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The steps outlined in the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* seem to cover several aspects of national power and the application of that power across the spectrum of international interaction, but it fails to clearly identify an enemy. In fact, nowhere in any of the literature addressing global terrorism does identification of the enemy proceed any further or with any greater specificity than the mention of Al-Qaeda and other known terrorist organizations. But the fact remains the U.S. has been unable, or unwilling, to adequately describe the enemy or the nature of the war currently being waged. The time has come for the U.S. to face the reality that has long been festering throughout the Middle East but has been wished away for over 80 years, a reality that has manifested itself in a global Islamic insurgency embodied and led by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. If the U.S. fails to identify the war on terror as essentially a counterinsurgency effort, then geographic combatant commanders will never be able to accurately assess the proper ways, means, and ends necessary to determine a calculus for victory, nor will they be able to properly identify the enemy's center of gravity to assist them in that calculation.

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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<u>NEW CENTURY, OLD PROBLEMS: THE GLOBAL INSURGENCY WITHIN ISLAM AND
THE NATURE OF THE WAR ON TERROR</u>

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the
requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the
Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:_____

03 February 2003

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I. Introduction

With the U.S. occupying the sole position of leadership in the world in terms of economic and military strength, it has increasingly found itself in situations where the demands of global and regional stability have been placed squarely on the shoulders of national leaders. Faced with the prospect of ethnic, religious, cultural, and nationalistic clashes that are no longer held in check by the two superpowers, and given the increased threat posed by transnational actors, every agency involved in the application of national power has struggled to develop policies to guide them through the minefield posed by the fractious nature of the "New World Disorder."[1]

The attacks of September 11, 2001, however, galvanized the sluggish bureaucratic machinery and served as a focal point to provide some clarity and direction for the U.S.'s national security strategy. With respect to trans-national, or global, terrorism, the U.S. has delineated the steps it intends to take, most notably:

> 1. Disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations through direct action against terrorist organizations of global reach, and against any terrorist or state sponsor of terrorism which attempts to gain or use weapons of mass destruction.
> 2. If necessary, exercise the right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists.
> 3. Support moderate and modern government, especially in the Muslim world, to ensure that the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism do not find fertile ground in any nation[2]

But while the steps outlined seem to cover several aspects of national power and the application of that power across the spectrum of international interaction, it fails to clearly identify an enemy. In fact, nowhere in any of the literature addressing global terrorism does identification of the enemy proceed any further or with any greater specificity than the mention of Al-Qaeda and other known terrorist organizations. Whether this has occurred as a result of a political desire to avoid turning the current conflict into a clash of civilizations as envisioned by Samuel Huntington,

or because the transnational nature of some of these organizations makes it difficult to identify a traditional enemy in the nation state sense, the fact remains the U.S. has been unable, or unwilling, to adequately describe the enemy or the nature of the war currently being waged.

But the time has come for the U.S. to face the reality that has long been festering throughout the Middle East but has been wished away for over 80 years, a reality that has manifested itself in a global Islamic insurgency embodied and led by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. If the U.S. fails to identify the war on terror as essentially a counterinsurgency effort, then geographic combatant commanders will never be able to accurately assess the proper ways, means, and ends necessary to determine a calculus for victory, nor will they be able to properly identify the enemy's center of gravity to assist them in that calculation. To that end, this paper seeks to provide a better understanding of the enemy through an analysis of the contextual and ideological framework from which they operate. Next, based on an understanding of the enemy's motivations, an analysis of the nature of the war and the strategy utilized by the enemy will place the conflict within a strategic and operational framework from which to determine possible courses of action. Finally, based on this information, options to address the threat will be highlighted.

II. The Enemy

"Know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."

Sun Tzu[3]

Much has been written regarding Al-Qaeda's organization, ideology and strategy, but much of the analysis seems to be incomplete. In fact, U.S. interpretation of Al Qaeda's ideology is perhaps the greatest analytical failure facing strategy and policy planners in their war against terrorism. Indeed, the U.S.'s politically motivated rhetoric to limit the conflict to a war against

terrorism versus an ideological struggle of immense proportion not only limits the scope of the conflict, but perhaps falsely constrains what might constitute victory in the future. Whether guilty of viewing the problem through the prism of western ideals and cultural mores, or of simply taking a politically expedient step to avoid escalating the situation into a true clash of civilizations, the U.S. has analogized the conflict to such an extent that it may be impossible to view the strategic landscape as it truly exists. As Michael Vlahos asks in his remarkable and insightful essay, *Terror's Mask: The Insurgency Within Islam*, "Can we defeat an enemy that we are afraid to name?"[4]

In addition to the question above, the central question that needs to be asked is: Does the ideology espoused by Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda followers truly represent a fringe, or radical doctrine that can be discredited amongst the greater Muslim population, or does it touch on something much deeper and central to Islamic identity and orthodoxy? To answer this question combatant commanders must not only see Al Qaeda as they see themselves, but also as other Muslims see them. Although the U.S. has branded Al Qaeda a terrorist network as though it was a cartel of criminal gangs, it enjoys the support, sometimes passive though it may seem, of millions of Muslims across the globe. As such, it is critical to ask what the relationship between Islamist militant and Muslim societies is.[5]

Historical Context: Whereas western culture views history in linear, quantifiable terms of past, present and future, and relies heavily on *analysis* as the coin of this rational, quantifiable realm, the Muslim culture views history as a never ending story where the time-space continuum represents an ongoing narrative of existence. For them the past, present and future is all one, an ever-present

mythos that informs their existence and view of the world around them. Thus, when Muhammad

came out of the desert in the seventh century as a holy man with a message to unite all Arabs under

the word and law of *Allah*, the story of his journey and ultimate success became part of the mytho-

heroic continuum of Islamic identity.[6] Indeed, whenever the *Ummah*, or Muslim people, lost its

way, great leaders would sweep out of the wilderness:

> There was Ibn Tumart leading Berber and Tuareg zealots out of the bleak
> Sahara. There were the *Mahdi* storming out of the desert Sudan to overthrow
> Gordon and his *Raj* at Khartoum. There was Babur too, brand-ancestor of
> Pakistan, sweeping down from Afghan mountains. Then came the pious
> Mamluk Baybars, last scourge of the Crusaders, and of course the chivalrous
> Saladin, whose *jihad* wrested Jerusalem from infidel Frank.[7]

And now Osama bin Laden has picked up the mantle of *jihad* and immersed himself in the never-

ending, ahistorical story of Islam. That this story has been so passionately and so often replayed is

not surprising. What is surprising is how the West dismisses its claim and forgets as well the

leitmotif of an *Ummah* that has lost its way.[8] The emergence of a leader, therefore, as is happening

now, creates the anticipation of an imminent renewal of the *Ummah*. As Vlahos asserts, "Renewal

in Islam is thus civilizational rather than simply theological: by seeking to purify the *Ummah*, its

goals are as much political as religious."[9]

So what does *jihad*, the central message of bin Laden's *fatwas*, mean within this context,

and why does it resonate so strongly amongst the Muslim population? Many in the western world,

perhaps in an effort to interpret the Koran through western religious mores, believe *jihad* to simply

define a spiritual struggle of good versus evil within each individual. But in addition to Vlahos,

Middle Eastern scholars such as Bernard Lewis interpret *jihad* differently. As Lewis states:

> One of the basic tasks bequeathed to Muslims by the Prophet was *jihad*. This
> word, which literally means "striving," was usually cited in the *Koran*ic
> phrase "striving in the path of God" and was interpreted to mean armed
> struggle for the defense or advancement of Muslim power. In principle, the
> world was divided into two houses: the House of Islam [*Dar Al'Islam*], in
> which a Muslim government ruled and Muslim law prevailed, and the House
> of War [*Dar Al'Harb*], the rest of the world, still inhabited and , more
> important, ruled by infidels. Between the two, there was to be a perpetual
> state of war until the entire world either embraced Islam or submitted to the
> rule of the Muslim state.[10]

Similarly, 16th century Ottoman scholar Ebu's Su'ud described *jihad* in terms that have changed little over the centuries:

> . . .*jihad* is incumbent not on every individual but on the Muslim community as a whole. Fighting should be continual and should last until the end of time. It follows therefore that peace with the infidel is an impossibility, although a Muslim ruler or commander may make a temporary truce if it is to the benefit of the Muslim community to do so. Such a truce is not, however, legally binding.[11]

Jihad, then, both spiritual and physical, fits into the mytho-heroic framework of Islamic orthodoxy and therefore is a force within Islam that can create a society dedicated to God's service.

This becomes an important factor for several reasons. First, from the perspective of many Muslims, this is a time of crisis for Islam. The *Ummah* is not only threatened by the western powers, or *Dar Al'Harb*, but by the "apostate," or *murtad*, rulers within the *Dar Al'Islam* itself. Second, *jihad* is a path to renewal within Islam, but that renewal requires both armed struggle as well as spiritual struggle. Third, no one is exempt from the struggle, because Islam is threatened at its very heart. Finally, this collective defense of the *Dar Al'Islam* creates a sense of unity for all Muslims; a celebration of the eternal struggle or continuum mentioned earlier that identifies Islamic experience in mytho-heroic terms.[12] In a very real and practical sense, then, Islamic law, or *shari'a*, as it applies to *jihad*, highlights the centrality of perpetual struggle as a condition of the religion. It does not make provision for relations with the infidel, except in so far as it benefits the *Ummah*, and so provides an existential concept of life—the heart of Islam's ethos—which leaves no room for any point of view or way of life other than Islam. This is not the radical ideology of Islamist fundamentalists. This is the nature of Islam.[13]

As a result, it is easy to see how Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda view themselves. Like Muhammad before him, he is the warrior prodigal with his band of *mujahidin*, sweeping out of the desert to renew a degenerate Arabia. An Arabia run by a subverted kingdom, which in turn is run

by foreign infidels. And how do Muslims view Al Qaeda? Vlahos lists what he believes those

perceptions to be:

> 1. Their status in the Islamic imagination as warrior poets and ascetic men of God is revered.
> 2. Their heroic journey places them close to the spirit of Muhammad.
> 3. Their quest to renew Islam and defend against an infidel invader gives them high authority within Islam.
> 4. Some have differences with the means, but accept the fighter's role in *jihad*.
> 5. There is more sympathy for Al Qaeda than for the established regimes.
> 6. There is no greater task at this time for Islam and its *Ummah*.[14]

If this, then, is how the "enemy" views the struggle, is the current U.S. focus on the

military and financial arms of Al Qaeda's organization enough to ensure lasting victory? What is

the nature of the current war, and how does Al Qaeda's operations fit within that framework?

III. The Nature of the War

> "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."
>
> Carl von Clausewitz[15]

If *jihad*, as described above, were indeed a central tenet of Islam and a rallying cry for

those dispossessed Muslims who feel the very core of their faith is under attack, how then would

one characterize the nature of the war currently being waged? While the US has characterized the

conflict as a war on terrorism, the subtext of the rhetorical phrase nevertheless can be inferred as a

war on the violently militant factions within Islam. This narrow definition of the enemy as a

criminal subset of a greater cultural whole, however, has created a US strategy of limited means to

achieve its ends and fails to identify the greater threat.

Al Qaeda, on the other hand, with the nominally passive, oftentimes active, support of the

global Muslim population, is waging a total war against the US, Israel and the secular/ *murtad*,

regimes in the Middle East in an effort to renew the *Ummah* and reestablish the caliphate and

universal *shari'a* under its rule. Ralph Peters perhaps puts it most succinctly in his essay, "Rolling

Back Radical Islam" when he states, "We are not at war with Islam. But the most radical elements within the Muslim world are convinced that they are at war with us. Our fight is with the few, but our struggle must be with the many."[16] While the specifics of this quote are somewhat off the mark concerning the centrality of core Islamic belief and its role in support of Al Qaeda's aims, the essence of the statement is germane, namely that Al Qaeda represents the fighting arm of an Islamist insurgency that is growing within greater Islam. But does shifting the language of conflict away from terrorism toward one of insurgency recalibrate the U.S.'s strategic compass? Can something like Al Qaeda even be considered an insurgent organization in the traditional sense?

The image *normally* associated with insurgency is one that involves an uprising of a group against the established government within the political and geographic boundaries of a specific state. Some examples would include, but are in no way limited to, the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, or the Vietcong in Vietnam. There have been, however, a few examples of global, or civilizational, insurgencies that mirror to some degree the Islamist insurgency occurring today. Some examples would include Christianity under Roman rule, the Protestant Reformation under Catholic rule, and Nazism under the Weimar Republic (though ostensibly political at first blush, the Nazis nevertheless had a religio-political agenda of global proportion). If Al Qaeda can truly be viewed as an insurgent movement rather than simply a terrorist organization, then combatant commanders will be forced to consider the conflict in the broadest possible terms. What is the dynamic path of insurgencies? How do they achieve their goals? What is the calculation of victory and defeat in political struggle outside of classic warfare?[17]

Most insurgencies follow a classic vector that has a beginning, middle, and end, and exhibit characteristics that can be considered universal. First, at the heart of any insurgency is the primacy of legitimacy and political cachet.[18] It is the goal of any insurgency to overturn the *status quo* and establish its own political agenda, and it is here that Al Qaeda has struck a nerve within the Middle

Eastern psyche and tapped into a deep reserve of antipathy and despair that has served to heighten its standing within the Muslim community. Facing overwhelming poverty, economic stagnation, poor educational opportunities, and repressive regimes, Muslims throughout the Middle East have simmered with rage as they found their once great culture placed on the back burner of history as the western juggernaut took primacy on the world stage. It is in this environment of uncertainty and rage that Osama bin Laden's call for a return to traditional Muslim values and caliphate rule under *shari'a* has fallen on a receptive audience ready to travel back to its roots in a time of crisis. Although transnational in his efforts, bin Laden has delineated a very clear political goal for his desired end state that resonates throughout the Muslim world. As a result, the political unrest of the Middle East, coupled with the Islamic orthodoxy described earlier, has established Osama bin Laden as a legitimate warrior for the cause of Islam and, by virtue of *shari'a*'s inextricable link to Islamic governance, his political cachet as well.

The second characteristic shared by most insurgencies is the importance of effective psychological warfare, or the propaganda war for the "hearts and minds" of the people.[19] As noted above, the Middle East provides fertile ground in which to sow the seeds of rebellion, and no one has capitalized more on the regional potential for recruitment than Al Qaeda. Indeed, so much importance is placed on spreading its message and vision to the Muslim world that Al Qaeda has made media and publicity one of its four operational committees, co-equal with the military, finance and business, and *fatwa* and Islamic study committees in its organizational hierarchy.[20] Manipulating and exploiting mass media and information technologies to garner support for his mission, Osama bin Laden has waged an information warfare campaign drawing on Islamic orthodoxy and the mytho-heroic *zeitgeist* described earlier that has effectively denied combatant commanders counter-information warfare access to the Middle Eastern population. In essence he has made it a battle for the "hearts and souls," vice the "hearts and minds" of his target audience, severely limiting possible U.S. response in the region. Lacking any credibility in the Muslim

community's eyes, the U.S.'s counterinsurgent rhetoric espousing economic development, nation building, and democratization may not be germane to meeting the regional, yet revolutionary, strategy of Al Qaeda who emphasizes the idealized return to fundamental religious values and the rejection of both technological and political modernity. [21]

The third characteristic, and perhaps the most thorny for combatant commanders to contend with, is the use of protraction on the part of insurgents to buy time in an effort to erode the legitimacy of the target government(s), while by default gaining increased legitimacy for their own cause. As Michael Vlahos puts it:

> While the established and legitimate [governments] must have as their goal the destruction of the insurgent movement, the insurgency needs only to survive to deny the established authority its goal . . . Insurgencies thus can play a waiting game, because the longer they survive the more their authority grows, and the weaker the strategic position of the establishment becomes.[22]

Al Qaeda, and more importantly bin Laden, have demonstrated remarkable resilience and resistance to U.S.-led efforts to curb their ambitions. Their deeply clandestine nature and sophisticated vetting of potential recruits has aided in maintaining the organization in the shadows, while their hit-and-run tactics continue to remind both enemies and allies alike of the long term viability of the organization and its ability to flaunt the best efforts of those it seeks to overthrow. The longer the organization and its charismatic leader endure, the greater its following will become as more and more Muslims across the globe see resistance and *jihad* not as abstract theological dreams, but rather as legitimate and effective means to give action to their collective disenfranchisement and anger.

The fourth, and final, characteristic shared by most insurgencies is the reliance on unconventional forces, tactics, and strategies. [23] At least at inception, every insurgency has begun its struggle from a position of weakness in almost every sense, from manpower, to military strength, to popular support, to financial solvency. Armed only with an idea, or ideal, a small band of loyal followers, and conviction in their cause, these embryonic insurgent movements had no

choice but to resort to unconventional warfare in order to gain the legitimacy and political standing necessary to affect their aims. But while Mao Tse Tung may have written the book on insurgent warfare, it is Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda who have raised those theories to a whole new realm of possibility.

The U.S., and indeed the world, is well aware of the litany of operational successes Al Qaeda has enjoyed over the past 23 years. Utilizing and exploiting a potent blend of high technology and low technology means of communication and warfare, as well as a sophisticated and complex organizational structure, Al Qaeda represents the new wave of insurgent actors; transnational, or super empowered, individuals no longer bound by traditional nation state borders, but rather groups of individuals capable of organizing insurgency on a global scale. With the proliferation of information technologies as well as sophisticated weaponry, to include weapons of mass destruction, the global, or civilizational, insurgent of today has tools at their disposal that makes them every bit as formidable as any rogue state and far more dangerous to the establishment than those insurgencies that have gone before them.

In today's environment, the unpredictable and virtually undetectable nature of Al Qaeda, coupled with the lethality presumably at its disposal, makes it and any future movements that follow in its footsteps the single greatest challenge to national and global security for the foreseeable future. As a result, by virtue of Al Qaeda's guerrilla tactics and strategies, and the U.S. response to the threat, Osama bin Laden has gained that most coveted of all insurgent prizes: Legitimacy. Whether the U.S. calls Al Qaeda terrorist, criminal, or murdering is irrelevant. The fact that Al Qaeda's actions have forced the U.S. to respond speaks louder to bin Laden's target constituency than any rhetorical semantics the U.S. can proffer.

Given the analysis above, if combatant commanders accept the notion that the nature of the current war on terror is in fact a civilizational insurgency requiring a counter- insurgency strategy across the spectrum of conflict to affect a true and lasting peace, what might that strategy look like,

and what might it entail for the geographic combatant commanders whose mandate it would be to execute the strategy?

IV. Altering the Strategic Landscape

Some would argue that the case presented thus far presents a "monolithic" view of Islam that simply does not exist. As Middle Eastern scholar Judith Miller points out, ". . . Islamic movements themselves are increasingly divided by personal rivalries, ideological differences, and disputes over money."[24] While this is undoubtedly true, it is also true that in times of crisis groups of individuals bound by some commonality will band together in collective defense when threatened by external forces. This fits with the Muslim tradition of revolution and renewal mentioned earlier, and describes a cultural/religio-political unity that transcends minor dogmatic differences between, say, Sunni and Shia orthodoxies. This would explain why Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda have enjoyed such freedom of movement across cultural and religious boundaries throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. How then, when faced with a civilizational insurgency that appeals to the existential unity of the global Muslim populace, do combatant commanders reframe the war to address the threat without escalating the conflict into a full-blown clash of civilizations?

One approach would be to adopt classic counterinsurgency techniques to garner victory. Within this realm combatant commanders could adopt three courses of action that could be undertaken either in series, or in parallel: 1) Counter organizational targeting; 2) Counter leadership targeting; or 3) The indirect approach, or capturing "the hearts and minds" of the target constituency. All three strategies, whether taken as singular approaches or as parallel means to attack the problem, have had their successes in the past.

As applied to Al Qaeda, a case could be made that the U.S. has embarked on a de facto counterinsurgency campaign through its efforts to target elements of the organization while simultaneously attempting to eradicate its leadership. While this approach has produced noticeable

effects, it arguably ignores the most critical element in the successful conduct of the war, namely the "passion" portion of the omnipresent Clausewitzian trinitarian analysis of conflict. As long as Muslim passions run high based on the perceived threat to Islam the U.S. represents, can America ever truly claim victory in the war, or will the seeds of hatred and discontent continue to germinate in the fertile soil of the Middle East? What if the U.S. was successful in its goal of eradicating Al Qaeda? Would victory then be assured, or would it merely be the removal of a malignant piece of the greater cancer?

If the combatant commanders were to reject that strategy as ultimately failed in its logic, what next? Much scholarly attention has been paid to the coordination of all instruments of national power to address the current situation. Simultaneous application of the diplomatic, informational/public relations, military, and economic means of enticement, coercion, appeal and promise has gained great popularity amongst those seeking a comprehensive approach to national security. While arguably better than the counter-organizational targeting solution, does it achieve the U.S.'s ultimate ends?

In the diplomatic realm it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine what constitutes friend and foe. While the U.S. may gain advantage with a particular leader in the region one day, that same leader may espouse anti-American polemic the next in an effort to deflect the growing dissatisfaction and unrest of the citizenry. Ironically these leaders, who are too entrenched and brutal to be immediately overturned, but are too weak to survive without U.S. support, seem to be engaged in a delicate high wire act between reliance on the U.S. versus the condemnation such support brings from their publics. The only thing current diplomacy could ever hope to achieve in such a mutable, untenable and shifting environment is the short-term bolstering of an increasingly fragile *status quo*.

In the propaganda war U.S. prospects are even more grim. As previously mentioned, Osama bin Laden has captured the "hearts and *souls*" of the Muslim population. How, then, could

the infidel U.S. ever hope to achieve a foothold on popular opinion? First off, all is not lost when considering Muslim populations outside the Middle East. While Arabia may be the seat of Muslim holiness and the focus for U.S. foreign policy analysts, much can be done with regard to the millions of Muslims residing throughout the rest of the world. As Ralph Peters asserts:

> . . .it is time to shift our focus and our energies, to recognize, belatedly, that Islam's center of gravity lies far from Riyadh or Cairo, that it is in fact a complex series of centers of gravity, each more hopeful than the Arab homelands. On its frontiers, from Detroit to Jakarta [from London to New Delhi], Islam is a vivid, dynamic, vibrant, effervescent religion of changing shape and potential."[25]

This is not to suggest the U.S. should give up its hopes for the Middle East. Rather, it describes a possible course of action where combatant commanders can exert influence in their various areas of responsibility beyond the Middle East. Where Islam has been fused with preexisting orthodoxies and dogma in areas such as India and Indonesia, the U.S. stands a good chance of mitigating the potential for civilizational struggle by capitalizing on the already mutable and adaptable nature of each culture's unique approach to religious interpretation. But again, while this strategy may pay long-term strategic dividends, does it answer the threat posed by Al Qaeda and the Middle Eastern insurgency?

Finally, the military and economic portions of the equation have been furiously applied to the Middle East over the past 40 years with obviously less than desirable results. Economically the U.S. has played an ironic high wire act of its own. Devoting its largest portion of foreign aid (roughly 4 billion dollars) to Israel, the U.S. subsequently allocates its next largest amount of foreign aid (roughly 2 billion dollars) to Egypt. If the U.S. seeks lasting peace and stability in the Middle East, what message does its fiscal policies send to the Muslim populace who rarely, if ever, benefit from the largesse deposited in their leader's pockets? Is it any wonder the Arab "street" exhibits frustration with what it perceives to be Washington's peace-through-bribery policy?

And what of U.S. military intervention in the region? Far from establishing prescience with regard to international relations, it rather resembles a myopic, stopgap, thumb-in-the-dike

approach to maintaining the *status quo*. Why? Because the U.S. is unwilling to address the fundamental crisis facing the Middle East today and would rather "kick the can" as long as possible to maintain "favorable" conditions for trade in this economically vital region. But the leaky dike is coming dangerously close to running out of thumbs and the U.S. needs to decide what course of action comes next.

Naturally the U.S. needs to continue its pursuit of Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in an effort to decapitate the insurgency's leadership while enhancing security at home. By keeping Al Qaeda on the run, it allows the U.S. time to focus on the truly critical aspect of the conflict, the true strategic challenge facing the U.S.

If Washington wishes to establish a lasting peace in the Middle East, then it will have to finally confront the insurgency occurring within Islam. As had been noted earlier, traditional counter-insurgency techniques employed by the U.S., either knowingly or unwittingly, have proven inadequate, indeed counter-productive, in the face of the growing Islamist tide. Perhaps now is the time to begin preparing the battlespace for a bold new initiative, an initiative that would serve to remove the insurgency's external preoccupation and allow its dissatisfactions to revert to internal concerns. Perhaps in the very near future it will be in the U.S.'s best interest to allow the collective Muslim ethos in the Middle East to fulfill its mytho-heroic legacy and embark on a campaign of renewal for the *Ummah*.

This approach is obviously fraught with risk and would require quiet, covert, indeed inspired, preparation on the part of the U.S. to ensure its success. Aggressive cooperation, diplomacy and economic support should be offered to those states moving toward reform. By aiding states such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Jordan, Yemen, Malaysia and Indonesia, the potential for attacking Al Qaeda's center of gravity—disaffected Muslims throughout the world— would be manifest in those populations that found their own brand of renewal within the construct of Islam without abrogating modernity. By allowing the citizens of these moderating nations to

determine their own political future within the guidelines of Islam, while assiduously supporting them through all facets of national power, a very real possibility could exist to stem the Islamic insurgency through the example of success witnessed in these states. This success would effectively de-fuse the hate filled ideology of Al Qaeda and serve to diminish its appeal throughout the culture.

With regard to the leading nations of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the time has come for the U.S. to make it unequivocally clear that its vector is behind the moderating nations of the region *regardless* of any economic hardship friction with the Egyptians and Saudis would surely engender. It is no longer a matter of "supporting corruption or inviting chaos," indeed both are readily abundant as it is, rather a shift in political priority needs to take place that Muslims will perceive as the West's concern and empathy for their attempts at self-determination and improvement of their condition. [26]

V. Conclusion

While the war on terror at first blush seems an intractable and overwhelming conflict with no clear course for victory, quite the opposite is true. In the final analysis, war is war, and insurgency is insurgency. Regardless of the year, the technology, or the surface motives, conflict boils down to the basic need to exert political dominance over another entity.

In the case of the current war on terror, the enemy the U.S. needs to confront isn't Al Qaeda per se, but rather the conditions that gave rise to Al Qaeda in the first place. Those conditions are what provide Al Qaeda its source of strength, its legitimacy, and its manpower. If the U.S. were to attack that center of gravity through the means described above, then the insurgents would no longer have that support base and would eventually be driven into ineffectual isolation.

More importantly, however, would be the disarming of future bin Ladens through a Muslim-led renewal of the *Ummah* consistent with Islamic law in the context of the modern world.

Like the Reformation before it, Islam will eventually have to come to terms with the changing world and either learn to adapt and moderate as necessary, or be continually plagued by idealists like Osama bin Laden. In any event, if a cultural shift within Islam is going to take place, it is going to have to be coincident with a political shift in Washington. The time has come where the *status quo* is no longer adequate for the people of the Middle East *or* America's "vital" interests. Indeed, the U.S.'s vital interests should necessarily shift away from resources and encompass those very people just mentioned in a vigorous struggle for their hearts, minds, *and* souls. Only then can lasting peace and true victory be declared.

ENDNOTES

[1] Steven Sloan, "The Changing Face of Insurgency in the Post-Cold War Era: Doctrinal and Operational Implications," in *Saving Democracies*, ed. Anthony James Joes, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999) 68.

[2] President of the United States of America, *The National Security Strategy*, (Washington, D.C., 2002), 6.

[3] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 84.

[4] Michael Vlahos, *Terror's Mask: The Insurgency Within Islam*, (Laurel, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1.

[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] Ibid., 8.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 9.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Bernard Lewis, "The Revolt of Islam," *The New Yorker*, 19 November 2001, 4.

[11] Vlahos, 11.

[12] Ibid., 9

[13] Ibid., 11

[14] Ibid., 13

[15] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Press, 1984), 88.

[16] Ralph Peters, "Rolling Back Radical Islam," *Parameters* (Autumn 2002): 6.

[17] Vlahos, 4.

[18] Sloan, 70.

[19] Ibid., 73.

[20] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), 57.

[21] Sloan, 78.

[22] Vlahos, 4.

[23] Sloan, 75.

[24] Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-Nine Names*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 472; quoted in Michael Vlahos, *Terror's Mask: The Insurgency Within Islam*, (Laurel, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 20.

[25] Peters, 6.

[26] Martin Indyk, "Back to the Bazaar," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 81 No. 1 (January/February 2002), 86.

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