

AL QAEDA: A MODERN DAY LERNAEAN HYDRA

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ABSTRACT

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The latest in a long line of threats confronting the U.S. is a modern day hydra – Al Qaeda. Much has been written about Al Qaeda since it emerged in 1988. It has been labeled a terrorist organization by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of State (DoS), and the Department of Defense (DoD). Numerous authors and think tanks have characterized Al Qaeda as an insurgency. Still others have referred to it as a netwar organization waging conflict primarily through the use of networks. A few authors have characterized it as a religious movement. Like the Hydra, Al Qaeda has many heads: netwar; terrorism; and insurgency. And like the Hydra, it has proven to be resilient and difficult to defeat. This paper will show that Al Qaeda is a religiously motivated organization that employs the strategies and tactics of netwar, terrorism and insurgency out of necessity and as a means to achieve its goals and objectives. The paper will also assess the U.S. government's response to this threat and make recommendations for a more focused and tailored strategy to respond to this modern day hydra.

AL QAEDA: A MODERN DAY LERNAEAN HYDRA

The Lernaean Hydra was a terrifying monster that lived in the swamps near the ancient city of Lerna in Argolis. It had the body of a serpent with numerous heads. Its breath was deadly and its bite poisonous. Of its many heads, one was immortal making the beast seemingly impossible to kill. For years it terrorized the people. Hercules, the strongest and undoubtedly most powerful man in all of ancient Greece, was commanded by King Eurystheus to kill the beast. But every time Hercules cut off one of its heads, another would emerge.

The latest in a long line of threats confronting the U.S. is a modern day hydra – Al Qaeda. Much has been written about Al Qaeda since it emerged in 1988. It has been labeled a terrorist organization by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of State (DoS), and the Department of Defense (DoD). Numerous authors and think tanks have characterized Al Qaeda as an insurgency. Still others have referred to it as a Netwar organization waging conflict primarily through the use of networks.¹ A few authors have characterized it as a religious movement. What is Al Qaeda? And why does it matter? The simple answer is that to defeat your enemy, it helps to understand your enemy. Like the Hydra, the monster Al Qaeda has many heads: netwar; terrorism; and insurgency. And like the Hydra, it has proven to be resilient and difficult to defeat. This paper will show that Al Qaeda is a religiously motivated organization that employs the strategies and tactics of netwar, terrorism and insurgency out of necessity and as a means to achieve its goals and objectives. The paper will also assess the U.S. government's response to the threat posed by Al Qaeda

and make recommendations for a more focused and tailored strategy to respond to this modern day hydra.

The Hydra's Religious Ideology

To glimpse the soul of Al Qaeda, one needs a basic understanding of how the organization sees itself fitting into the larger scheme of Islam. They "...perceive themselves as the base for a Salafi-led Islamic revival and as the vanguard of the global jihad."² A Salafi led Islamic revival is not unique to Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is the latest in a line of the salafi jihadist movements. Salafism comes from the Arabic word, Salaf, which literally means "predecessors", and refers to the early followers of Muhammad, his companions, and the next three generations of Muslims that followed. Salafis believe the early followers of Islam provided the perfect example of how it should be practiced. Salafi movements are inherently revival or reform movements within Islam. They are a call by their adherents to return to the perfect practice of Islam as exemplified in the early years of the Caliphate. Salafism comes in many forms, most of which are non-violent. However, "the Salafis who began the global jihad, such as Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, added the swords to concepts that existed long before...."³ For Al Qaeda, violent global jihad is the means for returning Muslims to the perfect practice of Islam.

To understand the engine that drives Al Qaeda, it is essential to understand its ideology and strategy. Its ideology is a combination of beliefs and objectives that provide the motivation, justification and focus for the group. Based on public statements, internal communications, and internet postings on Al Qaeda sponsored websites, the National Counterterrorism Center has "identified eight ideological tenets

that summarize what the al Qa'ida leadership considers the religious obligation of Muslims to participate in violent jihad against the perceive forces of evil.”⁴

1. This is a clash of civilizations. Violent “jihad” is not a matter of choice: it is an individual duty before God.
2. There now exist only two camps – good and evil. There can be no middle ground, no standing on the sidelines in this epochal conflict.
3. Violence by Muslims in the defense of Islam is the only solution.
4. Al-Qa'ida and other like minded Muslims are a divinely inspired and guided vanguard to lead other Muslims in this war. By fulfilling God's will, their struggle is fated to succeed.
5. The United States is the engine of the war against Islam; therefore, attacking the United States must be a priority.
6. US power is based on its economy. Therefore, large scale, spectacular attacks – especially focused on (US) economic targets – are desirable.
7. Violent jihad must continue until Sharia law is implemented throughout all Muslim lands and the Caliphate is reestablished.
8. Many theological and legal restrictions on the use of violence by Muslims do not apply to this war.⁵

The Heads of the Hydra - Strategy

These religious beliefs form the foundation for Al Qaeda's strategic thinking. Like its ideology, Al Qaeda's strategic thinking is extracted and deduced from the public statements, internal communications and websites used by its leaders. As one might expect, there are varying differences of opinion in the group. However, two main strategic themes emerge from the literature: the strategy of violent jihad and the strategy of uniting the ummah.⁶ Violent jihad has two objectives. The first objective is to remove US and Jewish presence from Muslim lands. The second is to overthrow local apostate regimes. The objective of uniting the ummah is to provide the manpower and support necessary to sustain violent jihad. Most Al Qaeda strategists consider

both violent jihad and uniting the ummah necessary for achieving the ultimate goal of reestablishing the caliphate. Al Qaeda is pursuing a two pronged strategy: a military campaign (battle of arms) and an information operations campaign (battle of ideas).⁷ The military campaign is directed primarily at the US by focusing on business interests and military targets. Al Qaeda's intent is to use the fear it generates from terrorism to bait Western military forces into the Middle East and thereby bleed Western economies dry by forcing them to defend everywhere against the threat of future terrorism.⁸ The information operations campaign is directed at the Muslim world. It is intended to generate propaganda in support of the Al Qaeda narrative as well as generate recruits and support of the Muslim population.

The Hydra's Heads - Netwar

Al Qaeda is a small dispersed organization operating in over 100 countries located throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and North America. This small diverse group is responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, USS Cole, US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and others. This small organization carries out devastating attacks by successfully conducting Netwar campaigns. Netwar enables Al Qaeda to finance, coordinate, synchronize, and support its operations.

Netwar is a product of the information revolution. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt of RAND initially used the concept of netwar to "refer to an emerging mode of conflict (and crime)...short of traditional military warfare, in which the protagonists use network forms of organization and related doctrine, strategies, and technologies attuned to the information age."⁹ Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that netwar has three "game changing" attributes for conflicts. First, the information revolution is changing the nature

of conflict (war) across the entire spectrum and has enabled non-state actors to wage effective conflict (war) through networks and other forms of modern communication. Second, that information operations and perception management will become as important as the physical conflict or combat. And third, netwar threats are likely to be more dispersed, multi-dimensional, non-linear and guided by a shared ideology and strategy.¹⁰ Focusing primarily on Middle East terrorism, Michele Zanini and Sean Edwards argue that many of the Middle East terrorist organizations (including Al Qaeda) are actively engaged to varying degrees in netwar. Zanini and Edwards evaluated these groups in terms of organization, command and control, type and use of information technology and information operations.¹¹

Netwar has found an eager and enthusiastic practitioner in Al Qaeda. Without the tools of the information revolution, Al Qaeda's reach and impact would be extremely limited and its movement severely threatened. Al Qaeda is organized for netwar and uses its tools for command and control (C2), training, propaganda, finance and recruiting. The information revolution has allowed Al Qaeda to organize in highly dispersed and loosely controlled groups and cells making it extremely difficult for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts to decapitate the organization. Al Qaeda's leadership operates in what Arquilla and Ronfeldt refer to as an all channel network organization. An all channel network consists of "dispersed 'nodes' that share a set of ideas and interests and who are arrayed to act in a fully internetted 'all channel' manner."¹² The all channel organization allows for fast dissemination of information and minimizes the chance of decapitation by Al Qaeda's enemies. Al Qaeda's rank and file members also have access to nodes on the all channel network, but they are generally

not fully inter-netted. For security reasons, its tactical organizations more closely resemble hybrid chain and hub network organizations. A chain organization is one in which end-to-end communication must flow through intermediate nodes. A hub network is one in which information must flow through the “hub” to get to the nodes connected to the hub. These hybrid hub and chain organizations allow Al Qaeda’s leadership to guide its terror and insurgency operations without jeopardizing the entire network. They also allow for the inevitable elimination of operational nodes by Al Qaeda’s enemies without putting the entire network at risk.

Al Qaeda uses websites, cell phones, satellite phones, video, and even cassette tapes. Websites are most commonly used to disseminate a broad range of information quickly to its widely dispersed groups. It is not uncommon for Al Qaeda’s strategic thinkers to debate strategy on its sponsored websites. From these discussions coalesce broad strategic guidance and a kind of commander’s intent that provides focus and direction to tactical groups and cells. The websites provide near real time access to what worked and what did not work in operations, intelligence gathered on locations, and likely targets. There are also training manuals, lessons learned, target lists, and numerous “how to” manuals. The websites enable the regionally dispersed groups to remain connected, informed, and nested.

The internet enables Al Qaeda’s propaganda machine to reach anywhere in the world where there is internet access. It is Al Qaeda’s primary tool for waging information operations: its war of ideas. The internet provides a readily available and reliable mode of communication for Al Qaeda to reach its intended audience--the Muslim world in general and, more specifically, potential future violent jihadists.¹³ Al

Qaeda leadership considers winning this war of ideas essential. Ayman Al-Zawahiri in his work, *Knights under the Prophet's Banner* considered the war of ideas essential for liberating the ummah and sustaining violent jihad. "We must communicate our message to the masses and break the media embargo imposed on the jihad movement. This is an independent battle that we must wage side by side with the military battle."¹⁴ And in another document he goes even further, "More than half this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media...we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our ummah."¹⁵ For Al Qaeda then, information operations and perception management are as important, or even more important, than the physical conflict. The war of ideas is critical for recruitment, funding, propaganda, and maintaining the support of the Muslim population. The tools of netwar--the internet, cell phone, and other modern global communication mediums--provide a small dispersed group like Al Qaeda a potent means to effectively wage this fight while remaining physically difficult to locate and retaining flexibility.

Al Qaeda effectively uses its netwar-enabled global reach for recruitment of its operatives. "Increasingly, recruiters are taking less prominent roles in mosques and community centers because places like that are under scrutiny. So what these guys are doing is turning to the Internet"¹⁶ The perpetrators of the 2004 Rotterdam plot, the 2007 Nancy plot, the 2008 Exeter plot, and the 2008 French Direction Centrale du Renseignement Interieur plot were linked only by the internet to Al-Qaeda affiliated organizations.¹⁷ A recent example is the case of the five Muslim youths from Virginia. An extremist recruiter known as Saifullah was able to convince these youths to travel to Pakistan in the hopes of joining Al Qaeda. Additionally, as yet still unproven, the

November 2009 Fort Hood shootings may become another example of the effectiveness of netwar in generating home grown terrorists.

The Hydra's Heads - Terrorism

Thursday, March 11, 2004, Madrid, Spain. Ten bombs detonated on four suburban trains in three rail stations at the height of the morning rush hour in southern Madrid. Three bombs failed to go off and are later deactivated by explosive ordnance disposal experts. More than 190 die in the attacks, making it one of the largest attacks since September 11, second only to the 2002 nightclub bombings in Bali, Indonesia that killed 202 people. Spain subsequently withdrew its forces from Iraq.

Wednesday, Nov 9, 2005, Amman, Jordan. Al Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacks on the Grand Hyatt Hotel, the Radisson SAS Hotel, and the Days Inn in Amman, Jordan that killed 60 people and injured 115. The bomb at the Radisson SAS exploded where a wedding hosting hundreds of guests was taking place.

Most U.S. government organizations, national security experts and academics consider Al Qaeda a terrorist organization. The above examples are two of 97 known or attempted terrorist attacks conducted by Al Qaeda or by groups associated with it over the past two decades.¹⁸ Al Qaeda is an opportunistic organization. It is limited by its size, dispersion, training and equipment. Out of necessity, "... it decided to make terrorism a core, although not an all-encompassing, part of its grand strategy. Terrorism allows a small number of people to have a disproportionate impact on a substantially larger enemy by targeting its non-combatants."¹⁹ A strategy of terrorism is also relatively inexpensive to conduct, provides long term psychological effects, and allows terrorists to trade time for the ability to choose targets that will produce the greatest effects.²⁰

Defining a strategy of terrorism is problematic. The first difficulty in defining a strategy of terrorism is that there is no generally accepted definition for terrorism.²¹ In fact, there is not even a uniform definition within the various U.S. government organizations charged with countering it.²² However, most definitions focus on three aspects of terrorism: the person or group's (terrorists') motivation – to coerce, intimidate, influence; the person or group's identification – sub-national group, clandestine agents, non-state actors, state sponsored, etc.; and the methods used – calculated use of unlawful violence, unlawful use of force and violence, premeditated, politically motivated violence. Fortunately, the definition of strategy presents fewer problems in that there is broad acceptance in the military community that strategy involves the application of ends, means and ways to achieve a political purpose. The Army War College defines strategy as "... the skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action), and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests."²³

A strategy of terror can then be described as the calculated use of unlawful violence by state or non-state actors to intimidate citizens and governments in order to achieve some political purpose or objective. However, there are problems with this description of a strategy of terror. The most obvious are the terms "unlawful violence" and "political purpose". The legal issues surrounding the use of violence aside, the issue of purpose is important to the current discussion. First, terrorist use of violence must have a purpose. It is not a random act. Paul R. Pillar argues convincingly that terrorism is fundamentally different from other forms of violence by what motivates it and in how it must be countered, beyond simple physical security and police

techniques.²⁴ “Terrorists’ concerns are macro-concerns about changing a larger order; other violent criminals are focused on the micro-level of pecuniary gain and personal relationships. ‘Political’ in this regard encompasses not just traditional left-right politics but also what are frequently described as religious motivations or social issues.”²⁵

Frank L. Jones makes the same observation -- that terrorists use violence for social and religious purposes as well as political purposes.²⁶

Adding achievement of social and religious purposes as well as political purposes to the description of a strategy of terrorism provides clarity and understanding to the motives the actions of Al Qaeda. Out of necessity, a strategy of terrorism is a large part of Al Qaeda’s grand strategy. The strategic concept of violence as a way to undermine government legitimacy is attractive when one’s means (small dispersed groups, poorly equipped, with limited training) are limited and one’s ends (re-establishment of the Caliphate, elimination of Western influence from Muslim lands) are grand. Stated simply, terrorism is a strategy of necessity for the weak.²⁷

The Hydra’s Heads - Insurgency

Joint doctrine defines an insurgency as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.²⁸ Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-27/MCWP 3-33.5 (FM 3-27) defines insurgency as an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.²⁹ FM 3-27 describes insurgencies as internal wars generally occurring within a state where insurgents will use all elements of power: political; military; economic; and informational to overthrow the existing

government.³⁰ The conflicts in post-Saddam Iraq and post-Taliban in Afghanistan are examples of insurgencies as defined by U.S. military doctrine.

Insurgent theory and strategy are known, understood and espoused by many of Al Qaeda's strategic thinkers. A book entitled *Winds of Revolution* found in a house in Afghanistan and associated with Osama bin Laden provides proof that Al Qaeda is familiar with insurgency theories and uses them to educate its leaders.³¹ The book's content includes chapters covering Che Guevara's thinking on guerrilla warfare, Mao Tse-Tung's writings on revolutionary war in China, America's experience in Vietnam, Van Nguyen Giap's strategy and tactics in Vietnam, and other revolutionary and guerrilla warfare topics.³² Abu Ubayd al Qurashi refers to many of Mao's revolutionary war concepts in his writings. He "used Mao's fish strategy when describing U.S. counterinsurgency strategy: '...If the early theoreticians of guerrilla warfare believed that a revolutionary war required guerrillas to deploy and live among the population 'like fish in water', the U.S. strategy is based on drying up the water, the population, so that the fish, the fighters, would perish.'"³³ "Former al-Qaeda-in-the-Arabian-Peninsula leader Abd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin wrote several journal articles describing classic Maoist guerrilla warfare as a prescription for how the global jihadis can defeat local authorities and gain territory,..."³⁴ Abu-Mus'ab al-Suri 's work, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, is reminiscent of Mao's and Guevara's guerilla war theories.³⁵

Al Qaeda's attempt to foment sectarian violence in Iraq is a good example of its use of an insurgency strategy. Al Qaeda Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers (Mesopotamia) commonly known as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was led by a Jordanian-- Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. Zarqawi began planning and coordinating future operations in

Iraq when it became clear the U.S. would invade to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Zarqawi established safe houses, built an intelligence network and stockpiled munitions and explosives in preparation for an American occupation. At that time, Zarqawi and his organization were still independent of Al Qaeda but were considered an affiliate organization. His pre-war preparations were coordinated with Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan, and Zarqawi was considered an Al Qaeda ally.

Zarqawi's insurgency strategy consisted of two phases. First, he sought to isolate the U.S. from its allies. This was accomplished by a series of terrorist attacks against United Nation (UN) and international aid agencies. The most devastating attack was the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in the summer of 2003. These terrorist attacks had the effect of driving most of the international and non-governmental aid organizations out of Iraq at a time when they were most needed. Once the U.S. was isolated, the second phase of the insurgency focused on undermining the U.S. supported Shiite government by provoking civil war between the Sunni and Shia sects. The plan was to make Iraq ungovernable and undermine U.S. public support for Iraq forcing the U.S. to withdrawal its forces. In effect, an all out civil war would turn Iraq into a quagmire. To implement this phase of the insurgency, AQI focused its attacks on Shia leadership, Shia holy places and ordinary Iraqi citizens. In March 2003, AQI assassinated Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Next, it carried out bombings of Shia shrines in Najaf (March and December 2004), Baghdad (March 2004), Karbala (December 2004), and Samarra (February 2006, May 2007). In 2005, AQI operatives carried out a series of suicide bombings that caused mass casualties against various Shiite gatherings. The

most significant attack was the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 that largely destroyed the golden dome and touched off widespread nationwide Shiite reprisals against Sunnis.³⁶ Zarqawi's strategy almost succeeded. By 2006, U.S. public and political support for Iraq was evaporating, there was widespread belief that the Iraq War was not winnable, and calls for ending the war were becoming more vocal. Three events combined to counter Zarqawi's strategy: widespread revulsion with AQI's brutality (beheadings, killing of non-combatants, Muslim on Muslim violence), the Sunni Awakening Movement against AQI, and the U.S. surge strategy. By January 2008, AQI operations were limited to areas around Mosul. By May 2008, CIA Director Michael Hayden stated that Al Qaeda was on the verge of a strategic defeat in Iraq because of its reduced presence and activity in large parts of Iraq.³⁷ By October, 2007, it was widely believed that the remaining high ranking AQI operatives had left Iraq and moved to Afghanistan indicating their belief that Afghanistan presented a better opportunity for carrying on the fight.

When analyzing the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, it is important to quantify the extent of AQI's involvement. In addition to Zarqawi and his foreign fighters, the insurgency involved a number of different players: former Saddam loyalists; Iraqi Sunnis; various Sunni tribes, and other Sunni extremist groups like Ansar al-Sunna.³⁸ An analysis of the total number of attacks during the insurgency reveals that AQI played a small role in the overall Sunni insurgency. From April 2003 to April 2005, one study estimated that AQI was responsible for 14 percent of all insurgent operations.³⁹ In 2007, U.S. intelligence estimated that AQI made up 15 percent of the various elements composing the Sunni insurgency.⁴⁰ Most of the U.S. combat deaths are attributed to Iraqi Sunni insurgents.⁴¹

Noteworthy, however, is the significance of AQI's operations. AQI's impact on the insurgency was greater than any of the other groups for two primary reasons: their primary target--the Shiite/Sunni divide and the tactics they employed--suicide bombings, assassinations, and beheadings.⁴² Finally, insurgency operations in Iraq were geographically limited to the urban areas with the majority of the fighting conducted in Anbar province and in Baghdad.

In Afghanistan, a weakened Al Qaeda has been forced to assume a supporting role in the Taliban-centered insurgency. Nonetheless, the insurgency in Afghanistan is a priority for Al Qaeda. It is their best chance for success now that the insurgency in Iraq is nearly lost. Afghanistan and Pakistan have been important sanctuaries and bases of support for both Al Qaeda and the Taliban, allowing both groups the ability to reconstitute, recruit, train, and plan future operations. Despite their greatly diminished presence in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda has assisted the insurgency through financing, recruiting and limited military operations from their safe haven in Pakistan.⁴³ Al Qaeda has assisted the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan by providing critical training and technical advice, as well as fighters to support Taliban operations. The Taliban have adopted Al Qaeda tactics. In 2002, there were two suicide attacks compared to 122 suicide attacks in 2007.⁴⁴

As noted in McChrystal's August 2009 assessment, security is being challenged by a confluence of related armed groups who are increasingly well equipped and sophisticated in their tactics and operations, particularly by using roadside bombs. U.S. military reports say that there were over 800 improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in July 2009, a post-Taliban high.⁴⁵

Al Qaeda and Taliban overall objectives in Afghanistan are fairly well aligned--undermine the U.S. supported government of Hamid Karzai thereby making Afghanistan

appear ungovernable. This will undermine U.S. public support for the war causing the withdrawal of U.S. military forces.

There are some significant differences between the two insurgencies. First, unlike Iraq, it appears that the Taliban and Al Qaeda groups are going to great lengths to avoid civilian and non-combatant Afghan casualties. Second, the insurgency in Afghanistan is rural-based with a favorable geography. Third, unlike Iraq, Afghanistan has no history of a strong central government with established bureaucracies for delivery of public services. Lastly, the insurgents in Afghanistan have a safe haven in Pakistan into which they can retreat and regroup. These differences make defeating the Afghanistan insurgency significantly more problematic than the insurgency in Iraq.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, Al Qaeda has demonstrated a willingness to engage in classic guerilla strategy as a means to achieve its strategic designs. The U.S. invasion of Iraq presented Al Qaeda an unanticipated opportunity that it seized and attempted to exploit using an urban-based insurgency strategy. In Afghanistan, a weakened Al Qaeda was limited to supporting a rural-based Taliban insurgency. The use of an insurgency strategy in Iraq was nearly decisive. In Afghanistan, the contest is undecided. Insurgency strategies gave Al Qaeda the ability to conserve its strength while tying down large portions of government and coalition forces. A few insurgents, using asymmetric means, possess the ability to fix disproportionately larger forces while undermining the populations' confidence in the government. The use of insurgency strategy has enabled Al Qaeda and the Taliban to get the most out of their relatively small dispersed forces while simultaneously forcing the U.S. to overextend its military and economy. Insurgency strategies have allowed Al Qaeda to keep its movement

viable, relevant and provide time for its dawah to mobilize the ummah against the crusader, Zionist, and apostate government threats. Similar to a strategy of terrorism, an insurgency strategy is a strategy of necessity for the weak.

Countering the Hydra's Heads - Netwar

Although netwar enables Al Qaeda to have a far greater reach and impact than its numbers warrant, it comes with vulnerabilities. The key is to understand these vulnerabilities and exploit them. "What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."⁴⁶ The war on Al Qaeda is both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas. Most senior policy makers in the U.S. believe that winning the battle of ideas is vital to success and one that the US cannot afford to lose.⁴⁷ How well is the U.S. fighting the battle of ideas? The general consensus is that it is not doing well. But, the U.S. is doing better than its senior leaders believe. The perception of Al Qaeda's strategic thinkers is that their enemies possess capabilities beyond their ability to match. They worry that they cannot win the battle of ideas that is vital to their strategy. This is positive for the U.S. It is crucial that the U.S. continue to press this advantage and tweak the strategy to hasten the defeat of Al Qaeda.

To win the battle of ideas, one should heed the wisdom of Sun Tzu and understand how the enemy thinks about its information operations and the role that it plays in its overall strategy. With this understanding of the enemy comes the ability to effectively attack Al Qaeda's strategy. As noted earlier, Al Qaeda primarily uses the tools of the information revolution to wage its war of ideas. It is dependent on the internet for recruitment and is becoming more dependent on it for training as the U.S. continues to interdict its training camps in the uncontrolled areas of the world. For Al Qaeda, winning the battle of ideas is a precondition for success. The primary aim of the

war of ideas is to unite the ummah and provide the manpower necessary to sustain violent jihad. Al Qaeda's view centers on the concept of dawah (the call).⁴⁸ Dawah is their information operations. Al Qaeda uses it to persuade and indoctrinate Muslims to accept its world view and to promote violent jihad as an individual responsibility of true Muslims.⁴⁹ How effective is its information operations? Effective enough to keep the movement alive, but it has come up far short of anticipated results. One prominent Al Qaeda strategist, Abu Naji, estimated that 500,000 mujahideen would be necessary "for our long battle and to achieve the results we want."⁵⁰ This number is less than 1 percent of the 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide. Although no one knows how many recruits have responded to Al Qaeda's call, estimates range from a few thousand to twenty thousand recruits—well below the required figure. The failure of Muslims to respond to the call has been a big disappointment and setback for Al Qaeda's strategic thinkers. Al Qaeda's inability to recruit even a fraction of the required 500,000 points to the limited nature of its appeal in the Muslim world⁵¹ and to a potential critical vulnerability of the movement.

The question then becomes how to attack this vulnerability? In Al Qaida's view, the following pose the greatest threats to their dawah: the power of the media allied with the United States (even Al-Jazirah is seen as a threat); opposition of moderate senior Islamic scholars; an ummah corrupted by western influence and distracted by "worldly concerns"; and internal policy differences (the use of violence against other Muslims; appealing to Muslims by means other than violent jihad; agreeing on a strategic focus).⁵² The U.S. should leverage these perceived threats in any number of

ways. Potentially, the most effective means is to promote the expansion of media outlets throughout the Middle East and provide support to moderate Islamic scholars.

Additionally, re-evaluating the United States' strategic communication strategy, and more specifically its strategy toward the Muslim world, may yield some additional benefits. Current US strategic communication policy focuses on promoting democracy, equality and human rights. As stated in the U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication,

All communication and public diplomacy activities should: underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being; reach out to those who share our ideals; support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.⁵³

These are all laudable goals and values; however, many times our actions do not match our words. U.S. support for non-democratic, authoritarian Arab countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Jordan highlight this word/deed mismatch. Al Qaeda exploits this and other inconsistencies in US foreign policy. Our word/deed mismatches negatively resonate with Muslim populations and vulnerable Muslim youths that generate a varying degree of support and sympathy for Al Qaeda. Too often Al Qaeda is correct in that our policy is out of synch. We must fully integrate our actions and our communications to ensure that both are mutually supporting. However, we should also reconsider our communications strategy.

By using a communication strategy that focuses on promoting democracy, equality, and human rights the United States impedes its ability to win the battle of ideas. U.S. actions and interests often conflict with its stated values, and Al Qaeda will continue to exploit this for propaganda purposes. Instead, the U.S. communications strategy should be aimed at discrediting Al Qaeda and its ideology similar to what was

done to Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq.⁵⁴ The communications strategy should highlight Muslim on Muslim violence, alternatives to violent jihad, and Al Qaeda's word/deed mismatches. It is not necessary for the Muslim world to 'like' the United States; it is only necessary for Muslims to dislike Al Qaeda more.⁵⁵

We should give serious consideration to "toning down" our explicitly stated policy of promoting democracy. Muslims see this policy as an assault on Islam. Establishing democratic governments in the Muslim world is not a precondition for defeating Al Qaeda and other extremist Islamist groups. By promoting democracy to the Muslim world, the U.S. provides additional propaganda material for Al Qaeda. First, as stated above, the United States supports many non-democratic regimes. Second, large segments of the Muslim population oppose democracy, like other forms of secular political organization (communism, socialism, nationalism, etc.). The concept of separation of church and state, a fundamental tenet of U.S. democracy, is foreign to Islam.

[The]Islamic principle of tawhid, or the principle of the absolute unity of God, and an identification of Islam as an all-encompassing religious, political, and social system. According to this perspective, Islamic faith, adherence to Islamic law, and implementation of conservative Islamic social and political principles are synonymous.⁵⁶

The late al-Qaeda ideologue Yusuf al-Ayiri wrote,

One of the worst products of secularism is democracy, which abolishes the authority of shari'a over society and opposes it in form and content. The Most High said 'the command is for none but Allah.' Democracy says that the command is for none but the majority of the people.⁵⁷

Ayman al-Zawahiri likened democracy to an idolatized religion.

Democracy is a new religion. In Islam, legislation comes from God; in a democracy, this capacity is given to the people. Therefore, this a new religion, based on making the people into gods and giving them God's rights and attributes. This is tantamount to associating idols with God and

falling into unbelief, since God said: 'The command is for none but God. He has commanded that you worship none but him.'⁵⁸

In the war of ideas, perception is reality. Actions must shape the desired perception.

An effective method for the U.S. to fight this battle of ideas and promote its interests is to first craft the message and understand the audience and then follow with actions that support the message. The U.S. should gauge the response and adjust as required.

By far the greatest liability of Al Qaeda's dependence on the internet and other forms of global communications is that their thinking, strategy, and tactics are readily available to its adversaries. In other words, Al Qaeda's playbook and game plans are accessible for the U.S. to exploit. The question is whether the government can respond fast enough and in a comprehensive way to effectively thwart Al Qaeda's plans.

Hierarchical organizations like U.S. government bureaucracies can impede coordination, information sharing and timely decision making. All these functions are critical for effectively countering the threat. Although an analysis of U.S. government intelligence, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency organizations is beyond the scope of this paper, efforts to flatten and fully integrate the many government organizations involved should be considered in order to reduce response time and increase effectiveness.

Al Qaeda's increasing dependence on the internet as its main source for recruitment provides another weakness that the U.S. can exploit. Although the social networking sites used by Al Qaeda recruiters are difficult to monitor (privacy and constitutional considerations limit the ability of the government to monitor these sites), there are other ways to disrupt Al Qaeda's recruitment efforts. The anonymity offered by internet sites makes counterterrorism sting operations attractive for identifying

recruiters and potentially infiltrating their cells and networks. To be successful, it is not necessary to infiltrate the networks or even identify the recruiters. Of course, either result is ideal, but simply ensuring that they are aware that the government is conducting these types of operations may be sufficient to thwart a large portion of Al Qaeda's recruiting effort. This strategy complicates and slows down the process while Al Qaeda recruiters and leaders execute ever more laborious screening measures to determine whether potential recruits are legitimate and can be trusted. Even after recruits have made it through the screening process, suspicions and mistrust are likely to remain until recruits can prove themselves. These tactics provide time for intelligence and counterterrorism agencies to identify, locate, and interdict potential recruits. Although this cat and mouse game is uncomfortable, it may be the most effective means available given U.S. legal and constitutional considerations. The case of the five American Muslim men from Virginia illustrates the effectiveness of this tactic. Although, they were able to make their way to Pakistan, they ultimately did not link up with Al Qaeda operatives because those operatives were concerned that the men were CIA proxies attempting to infiltrate the group.⁵⁹

Countering the Hydra's Heads - Terrorism

Most news accounts and news commentators give the impression that counterterrorism efforts have not gone well. This is most likely a reaction to the perceived re-emergence of the Taliban and to a lesser degree, Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although the fight in Afghanistan may not be going well according to various sources; in the U.S., Western Europe, and Australia the results are much better than reported. The numbers support this conclusion. Over the last eight years, there has not been a single successful terrorist act conducted in the United States by Al

Qaeda, Al Qaeda affiliated networks or Al Qaeda inspired individuals/groups.⁶⁰ It has been over four years since a successful attack in Western Europe. Marc Sageman, Director of Research at ARTIS Research and Risk Modeling, conducted a survey of neo-jihadi plots directed against the West (North America, Western Europe – less civil war in the Balkans, and Australia) since 1988. The results are revealing and are depicted below.

Neo-jihadi plots directed against the west since 1988⁶¹:

12 AQ Core controlled operations

- LAX millennial plot (1999)
- Strasbourg Christmas Market bombing plot (2000)
- 9/11/01 attack (2001)
- Paris Embassy bombing plot (2001)
- Belgian Kleine Brogel US Air Force base bombing plot (2001)
- Shoe bomber plot (2001)
- London fertilizer bomb plot (Operation Crevice, 2004)
- London limousine bombing plot (Operation Rhyme, 2004)
- London 7/7 bombings (Theseus case) (2005)
- London 7/21 bombing plot (Vivace case) (2005)
- London airplanes liquid bomb plot (Operation Overt) (2006)
- Danish Glasvej bombing plot (Operation Dagger) (2007)

15 AQ affiliated terrorist organizations controlled operations

- 11 GIA plots against France (1994-5)
- German al-Tawhid bombing plots (Zarqawi group) (2002)

- Sydney bombing plot (Brigitte-Lodhi, LT controlled) (2003)
- German Sauerland bombing plot (IJU controlled) (2007)
- Barcelona bombing plot (alleged TTP control) (2008)

32 AQ inspired terrorist plots, carried out either on behalf of al-Qaeda or other transnational terrorist organizations

- AQ Core – 20.3% (12/59)
- AQ Affiliated – 25.4% (15/59)
- AQ Inspired – 54.2% (32/59)

The trend can be shown by plotting the events on a timeline and is depicted below⁶²:

shows that Al-Qaeda's ability to project terror against Western targets is on the decline. Second, the vast majority of the plots, nearly 80 percent, are conducted by AQ Inspired groups, further supporting the conclusion that Al Qaeda is on the decline. The data also supports the conclusion drawn in the previous section regarding Al Qaeda's increasing dependence on the tools of netwar for recruitment, propaganda and operations. The trends demonstrate that Western counterterrorism operations have been quite effective.

U.S. success in counterterrorism efforts comes at a high cost. There are nine U.S. government agencies involved in counterterrorism operations: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Department of Energy (DOE); Department of Defense (DOD); Department of State (DOS), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Interior (DOI), Department of Treasury, Department of Transportation (DOT), and 15 other Intelligence Agencies distributed throughout the government as well as state government agencies and various municipal agencies . Within each of these departments are numerous subordinate organizations, centers and committees that play a role in counterterrorism operations. To illustrate the complexities, in DHS there are 11 subordinate departments and three Advisory Panels/Committees that have a counterterrorism mission. The amount of effort dedicated to counterterrorism efforts is immense. Equally immense are the problems associated with coordinating, integrating and synchronizing all the players and stakeholders. The data shows that the U.S. has done well in countering terrorism in the West. Quantity does provide its own kind of quality; however, equally true, despite the hundreds of billions spent on counterterrorism, Al Qaeda has not yet been defeated. It continues to survive and continues to conduct and support terrorist

operations, albeit fewer and with less impact. It is clearly established that a counterterrorism approach alone will not defeat Al Qaeda.

Countering the Hydra's Heads - Insurgency

Conducting a counterinsurgency is expensive in terms of forces, money, time, and political capital. Whether it was Al Qaeda's intention to lure the U.S. into a protracted war in Afghanistan with the 9/11 attacks is debatable. However, what is clear is that Al Qaeda espouses the idea of imperial overstretch and believes that it can reproduce a communist-like collapse of the U.S. by defeating the West in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶⁴ It is likely that it will continue its efforts to over-extend the U.S. and bleed its economy. Unfortunately, the U.S. Government's over-reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attack has played into the hands of Al Qaeda by drawing in U.S. forces where they can more easily be attacked, where the financial costs for the U.S. are high, and in circumstances where U.S. public support is likely to erode over time. It also plays into the Al Qaeda narrative of the U.S. as the vanguard of a Western/Crusader attack on Islam and Muslim lands.

There is no doubt that the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 dealt a serious blow to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Certainly Al Qaeda and jihadist leaders throughout the Muslim world were shocked and shaken by the rapid success of the U.S. and Northern Alliance forces. In 2001, the capture or killing of bin Laden and al Zawahiri could have potentially dealt the death blow to the Al Qaeda organization. However, it appears that the organization has recovered its balance and evolved, making it harder to defeat. Now the organization is more dispersed and less reliant on key leaders for its operations. Killing bin Laden or al Zawahiri today would deal a significant blow to Al Qaeda, but it is unlikely to lead to the defeat of the organization.

By their very nature, insurgencies are drawn out, lengthy struggles fought in both the military and political domains. Likewise, counterinsurgencies require time to successfully prosecute. Post World War II insurgencies have lasted on average almost 13 years with some lasting decades.⁶⁵ Combating insurgencies can take 8 to 10 years of sustained effort.⁶⁶ The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are in their 8th and 9th years respectively and are expected to continue for at least 2 to 3 more years. This is in line with historical trends. It is a significant amount of time that requires sustained political will and public support. Traits that have historically been in short supply in the U.S. when vital and compelling interests are not clearly articulated, understood, or accepted.

The U.S. has expended significant blood and treasure in Iraq and Afghanistan. As of 14 January 2010, there have been 3,478 killed in action, 899 non-hostile deaths and 17,721 severely wounded military casualties in Iraq; in Afghanistan the numbers are 681, 267, and 2,007 respectively.⁶⁷ The financial cost is over \$1 trillion.⁶⁸ A significant fact of these counterinsurgencies is that the bulk of the fighting is against other than Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda affiliated insurgents.

The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan have over-extended the U.S. military and strained the U.S. economy. The military would be severely challenged to respond quickly and decisively to another contingency at this time. One of the primary objectives for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is to deny a safe haven and base of support for Al Qaeda. The President has characterized this as a vital interest to the country. Al Qaeda's history in Afghanistan and Pakistan give this assertion some credence. However, there are many ungoverned places in the world that could be used as a safe

haven and a base of support, the latest being Yemen and the African Islamic Maghreb. The U.S. does not have the means or will to secure all the ungoverned areas of the world. There will always be a safe haven somewhere for Al Qaeda to use. The cost of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan has been enormous. The benefits have been mixed. Iraq appears poised to go into the victory column. Afghanistan is too close to call.

Defeating the Hydra

The hydra in Heracles' time appeared undefeatable; it was not and neither is Al Qaeda. By adjusting his strategy and enlisting the help of his nephew, Iolaus, Heracles was able to defeat the hydra. The U.S. should adopt a similar course of action. The U.S. has expended a lot of effort in the fight against Al Qaeda and inflicted severe damage to the organization. Counterterrorism efforts have been generally effective. Counterinsurgency efforts are mixed. However, the turn-around in Iraq and a change of strategy in Afghanistan are encouraging signs. The U.S. has re-organized its bureaucracy to better protect the homeland. In spite of these efforts, Al Qaeda is not yet defeated.

Al Qaeda is one of many jihadist organizations. What makes it stand apart from the others is its global focus. The U.S. needs to enlist help with this fight. To destroy a global threat like Al Qaeda requires a worldwide effort. The U.S. needs allies, especially Muslim allies. Al Qaeda's base is in the Muslim world, and it will inevitably need to be Muslims that yield the decisive blow. The decisive blow is the rejection of Al Qaeda's ideology by the ummah. Therefore, the main focus should be on winning the war of ideas and undoing the Al Qaeda narrative. Without recruits, without a religious justification, and without victims (Palestinians, Kashmiris, Iraqis, and Afghans), Al

Qaeda's narrative will ring hollow. Muslim support and sympathy will fade, and the organization will wither away. At the center of Al Qaeda's narrative about the West's crusade against Islam is the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.⁶⁹ In 2002, just before the battle for Tora Bora, bin Laden defended the 9/11 attacks saying, "America and its allies are massacring us in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Iraq. The Muslims have the right to attack America in reprisal."⁷⁰ In 2008, on the sixtieth anniversary of Israel's creation, Bin Laden is reported to have stated,

The main root of the conflict between our civilization and your civilization is the Palestine question. I stress the Palestine question is my nation's central issue. It was, therefore, a key factor that has, since childhood, provided me and the free 19 men (9/11 hijackers) with an overwhelming feeling of the need to punish the Jews and those supporting them.⁷¹

The Palestinian issue resonates strongly in the Muslim community. By taking the lead and brokering a just solution to the Palestinian issue, the U.S. can make great strides toward undermining the Al Qaeda narrative.⁷²

Another method of undoing the Al Qaeda narrative is to marginalize the movement. "The global Jihadist movement would not exist today without its scholars, sheikhs and intellectuals."⁷³ Every effort should be made to discredit and isolate them. Muslim on Muslim violence in Iraq and Pakistan has caused a backlash and resonates negatively with Muslims. This kind of violence should be exposed to the Muslim community at every opportunity. Differences in strategic focus among jihadist elites provide another opportunity. Differences of opinion on violent jihad versus other forms of jihad, regional focus versus global focus, and violence against Muslims versus no violence against Muslims are fractures that we can use to break apart the organization.

Third, the U.S. and other Western nations should minimize their military footprint in Muslim lands, especially the Middle East. Imagine what it would be like to have

foreign military forces patrolling the streets of America's cities and towns. It is understandable that Muslims are resentful, uncomfortable, and suspicious of U.S. intentions and its promotion of its values and 'democracy'.

Finally, in the battle of arms, it is essential for the U.S. government to continue its aggressive counterterrorism and counterinsurgency campaigns. Ultimately, as the flow of recruits dries up and the jihadist elites become more isolated and alienated, the campaigns will be able to deliver the final blow-- the attrition of the un-reconcilable Al Qaeda core. Like Hercules, who adjusted his strategy and defeated the hydra, ultimate victory is dependent upon a strategy that wins both the battle of arms and the battle of ideas.

Endnotes

¹ For background on the concept of netwar, see John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwar, The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Arlington, VA: National Defense Research Institute, Rand, 2001). Arquilla and Ronfeldt believe the information revolution is changing the nature of conflict by enabling non-state actors to wage effective conflict through networks. Arquilla and Ronfeldt depict Netwar as being used by terrorists, criminals and social activists. They assert that the information revolution favors network forms of organization over hierarchical forms and that the conduct and outcome of conflicts increasingly depend on information and communications.

² Mark E. Stout, Jessica M. Huckabey, and John R. Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴ The National Counterterrorism Center, http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_qaida.html, (accessed November 15, 2009).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Stout, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 138. Ummah refers to the community of Muslims. The word was used to describe the original followers of Muhammad who migrated from Mecca to Medina. The meaning has evolved and now refers to the whole Muslim community.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁸ Jerret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism, Theory and practice*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 188.

⁹ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwar, The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Arlington, VA: National Defense Research Institute, Rand, 2001), 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2,9.

¹¹ Michele Zanini and Sean J.A. Edwards, "The Networking of Terror in the Information Age," in *Networks and Netwar, The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Arlington, VA: National Defense Research Institute, Rand, 2001), 31-41.

¹² Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwar, The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*, 7.

¹³ Stout, Huckbey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 180 - 81.

¹⁴ Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 204 - 05. When Al-Zawahiri refers to the masses, he is talking about the Muslim community, not the world as a whole.

¹⁵ Stout, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 167.

¹⁶ Griff Witte, Jerry Markon, and Shaiq Hussain, "Dangers, Limits as Terror Recruiters Turn to Web," from the Washington Post Homepage, December 13, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com> (accessed December 21, 2009).

¹⁷ Marc Sageman, "Perspectives on Terrorism – Confronting al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan", The Terrorism Research Initiative at "Journal Archives," <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com> (accessed December 21, 2009).

¹⁸ "Al Qaida's Reach, Plots and Attacks Over the Last Two Decades," linked from MSNBC News at "World News – Terrorism," http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27071403/ns/world_news-terrorism (accessed November 18, 2009).

¹⁹ Brachman, *Global Jihadism, Theory and practice*, 188.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ For additional information on definitions for terrorism see Mark Burgess, "Terrorism: The Problems of Definition," August 1, 2003, linked from the Center for Defense Information Home Page at "Terrorism," <http://www.cdi.org>. Also see United States Code, Title 22 - Foreign Relations and Intercourse, January 5, 2009, http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/Title_22.txt. The following are a few of the many definitions of terrorism. 1937 League of Nations Convention Definition of Terrorism: All criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public. The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism: Any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the

environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize a national resources. *U.S. Code Title 22, Ch.38, Para. 2656f(d)*

Definitions

As used in this section—

- (1) the term “international terrorism” means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than 1 country;
- (2) the term “terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents;
- (3) the term “terrorist group” means any group, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism;
- (4) the terms “territory” and “territory of the country” mean the land, waters, and airspace of the country; and
- (5) the terms “terrorist sanctuary” and “sanctuary” mean an area in the territory of the country—
 - (A) that is used by a terrorist or terrorist organization—
 - (i) to carry out terrorist activities, including training, fundraising, financing, and recruitment; or
 - (ii) as a transit point; and
 - (B) the government of which expressly consents to, or with knowledge, allows, tolerates, or disregards such use of its territory and is not subject to a determination under—
 - (i) section 2405(j)(1)(A) of the Appendix to title 50;
 - (ii) section 2371 (a) of this title; or
 - (iii) section 2780 (d) of this title.

²² Department of Defense definition: The calculated use of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. FBI definition: The unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. The Department of State definition: Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

²³ J. Boone Bartholomees Jr., “A Survey of the Theory of Strategy,” in the U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy, 3rd Edition (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College), 15.

²⁴ Pillar, Paul R., *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

²⁶ Frank L. Jones, Toward a Strategic Theory of Terrorism: Defining Boundaries in the Ongoing Search for Security, in U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy, 3rd Edition (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College), 101.

²⁷ Bartholomees Jr., “A Survey of the Theory of Strategy,” 31.

²⁸ Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 12 April 2001 (As Amended Through 31 October 2009), 266.

²⁹ U.S. Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-1.

³⁰ Ibid., 1-2.

³¹ Stout, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 124.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 126. Abu-'Ubayd al-Qurashi is the pseudonym of an al-Qaeda leader and strategist, a close aide to bin Ladin. He was a frequent contributor to the jihad journal (print and online) *al-Ansar*. His writings are generally devoted to jihad strategy and insurgency tactics.

³⁴ Sarah E. Zabel, "The Military Strategy of Global Jihad," October 2007, linked from the *Strategic Studies Institute United States Army War College Home Page* at "Publications," <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil>, October 2007, 7-8.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, (Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 2008), 100.

³⁷ Kenneth Katzman, "Al Qaeda in Iraq: Assessment and Outside Links," (Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, Updated August 15, 2008), 15.

³⁸ Ansar al-Sunna is an offshoot of the Zarqawi network that was operating in northern Iraq, including the Kurdish areas and areas of Arab Iraq around Mosul. The group has always maintained some distance from AQ-I. It did not join the AQ-I umbrella group called the "Islamic State of Iraq." The group claimed responsibility for the February 1, 2004, twin suicide attacks in Irbil, northern Iraq, which killed over 100 Kurds including some senior Kurdish officials.

³⁹ Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 101.

⁴⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman, "A Tenuous Case for Strategic Patience in Iraq," (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Working Draft: Updated: August 6, 2007), 11.

⁴¹ Katzman, "Al Qaeda in Iraq: Assessment and Outside Links," 11.

⁴² Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 101.

⁴³ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", (Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress December 2, 2009), 24.

⁴⁴ Reidel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 122.

⁴⁵ Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," 23.

⁴⁶ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford University Press, 1971), 77.

⁴⁷ Stoudt, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 164.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Stout, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 188.

⁵¹ Ibid., 190.

⁵² Ibid., 232-235.

⁵³ US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication (Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) released June 2007), 2.

⁵⁴ After the fall of Saddam, Muqtada al-Sadr emerged as one of Iraq's most powerful Shi'a leaders. In August 2004 he called on his followers in Iraq to rise up and fight US troops. Clashes broke out in at least three cities between his supporters and US and Iraqi security forces. The US military estimated it had killed 300 militants in the city of Najaf in two days of fighting. There was also heavy fighting in Sadr City in Baghdad. In October 2006, al-Sadr's Mahdi Army seized control of Amarah in southern Iraq. In February 2007, he was reported to have fled to Iran in anticipation of a government security crackdown. By 2008, he ordered most of his militia to disarm. Al-Sadr had close ties with Iran and was receiving support from them. To undermine his disruptive influence with the Iraqis and more moderate Shi'a, coalition forces and the government of Iraq embarked on a strategic communication effort aimed at publicizing al-Sadr's connections to Iran. The aim of the campaign was to paint al-Sadr as an Iranian proxy. The effort was highly successful in containing his influence and marginalizing him with a large segment of the Iraqi population.

⁵⁵ Stout, Huckabey, and Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project*, 237.

⁵⁶ Christopher M. Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," (Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, 2004), 9. As Bin Laden describes it, "Islam is one unit that cannot be divided." Islam is, "a way of life revealed by God for men to abide by all of its aspects in all their affairs." FBIS Report - FEA2004122700076, December 27, 2004.

⁵⁷ Sarah E. Zabel, "The Military Strategy of Global Jihad," 3.

⁵⁸ Kepel and Milelli, *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, 184.

⁵⁹ Witte, Markon, and Hussain, "Dangers, Limits as Terror Recruiters Turn to Web," 2.

⁶⁰ Marc Sageman, in his article "Perspectives on Terrorism – Confronting al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan", used the categories of AQ Core, AQ Affiliated, and AQ Inspired to classify global neo-jihadi violent plots aimed at the West. **AQ Core** means that AQ proper directed and controlled the operation. **AQ Affiliated** means that an international terrorist organization affiliated with AQ, such as LT or IJU, directed and controlled the operation. **AQ Inspired** means that there was no direction or control by any of the above organization for the plot. In other words, the plot was completely autonomous. He defined the West as North American, Western Europe (less the civil war in the Balkans), and Australia. The global neo-jihadi terrorist threat includes plots under the control of al-Qaeda core; al-Qaeda affiliates like

the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), Pakistani Lashkar e-Toyba (LT), the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), the Pakistani Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as well as threats by autonomous groups inspired by al-Qaeda like the Dutch Hofstad network.

⁶¹ Marc Sageman, "Perspectives on Terrorism – Confronting al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan", The Terrorism Research Initiative at "Journal Archives," <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com> (accessed December 21, 2009).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 122. Imperial overstretch is a term Yale professor Paul Kennedy popularized in the late 1980s in his book *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*.

⁶⁵ Walter L. Perry and John Gordon IV, "Analytic Support to Intelligence in Counterinsurgencies," 2008, National Defense Research Institute – RAND Corporation at "Monographs," http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG682.pdf, 2.

⁶⁶ Donald Stoker, "Insurgencies Rarely Win – And Iraq Won't Be Any Different (Maybe)", January 2007, *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3689 (accessed December 17, 2009).

⁶⁷ The numbers were taken from the Defense Link Casualty Report located at <http://www.defense.gov/NEWS/casualty.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2010).

⁶⁸ Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, (Congressional Research Service, September 28, 2009), 2.

⁶⁹ Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 129.

⁷⁰ Peter Bergen, "The Battle for Tora Bora", *The New Republic*, December 22, 2009

⁷¹ Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda, Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future*, 129-130.

⁷² Ibid, 136.

⁷³ Brachman, *Global Jihadism, Theory and practice*, 189.