing of

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<sup>13</sup> The voluminous, opaque garment that completely covers and conceals a woman's body—except for the eyes.

the WTC in 1993 or attacks on the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998.<sup>14</sup> Even more recently, President William Clinton pardoned a group of Puerto Rican terrorists, showing increased US political “softness” towards terrorism.

Al Qaeda began as a guerilla force supporting the Mujahedin almost twenty years ago. They have proven their military competence against overwhelming traditional military forces, weapons, and tactics in the Afghan war to expel the Soviets and subsequently in the intertribal wars of succession—after which the Taliban seized power. Al Qaeda and other militant fundamentalist Islamic extremist groups have waged successful terrorist attacks without serious military defeat (except perhaps in the case of Palestinian-Israeli attacks and retaliations), convincing them that “Allah is on our side.” Military funding has been plentiful<sup>15</sup> and weapons are readily available in the post-Cold War era; training of guerillas and terrorists combines military skills and religious fervor. Mao Tse-Tung and others have shown remarkable success with this form of war—the difference in the current case is the level of religious (versus Communist) dedication, the willingness to inflict many casualties on innocent non-combatants, and willingness to absorb, to the point of suicide, casualties on one’s own forces. Or maybe it isn’t all that different (remember the massed Chinese horde attacks in Korea).

### **Interim objectives of al Qaeda**

The short-term objectives are a bit clearer. And this is where the theoretical processes of war provide an analytic model to describe what al Qaeda is trying to do. These are some candidates:

- Demoralize the US and economically developed nations’ populace (e.g., show inability to defend property and citizens; reduce confidence in the government and its leaders; play on the decadent, materialistic, complacent, weak, consumerist, self-centered personality of citizens).
- Destroy high visibility targets; first the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon, then other structures and assemblies of people using different weapons and tactics.
- Disrupt normal economic, social, and commercial activities (e.g., air travel, tourism, freedom of unimpeded access, consumer confidence).
- Provoke East-West (fundamentalist Islamic extremism versus capitalist democracy) conflict.
- Neutralize or reduce the effectiveness of banking and commerce (e.g., direct attack on the “Zionist-controlled” center of investment in New York, perceived through the hatred-filled terrorist eyes as the heart of international, Zionist-led international commerce; secondary objectives included struggling airlines, declining US economy, travel, and tourism).
- Motivate other Muslims to join the Jihad.
- Protect terrorists in safe havens.

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<sup>14</sup> The two embassy attacks killed 224 people and injured about 4500. The dozens of retaliatory US cruise missile strikes on August 20 hit six targets in northeastern Afghanistan, killing more than 20 people and wounding 30 others, almost none of whom were Arabs—most were Afghans and Pakistanis in training to fight in India-controlled Kashmir. These ineffective attacks led to the phrase, “use a million dollar missile to destroy a hundred dollar tent.”

<sup>15</sup> At least until the US and other nations froze certain financial accounts and invoked other economic pressures.



**Al Qaeda's strategy and tactics**

Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al Qaeda provide centralized policy direction, permitting the aligned terrorist cells to conduct specific operations in an almost autonomous manner; there aren't a lot of communications or orders or reports flowing through private or commercial channels. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and emerging threats (e.g., radiation weapons, small pox, imaginative scares) show careful central planning—well in advance.

For example:

- There were multiple operations, at least one of which (the crash in Pennsylvania) did not fully succeed, to compensate just for such possible failures.
- Al Qaeda-trained terrorists infiltrated early, obtained identification, enrolled in pilot training, lived unlike fundamentalist Muslims, and spent cash freely.
- The tactical timing was coordinated in a general sense, with the “echoes” and reinforced shock and horror of the second air crash into the World Trade Center, followed by the crash into the Pentagon—more effective than precisely timed simultaneous attacks.

It isn't clear that the timing of the September 11 attack wasn't loosely tied to the flagging US economy—a sudden, downward effect to topple the US and international stock markets as the US approached some sort of brink. The terrorist cell members were dispersed, well trained, and dedicated. They practiced great deception, living a non-Islamic way of life prior to the attacks.

Al Qaeda and its members have a long-term commitment to Jihad. Their endurance and persistence will undoubtedly result in continued follow-on attacks against the United States, its territories and citizens at home and abroad, and nations who support US goals and objectives. These attacks, as were the preceding embassy attacks, attack on the USS Cole, Marine barracks bombing, and the World Trade Center bombing and more recent attacks, will likely involve new and unusual methods and tactics (asymmetric in nature) and dissimilar weapons and surprises.

**United States war aims and responses**

After the initial shock subsided, the United States moved quickly to set some initial objectives in place, to reassure the public, and to threaten al Qaeda (“the terrorists” until intelligence sources confirmed with a high degree of assurance that Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the attack cells were closely linked). Due to the international and religious breadth of the attacks (citizens of approximately 70 countries died in the World Trade Center attacks) and threats, there was a need to set political priorities and war aims and to conduct response planning in several geographic and functional areas.<sup>16</sup>

**Homeland security and defense**

Immediately after the attack, priority was placed on identifying and detaining anyone remotely suspected of participating in or aiding the terrorists involved in the September 11 attacks, as well as finding others who might be planning to conduct future attacks on US citizens or facilities.

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<sup>16</sup> Early after the attack (September 24-28, 2001), Strategic Forecasting Incorporated, in Austin, Texas, published a five part analytic series, “War Plan,” on their web site [www.STRATFOR.com](http://www.STRATFOR.com). The analysis postulated four major theaters of operations: Afghanistan, North America, Intercontinental, and Follow-on. That became one of the key background documents for the discussions by members of The Military Conflict Institute in Monterey in October.

National security strategists and planners recognized the likelihood of follow-on attacks (or threats of attacks) of a similar or dissimilar nature, some credible, some not so credible. In parallel with detaining suspects, the US government initiated a major public affairs and propaganda campaign to (a) reassure US citizens, (b) place blame, and (c) promise harsh retaliation in the “War on Terrorism.” President George W. Bush appointed a cabinet-level Director of Homeland Security, Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, to coordinate detection, preemption, and defensive programs against the expected follow-on attacks.<sup>17</sup>

Some people believe that “defenses” against terrorist attacks in the United States (and elsewhere) are almost impossible to construct and maintain, that they would be prohibitively expensive and restrictive to law-abiding citizens, and that al Qaeda or any other dedicated terrorist group would seek out and exploit unforeseen vulnerabilities in clever and devious ways, nullifying all efforts to “defend.” At the same time, detecting and detaining terrorists and preventing some of the potential attacks (e.g., improved airport security, enhanced border control) can be moderately effective in protecting US citizens and property.

Direct defense against many forms of terrorist attack may be ineffective, and the only way to truly prevent all further terrorist attacks is to eliminate the source of those attacks through highly effective, violent, overwhelming offensive actions—mainly military. At the same time, other elements of power (e.g., will of the people, economic, political, diplomatic, religious) should be employed in a well-coordinated strategy to “attack” the foundations of al Qaeda, not just its leaders and members.

The war aims associated with Homeland Security include:

- Protect US citizens and territory.
- Motivate the public, here and around the world, to support the war on terrorists.
- Neutralize identified terrorists in the United States.

### **Public opinion**

The most pervasive and difficult campaign of the war on terrorists is associated with generating and maintaining supportive public opinion, marketing our policies and “justness” throughout the world, mounting an effective propaganda program against our enemies, and sustaining these efforts in the face of increasing media coverage of the United States prosecution of the war.

The world is used to almost real-time television reporting from CNN, Fox, al Jazeera, and others—seeing and hearing about both real and misrepresented destruction, damage, and casualties (not just from military actions, starvation is likely) create a strong influence on the public. There is also the concern, in a protracted war on terrorists, that the public will become distracted, bored, and complacent—tired of the whole thing. US policy objectives should include:

- Communicate our policies, objectives, and intentions in a factual, convincing manner.
- Motivate the American public to support the current war effort.
- Sustain public support in the United States and allied nations.
- Demoralize al Qaeda, fundamentalist Islamic extremists, and their supporters.

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<sup>17</sup> Governor Ridge’s duties are much broader than those stated herein—it’s a big job.

- Deceive the enemy and those people who support them with funds, recruits, and supplies to divert their efforts from more effective support to less useful actions.

**Allied and friendly nations**

The United States has a propensity, when faced with any crisis, to go bomb somebody—an almost automatic, emotional reaction. In the war on terrorists, the diplomatic initiatives were taken **first** by the United States to:

- Motivate friendly nations to build a consensus.
- Divide the world into those who back the United States and those who support terrorism.
- Construct a coalition to confront terrorists—economically (by freezing funds), politically (by reducing the legitimacy of Afghan leaders), diplomatically (by meeting with and winning support of key nations, often Muslim nations), and militarily (by securing promises of landing rights, basing rights, military forces, and other support).

Nations that “signed up” for this coalition essentially opened themselves to attacks by al Qaeda simply because they support the United States.

An interesting development occurred early in the diplomatic campaign, when Secretary of State Colin Powell visited several friendly nations in the mid-East, including those that were in the Coalition during the Gulf War. Pundits opined that Secretary Powell, on advice of United States policy makers, made those visits to strengthen the resolve of those Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden’s birthplace and source of fundamentalist religious commitment. Only after his return was it revealed that the leaders of the nations that he visited had actually been deeply concerned that the United States’ resolve in this instance was insufficient and that the US would not “see the thing through” as we failed to do in the 100-hour long Gulf War. They wanted to be assured that the US would in fact dedicate itself to finding and killing Osama bin Laden and eliminating al Qaeda forever.

For the first time, NATO invoked the provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty declaring that an attack on any member nation was an attack on all, and that NATO nations therefore had the duty to respond in concert with the United States. Great Britain was an early and enthusiastic ally; other nations joined in with promises of help. Additionally, Russia and some of the key Commonwealth of Independent States countries nearest Afghanistan promised assistance.<sup>18</sup>

**Afghanistan**

President Bush made several non-negotiable demands to the Taliban, including turning Osama bin Laden over to US authorities. The United States also made it clear that those in authority who harbored terrorists would be dealt with in the same way as the terrorists (presumably by sanctions and military attacks). The US war aims in Afghanistan are to:

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<sup>18</sup> This was not unexpected, since the lengthy wars of succession in Afghanistan have pitted the Pakistani-backed fundamentalist Taliban (Durrani Pashtun tribal core) against the loose coalition of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turcomen, Heratis, and Hazaras—essentially “family” members of tribes in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan (the Hazaras’ blood lines are a mix of Mongol invaders from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and local tribes in central Afghanistan, and the Heratis are compatible with Iran). The resultant United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (known as the Northern Alliance), created on June 13, 1997, is a fragile and temporary alignment of traditional tribal foes united to unseat the Taliban and restore some sort of ethnic, religious, and tribal coalition government.

- Isolate and destroy Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda forces (economically, physically).
- Create consensus, especially among Muslim nations, to gain support of US goals and objectives (e.g., Muslim leaders could dissuade sympathizers and recruits).
- Remove the Taliban from power, restore a viable government, and rebuild Afghanistan.
- Motivate other nations to assist.

But alliances involve compromising US principles and objectives to some extent and accommodating our allies' objectives to some degree.<sup>19</sup> And allied or coalition political, diplomatic, military, and economic activities consume inordinate time in planning, approval, and execution, delaying what could have been more timely and forceful actions.

On the military side, the emergence of air power advocates in the United States and NATO after Kosovo (where bombing of military targets was ineffective) and the increased US reluctance to take casualties or to inflict significant casualties on our enemies (perhaps products of the Gulf War) depict a stunted military capability, particularly in an asymmetric conflict (and most are). It could be that the military war aims of both sides are more accurately in the realm of the media and public opinion. Easily distracted, soft, self-centered Americans may become bored with unremitting war news or repelled with TV scenes of dead and wounded innocent civilians and bloody US casualties and demand an end to the war on terrorists. The military war aims are driven by political decisions that are driven by public opinion.

The overall war aims and strategies for Afghanistan involve two campaigns—against Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda and against the Taliban government of Afghanistan. And these are two very different, albeit interrelated, situations faced by the United States and its allies. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda are based in Afghanistan, so they must be isolated and destroyed. That should be "Job 1" in US planning and execution...and maybe it is. But al Qaeda forces and bases have been attacked with only a moderate degree of success; al Qaeda has not been isolated or defeated—unfinished business.

US planning in the war against terrorists necessarily included actions against the Taliban government, financial institutions, and military forces of Afghanistan—NOT the population, whom the US continues to support through increased humanitarian aid. Afghanistan is one of the most, maybe *the* most, impoverished, women-oppressive, destroyed, unhealthy, psychologically depressed and despondent, uneducated and illiterate, chaotic, ungoverned, and unrecognized countries in the world. It has been in a continuing downward spiral since the Taliban seized control of most of the territory and the governmental infrastructure.

**So what are you going to do to the Taliban?** There is an organized bureaucracy in Afghanistan headed by Mullahs appointed as Ministers and Generals, but the Mullahs are frequently shifted to other duties to ensure that no one creates a power base to challenge Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Amir-ul Momineen and Islamic spiritual leader. At this point, only Pakistan recognizes Afghanistan and the "governing" Taliban, and even Pakistan supports US

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<sup>19</sup> There is a principle of war, "Conservation of Enemies," that suggests that the political war leaders should not take on more opponents than they can handle. The parallel principle, "Conservation of Allies," amounts to the same thing—don't get so much support (and it will cost something to repay each ally for that support) that your own goals are compromised or simply disappear in the tradeoffs.

and allied operations against Afghanistan. There are Taliban military forces—trained, equipped, and led (at least at tactical levels) by experienced soldiers who are used to hardship, poor rations, fighting, and “winning.” And the Northern Alliance is at best unstable and of questionable reliance. The long-standing intertribal wars do not create great trust and confidence among those tribes in the Northern Alliance, and internal unrest is reported frequently. Bombing isn’t the answer here, since the country is essentially rubble after twenty years of warfare.

This must be a coordinated operation, integrating diplomatic, economic, and cultural measures as the “main attack.” Supporting military operations have already included suppression of air defenses (gaining air supremacy for ineffective bombers). The US and Britain have attacked command and control centers (but the Taliban military forces are used to autonomous and independent operations). Additional military operations (e.g., Special Forces advisors, raids) are moving slowly behind the scenes. And there is progress in the ground war by the Northern Alliance, supported by US and allied forces. But that isn’t enough.

The United States must apply diplomatic, economic, and political pressures to accomplish the more difficult goals of rebuilding a viable nation—a lengthy proposition in Afghanistan.

**Build on success**

For the long run, the United States must decide the extent of the war on terrorists. Will the public and our allies become disenchanted with a lengthy involvement in Afghanistan? Is the economic cost worth the value of destroying bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the Taliban? Has the United States made too broad a commitment in declaring a “war on terrorism”?

As with any war, progress depends on success. Political leaders can’t take the second and third steps without successfully completing the first step, and that is the case in the war on terrorists. Presuming success in Afghanistan (and security in the United States throughout the war), what are the next steps?

The United States must take the lead in building and maintaining a consensus of nations. Terrorism confronts and threatens many nations, not just the United States, and we must convince others that terrorism must cease to be a threat to vital values (e.g., economic well being, international commerce, improved standards of living, better health, safety of our citizens and territory). In particular, the US must solicit Arab and Muslim nations and leaders to support a peaceful world, one without terrorism...and especially one free from threats by militant fundamentalist Islamic extremists. Again, the US must recognize the principles of “Conservation of Enemies” (don’t try to bully the whole school) and “Conservation of Allies” (don’t water down primary goals to accommodate others’ goals).

So there is a series of “campaigns” in the war on terrorists.

- Homeland security.
- Public opinion.
- Allied support.
- Afghanistan.

- In some sort of order, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon—to restore stability throughout Islam.<sup>20</sup>
- Deal with other non-state terrorists (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah, FLN, Basque separatists, IRA, FARC), again in some sequential order and to some tolerable extent.
- Draw time, space, political, and other limits to scope the war on terrorists...and be prepared to change as the situation develops.

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<sup>20</sup> Nobody wants to talk about Saudi Arabia's role. Historically, the Arab-Islamic peoples and at least some Saudi government and religious leaders have supported the export of Wahhabism and the operations of terrorist organizations. But the United States claims that Saudi Arabia is our best ally in the Gulf. Economic and oil dependencies, regional and international political realities, shared military programs, and other factors create a quagmire for political leaders, but the situation will eventually need resolution.

***Conclusions***

There are some fundamental conclusions about the current situation, yet there are many unknowns, and perhaps unknowables. The basic conclusions are:

- It's a war. It fits the logical model (e.g., purpose-value-mission-outcome-cost cycle, goal of changing the state of the opponents' elements of power, using internal and external processes of war).
- It's a war against terrorists. The political slogan "war against terrorism" is sufficient for the public affairs and propaganda campaigns, but to be a real war, it has to have real enemies—terrorists in this case, militant fundamentalist Islamic extremists for the first campaign of the war.
- It's not a "new kind of war." Just because it hasn't happened in the United States for a while doesn't mean that it's new. History is replete with terrorist attacks with political objectives—and all wars have political objectives.
- It's a long war. Those who are steadfastly committed to United States' political objectives and specific war aims at this time need to understand the timelines for accomplishment. Even the first priority, isolating and destroying Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, is no simple task. If this truly is a war against ALL terrorists, it may last for many years, and it may be fought in many places.
- It's a war with several campaigns.
  - Homeland security is a chimera. Defense against terrorist attacks is extremely difficult and taxing, but not impossible. Direct defenses might be economically and militarily infeasible, since terrorists will discover and exploit vulnerabilities that we do not see. It is a necessary campaign that could well disappoint.
  - Public opinion and support must be gained and maintained. Initial shock and horror created a strong sense of both retaliation against the perpetrators and charity toward the victims and their families. Emotions can carry this campaign for a time, but long-term public commitment is both difficult and essential.
  - Allied support is essential, both in the near term and for the long haul. Economic cooperation (freezing accounts, embargos), political consensus, religious support of our goals (especially by Muslim clerics and governmental leaders), and military coalitions must be developed and nurtured.
  - The two campaigns in Afghanistan are coupled. Finding, isolating, and destroying Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda is probably a military special operations mission. Removing the Taliban from power, establishing a representative (not necessarily democratic) government, and restoring economic and cultural viability involves diplomacy, humanitarian aid, negotiations with historical rival tribes, long-term economic assistance (not just from the United States), and political and religious dedication.
  - There are several nations that support Islamic terrorist organizations. These nations (e.g., Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon) constitute the next round of enemies in the war on terrorists. Open-ended policy statements already made suggest that the United States is committed to eliminating ALL terrorists in the world. That sounds great and gains public appeal, but there will have to be some flexible limits set and adjusted. The campaigns for public opinion and allied

support will become increasingly demanding as this phase of the war on terrorists is discussed and planned.

- Non-state terrorist organizations (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah, Basque separatists, IRA, FARC) pose an almost easier challenge. The public (and the media) might see these as “gangs” rather than politically-aligned freedom fighters. Again the public opinion and allied support campaigns associated with this phase of the war on terrorists will be different in each specific case.
- There are great uncertainties in the war on terrorists and its campaigns. Commitment and success are subject to the vagaries of public support of political goals, changing allied perspectives, unexpected actions of opponents and enemies, economic pressures, and dozens of other complex variables.