



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is an expansion of presentations made at a U.S. Institute of Peace Current Issues Briefing on "Global Terrorism after the Iraq War" on June 25, 2003.

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The panel was chaired by Paul Stares, director of the Institute's Research and Studies Program. The meeting was organized by Joseph Klaitz, director of the Institute's Jennings Randolph Fellowship Program, who compiled and edited this report.

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## CONTENTS

Two Years After 9/11: A Balance Sheet, <i>Daniel Benjamin</i>	2
The United States as Target of Terrorism, <i>Martha Crenshaw</i>	6
Phase Three in the War on Terror, <i>Daniel Byman</i>	9

## Global Terrorism after the Iraq War

### Summary

- Whether out of rejection of Western values, envy of American wealth and power, or objections to specific policies, terrorist attacks can be expected to continue in coming years. The elimination of global terrorism remains far off.
- Many al Qaeda leaders have been captured, and there has been no repeat attack on U.S. territory. Yet terrorist attacks continue in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and Russia, as very small numbers of terrorists are sufficient to inflict great destruction.
- While the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has deprived al Qaeda of a state-based center of operations, the weak central government in Afghanistan has been unable to suppress warlordism and Taliban forces seem to be reemerging.
- The U.S.-led coalition's defeat of Saddam Hussein rid the Middle East of a brutal regime and eliminated a potential source of state-sponsored terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, but continuing instability in Iraq may make the country a breeding ground for anti-U.S. terrorism.
- States supporting terrorism, including Syria and Iran, remain threats, and options for military action against them are limited.
- Regimes in the Muslim world that are friendly to the U.S. continue to be threatened by Islamist militants. At the same time, U.S. support for some authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world provokes resentment over the suppression of democracy and human rights, creating hostility that can be exploited by terrorist groups for recruitment.
- To address these continuing problems, the next phase of a successful effort against global terrorism should differ in part from the approach of the two years following 9/11. It should augment intelligence and military means with a better strategy for countering militant Islamist ideology.
- The focus must be on long-term and deep-seated issues, including democratization, economic growth, and educational reform in the Muslim world. The development of more open societies and increased prosperity are key goals.
- To realize these goals, U.S. policy should concentrate on building consensus and enhancing international cooperation, strengthening law enforcement and the rule of

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law, applying cautious pressure for reform in Muslim states, encouraging moderate Islamic voices, and achieving political stability and economic reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- With effective policies, global terrorism may diminish over time, but at present public opinion has turned sharply against the United States in much of the Muslim world. Understanding that the problem is the hostile ideology of militant Islam, not just the actions of a conspiratorial group, or Islam as a whole, is the first step toward formulating an effective, long-term anti-terrorism strategy.

## Two Years After 9/11: A Balance Sheet, by Daniel Benjamin

Some two years after the September 11 attacks, an accounting of how the United States is faring in the war on terror reveals a mixed record. In some areas, American counterterrorism efforts are performing substantially better than we had any right to expect in the aftermath of the catastrophic events of 2001. In others, Washington has been slow to take necessary steps to ensure the nation's long-term security. Though we may have won a short-term hiatus—as demonstrated by absence of a catastrophic attack against U.S. interests in the last two years—it would be delusory to believe that America's experience with radical Islamist terror will be anything but long and difficult.

### *What We're Doing Right*

Undoubtedly, the success story of the last two years has been the ability of the U.S. intelligence community and its foreign partners to disrupt al Qaeda cells and apprehend operatives, including a significant number from the group's top tier. There were a number of noteworthy accomplishments: On September 11, 2002, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, a Yemeni leader of the team behind the attacks of the previous year, was captured in Karachi. Two months later, Qaed Senyan al-Harhi, a high-level al Qaeda official, was killed with five others in a remote area of Yemen by a missile fired from a Predator drone. Also in November, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a Saudi who served as operations chief on the Arabian Peninsula, was apprehended in the Persian Gulf region. In 2003, Walid Baataash, another operative involved in the World Trade Center/Pentagon attacks, was arrested in Karachi.

The pinnacle of this campaign was the apprehension of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was arrested in a predawn operation on March 1, 2003 in Rawalpindi. He had collaborated with his nephew, Ramzi Yousef, in a conspiracy to blow up a dozen U.S. 747 airplanes over the Pacific in 1995 and was an architect of the September 11 attacks. Mohammed had eluded capture for almost a decade, and he was an important reason why al Qaeda had emerged as the most tactically imaginative terrorist group in history.

There have been advances in other areas as well: Government officials, speaking on background, say there have been quiet but real improvements in cutting off the flow of funds to terrorists, especially those that course through Saudi Arabia's large charities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These improvements have occurred more through tactical intelligence cooperation than through permanent reforms, and they have been complicated by continuing turf wars within the Washington bureaucracy. Nonetheless, the progress is significant.

### *No License for Triumphalism*

The record is by no means one of unchallenged American victories. On the contrary—and despite creeping notes of overconfidence in some official U.S. pronouncements—the terrorists of al Qaeda and affiliated groups have continued to be extremely active, frequently to disastrous effect. The litany of attacks is long: The August 2003 bombing of the Jakarta Marriott suggests that Jemaah Islamiya, the Indonesian jihadist group with close

ties to al Qaeda, remains a potent threat 10 months after the October 2002 bombing of two nightclubs on Bali, which killed more than 200 people. (By any measure except that of September 11, Bali was a terrorist attack of major proportions.) In the same month as the Bali attack, Chechen rebels led by Movsar Basayev, a protégé of bin Laden's closest associate in the Caucasus, took some 800 theatergoers hostage in Moscow and threatened to blow up the building. A two-day standoff ended tragically when Russian special forces used an opiate gas to render the terrorists unconscious before storming the building. The gas was too potent and killed as many as 128 of the hostages; the 41 hostage-takers were either killed by the gas or shot. There is a tendency to write off Chechen violence as a problem of the dissolution of the Soviet/Russian empire, but the increasingly spectacular methodology of some Chechen terrorists and the increasingly Islamist tone of their rhetoric cannot be discounted.

In November 2002, al Qaeda's resourcefulness was displayed again in Mombasa, Kenya. The organization had a cell there from the early 1990s, and it had been thought to be cleaned out after the August 1998 bombing of the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. That belief was discredited when suicide operatives crashed a bomb-laden sport utility vehicle into a hotel owned by and catering to Israelis. Ten Kenyan workers and three Israeli tourists were killed. Almost simultaneously, terrorists launched two Soviet-made Strela shoulder-fired missiles at an Israeli charter jet that had just taken off from the local airport for Tel Aviv. The missiles narrowly missed the aircraft. Al Qaeda had been known to have Stinger-type missiles, but the attack demonstrated its willingness to use them in offensive operations out of the Afghanistan theater. It also confirmed the group's ever-increasing desire to attack Israeli targets and thereby establish its bona fides as the champion of the Palestinian cause and broaden its appeal in the Islamic world.

These were the largest attacks, but there were many other less spectacular ones, including the bombing of a French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen, the shootings of American servicemen in the Persian Gulf, the assassination of an American diplomat in Jordan, and a string of bombings in the Philippines. While we should be relieved that there has been no second 9/11, we should not lose sight of the magnitude of these events. In the last half century, no other terrorist organization has carried out or supported so much killing in a comparable period of time. That includes Hezbollah, which in 1983 bombed the barracks of U.S. Marines and French forces as well as the U.S. embassy in Beirut.

### ***The State of al Qaeda***

Intelligence operations and the war in Afghanistan have led to the death or capture of a dozen or so top al Qaeda officials and the incarceration of some 3000 lower-level members of the group. Undoubtedly, these losses and eviction from the sanctuary in Afghanistan have led to the degradation of the organization's capabilities. Looking at the other side of the coin, though, there are still about a dozen high-level operatives with the skill and authority to carry out a major attack. Western intelligence services have consistently underestimated the group's overall strength. Some services now estimate the number of members in the group to be in the range of 25,000–70,000. Some care needs to be taken in viewing even these imprecise figures. Too often, terrorist organizations are likened to armies. And while the removal of large numbers of operatives is undoubtedly for the good, a group like al Qaeda needs only a small number of intact cells to carry out an operation—even a major one. Decapitation of the leadership also will not suffice for a group that is so ideologically driven and whose ideology is spreading fast.

### ***Shaping the Environment?***

A central goal of combat with any foe is to shape the environment to one's advantage. Here, one can question whether the United States is doing an effective job. This has been the year of Phase Two in the war on terror, the year of regime change in Iraq. While no

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one can overlook the long-term potential benefits for the Iraqi people of removing Saddam Hussein, so far as the battle against al Qaeda is concerned, the invasion of Iraq was a non sequitur. No convincing evidence of a substantive link between the Baghdad regime and Osama bin Laden's organization has ever been presented, and, in fact, the intelligence record of the last decade suggests that while contacts may have occurred and terrorist operatives may have crossed through Iraq, no collaborative efforts of note have occurred between the arch-secularist Baath regime and the radical fundamentalists of al Qaeda.

For the war on terrorism in the broadest sense, the invasion of Iraq brought two important advantages: A state sponsor of terrorism, albeit a rather inactive one, has been removed, and the demonstration of military might in toppling Saddam Hussein's regime has given the United States more leverage against the outstanding state sponsors of terrorism—Iran and Syria. (Both, it should be added, appear to be behaving somewhat better, although the jury will remain out for some time on Iranian activity within the borders of neighboring Iraq and Afghanistan.) But as a threat to U.S. interests, the state sponsors are of relatively minor consequence compared to the non-state actors such as al Qaeda—which may in fact benefit from the American occupation of Iraq.

### *Costs of Iraq*

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How does al Qaeda benefit? The greatest windfall for bin Laden's forces comes in the realm of propaganda, not a small issue for a movement that views establishing itself as the undisputed champion of Islam as a primary goal. By occupying Iraq, the United States has given al Qaeda a major opportunity to drive home its argument that the "leader of world infidelity" seeks to destroy Islam and subjugate its believers. This has been at the very core of al Qaeda's message throughout its existence, and the group is now using the example of Iraq to reap gains in the areas of recruitment and fundraising. Independent polling by groups such as the Pew Foundation and others has established that conditions are ripe for this message since there has been a massive turn in public opinion against America in the last two years. The data suggest that the long slow erosion of positive feelings about the United States has given way to a landslide during the period of the war on terror, and especially during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. A long-term U.S. presence in Iraq, a central country within the historic realm of Islam and a longtime seat of the caliphate, will make it difficult to reverse these impressions. Positive perceptions about the reconstruction of Iraq may help, but they will have to be strong ones, widely affirmed by Iraqis themselves, to reverse this trend.

The occupation of Iraq presents other, related dangers in the war on terrorism. First, it seems highly likely that Iraq itself will become a central theater for Islamists seeking to attack the United States. Some may argue that this is preferable to having them attack the United States elsewhere, including at home. But the argument is false since there is no suggestion that one area of activity will affect the other. Iraq will attract those fighters who are prepared to carry on classic guerrilla warfare—as many of the trainees of the Afghan camps are capable of—while those with specific terrorist training will continue to focus on U.S. and Western interests elsewhere. (These fighters will feel honor-bound to attack American forces in Iraq since the Islamists' credibility will be on the line.) The potential cost to the reconstruction effort is considerable: Until U.S. forces can concentrate more on supporting the rebuilding and less on force protection, we will be challenged to deliver the kind of future that Iraqis expect, and that, in turn, will affect U.S. standing throughout the region. There are also further threats, such as proliferation of weapons and other dangerous materials. In the worst-case scenario, weapons of mass destruction material may have been privatized by regime adherents who know their future in an American-guided Iraq is unpromising. Additionally, weapons such as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, of which Iraq had many, may have fallen into terrorist hands—a possibility that has been voiced by senior U.S. military officials.



## *Elsewhere*

A number of other developments suggest additional problems that require greater attention by the United States and its allies. Perhaps the outstanding one is the deterioration of conditions in Afghanistan. Both Taliban and al Qaeda fighters are showing increasing signs of activity, and, with the ambit of Hamid Karzai's government essentially restricted to Kabul, the possibility of another round of warlordism is growing. In the past, terrorists have found safe haven in the territory of these regional strongmen, and this could well happen again, giving the terrorists a greater level of security as they plot and train. Additionally, some experts see the geographic base of Islamist terror shifting to the Caucasus, where camps are said to have been established. Russian and other forces may be able to destroy these camps, but without a comprehensive settlement in Chechnya and the broader region, terrorists will move from camp to camp and remain a problem.

Another growing issue is the radicalization of Europe's Muslim population. Just the last year witnessed the first suicide bombing in Israel carried out by Muslims who were British citizens. The incident was unique but it bespoke a deeper reality. As polling demonstrates, a growing and dangerous alienation of young, European-born Muslims has taken root, and, as the French scholar Olivier Roy has observed, this cohort increasingly embraces an alternative, pan-Islamic identity that is often radical and occasionally violent. This could emerge as a considerable security challenge for Europe and the West in general.

## *What's Missing*

Success in intelligence operations has led to an overemphasis on this prong of strategy at the expense of all others. Washington continues to focus too heavily on state sponsors of terror, and to ignore what Daniel Byman has rightly called the global insurgency now underway from the Pacific Rim to the Maghreb and Europe. The conflict we face is not just one against a single, determined group but against a fast-spreading, profoundly hostile ideology. Our record at disrupting cells and conspiracies is impressive, but it offers no promise that the next round of major terrorist attacks will be less dramatic than those of 9/11.

What is to be done? There is no magic bullet, of course, but the United States must begin to focus on the wider circle of Muslims who may be tempted by the al Qaeda message. We must not relax our efforts in intelligence and law enforcement in any way—indeed, this should be a period of constant innovation, particularly because other nations have come to share our threat assessment, which was not the case before September 2001. But we must also develop a foreign policy that addresses the tendency to radicalization in the Muslim world.

- Core elements of such a policy would include greater emphasis on a number of fronts:
- *Democratization.* Only democracies can hope to contain some of the dissent developing in Muslim countries. Yet support for democratization must be tempered by gradualism and an effort to join with existing regimes—whose assistance in counterterrorism remains essential—to encourage a new openness. Too abrupt a shift in U.S. policy risks bringing to power militants who would be inimical to American interests.
  - *Improvement of regional educational systems.* The widespread decay of state schools in the region has given many parents no option but to enroll their children in religious schools that inculcate radical ideology and do not prepare the young for the modern economy.
  - *Economic liberalization.* The countries of the Muslim world face enormous demographic and economic stresses. None of them is likely to produce the number of jobs necessary for their exploding populations. The primary hope for ameliorating some of the hardships is economic growth, which has long been stunted by the failure of economic reform.

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- *Curbing incitement.* Too many of the region's authoritarian regimes have sought to deflect criticism away from themselves and onto an external enemy—Israel, the United States, the West in general. U.S. leaders have long decried this tendency but have seldom put real pressure on these regimes to stop the incitement. To end the cultivation of radicalism, Muslim leaders must be shown that this practice will not be tolerated.

Making real progress on these fronts will require both diplomatic energy and money. The United States has taken a step in the right direction with the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative, which encourages democratization at the grassroots, and supports groups that have hitherto had little voice in their countries' affairs. But it will take much more to make a lasting impact—and a great deal of political capital has already been spent to buy support, or at least quiet, on the issue of Iraq. Historically, the United States has given the region's authoritarian regimes great leeway to do what they like domestically so long as they support our policies regarding the Middle East peace process and Persian Gulf security. But so long as many of these countries are incubators for radicals, we can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to what goes on within their borders.

*The reasons for anti-American terrorism are unlikely to disappear in the aftermath of the war in Iraq, even if the occupation succeeds in restoring order and rehabilitating Iraq.*

### **The United States as Target of Terrorism, by Martha Crenshaw**

Since the 1960s terrorists seeking radical political change have targeted American citizens and interests. The reasons for anti-American terrorism are unlikely to disappear in the aftermath of the war in Iraq, even if the occupation succeeds in restoring order and rehabilitating Iraq.

Why has the United States been targeted and what can be done? Since September 11 this question has dominated the public debate on terrorism. A frequent answer is simple: we are attacked by virtue of our existence. Our identity, our standing in the world, and our policies expose us to terrorism. These three lines of argument are logically related to each other. Our opponents might not feel threatened by our beliefs or blame us for injustices if we were not so powerful.

One basis of this explanation for terrorism is a civilizational argument. It suggests that our enemies hate us because of our culture and values—liberalism, secularism, democracy, equality, tolerance, freedom—all of which we perceive as virtues. The negative attitudes toward the United States and the Western way of life are currently associated in the public mind with Islam, and this blanket attribution has contributed to stereotyping and some manifestations of intolerance on our side. Nevertheless, if one accepts this civilizational premise, then the solution to terrorism lies in changing the mindset of the adversary. Consequently, the United States is promoting public diplomacy to reduce anti-Americanism and broadcast a positive image; sponsoring local educational reform to bolster understanding and objectivity, especially among the young; and encouraging “moderate” versus extremist or jihadist Islam. Proponents of the war against Saddam Hussein hope that a restored and democratic Iraq will exemplify precisely the values we wish to disseminate throughout the Muslim world and thus serve as a model for positive change. At a minimum we can no longer be criticized for the disastrous effects of economic sanctions. However, in the short run, insecurity, economic hardship, and the friction of military occupation may have fueled rather than dampened anti-Americanism. As yet we do not appear to be winning the war of ideas. Critics of American policy charge that the occupation of Iraq is actually confirming bin Laden's claim that the war on terrorism is an excuse for a war against Muslims.

A second part of this answer to the question of why we are targeted emphasizes power and resources, both military and economic. In this view, opposition to the United States is based on material factors more than ideas and values. Terrorism is presumably rooted in resentment and envy of America's wealth and global dominance. It is a reflection of the struggle between haves and have nots, a gap that is widening through uneven glob-

alization. Terrorism is thought to result from international inequality and real misery and deprivation among large segments of the world's population. After all, terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong. Thus, if the diagnosis is that economic disparities and American power are the root cause of terrorism, the prescription is to remove inequalities and reduce poverty. We could try to lower our profile, behave more circumspectly, and use our overwhelming power to promote global well-being rather than self-interest. Presumably reducing the gap between rich and poor by elevating those at the bottom rung would diminish the grievances that produce terrorism. If poverty is genuinely the cause of terrorism (and this contention is disputed), a prosperous Iraq will be a step in the right direction, but economic success in Iraq will not lift others. In the end, a rich and stable Iraqi ally would only add to American power. Moreover, in the short run, Iraqis complain that the world's only superpower cannot even restore electricity, protect the water supply, guard oil pipelines, or furnish gasoline for their cars. Our deficiency is attributed to lack of will rather than lack of ability precisely because we are perceived as all powerful.

A third part of this explanation for terrorism points to specific historical grievances that are unresolved, perceived injustices for which the United States is held responsible. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is most often cited as a catalyst for terrorism, although if this proposition is accurate it is curious that Palestinian Islamic groups have not targeted the United States. Nevertheless, if longstanding political disputes are a source of terrorism, the answer is to end these conflicts peacefully. Thus one argument for going to war in Iraq is that our victory will launch a wave of change in the Middle East that will sustain a peace process. It is thought that Arab opponents of compromise with Israel will lose heart. In addition, we have removed a regime that was assisting Palestinian suicide bombers by paying their families. On the other hand, American occupation forces face a daily risk of creating new grievances. This danger exists not only in Iraq, where it was predictable that efforts to maintain order would provoke anger, but also on other fronts. For instance, al Qaeda spokesmen have referred to the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay as justification for attacks on Americans.

Hostility toward the United States based on these assorted reasons is supposed to characterize the general attitudes of large numbers of people in the Muslim world. Is this actually the case, and if so would it make a difference to the future of terrorism? It can be safely assumed that antagonistic views create constituencies likely to be impressed by groups that espouse violent jihad. These conditions lay the groundwork for terrorism by providing sources of funding and recruits and also by encouraging the expectation among extremists that terrorism will attract popular support. However, the empirical basis for assessing aggregate opinion among these disparate populations is weak, and we should guard against speculation as to what the "other" thinks. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the United States and its policies need not be transformed into terrorism. In South Korea, for example, protests—often violent—have traditionally been the outlet for anti-Americanism. Thus opposition can be channeled into collective action rather than conspiratorial violence—in fact, in many cases the resort to terrorism is a manifestation of a lack of popular support rather than mass enthusiasm. Terrorism need not be linked to a social movement. Terrorism is not the direct result of a spontaneous outpouring of mass rage or frustration.

To understand terrorism one must look at the specific strategies of elites who may or may not actually be representative of mass opinion. The key is the willingness and ability to act of very small numbers of people. Over time few extremist organizations have chosen to target American interests in a significantly destructive way. In fact, the groups who have used terrorism against the United States since the 1960s represent only a small percentage of the total number of groups using terrorism (my rough estimate is fewer than 10 percent). We must therefore look closely at the incentives they have for targeting American interests.

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Most groups using terrorism internationally start as contenders in local power struggles. Their agenda is to gain political power at home, and their logic can be quite pragmatic as well as ideological. Terrorism is not simply a blind lashing-out against a despised enemy. Terrorist leaders have concrete political goals, and establishing an Islamic state is such a goal, however unrealistic we consider it. The expectation is based on a precedent realized in Iran and even briefly in Afghanistan. Islamic groups differ in terms of how realistic they are, but religious fervor does not in itself imply lack of political vision. The United States is a useful target because attacks on Americans are highly visible and because both acts of terrorism and the American response (especially if it involves the use of force) arouse popular emotions. Thus anti-American terrorism gains these conspiracies publicity and recognition. Their message reaches a large audience that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. Terrorism attracts actual and potential followers and recruits because it creates the appearance of power, whether or not it produces change in the short run. The users of terrorism are often impatient for immediate action but patient in terms of achieving long-term objectives.

Beyond the attention-getting function of terrorism, its users can have specific ambitions. One is to compel the United States to withdraw from a commitment that supports a local government. Thus the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Lebanon in 1983 was meant to end the American intervention, which it effectively did. Similarly, bin Laden demands that the United States withdraw from Saudi Arabia. A second purpose, paradoxically, is to draw the United States into a local conflict. Terrorism can be a means of gaining leverage in an unequal power struggle. Thus attacks on American targets in a country embarrass the local government. Terrorism might also lead the United States to pressure the government to make reforms. Bringing the United States in might expose the local government's reliance on American military support and thus undermine its legitimacy.

One policy implication that could be drawn from this interpretation of terrorism is that less involvement in countries confronting violent oppositions would diminish our value for would-be terrorists. Disengagement, however, is not a viable option. One obstacle is that we have other national interests that may be more important than reducing our vulnerability to terrorism. In the past we have accepted some unknown level of risk of terrorism in order to accomplish unrelated objectives—in deciding to refuel at Yemeni ports, for example, or in tolerating Pakistani support for the Taliban before September 11. In addition, much of America's worldwide presence is economic and cultural, driven by private rather than public interest. As official military and diplomatic targets are hardened, terrorists migrate to soft targets (as we have recently seen in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia, Kenya, and Indonesia). There is no way to restrict the publicity that attacks on Americans can generate. Terrorists now truly possess global reach and can easily strike American targets in distant theaters. They thrive on globalization. Local bases may no longer be necessary at all. Al Qaeda's loss of Afghanistan weakened the organization, but the top leadership apparently survived. Al Qaeda's access to diasporas and to groups involved in local conflicts, due to contacts made earlier in its training camps in Afghanistan, makes its structure resilient and adaptable.

Furthermore, the war on terrorism and the war against Iraq have pushed us to more rather than less involvement. Our military presence in the Middle East has expanded dramatically. (Ironically, gaining access to bases in Iraq, as well as incapacitating Saddam Hussein, now permits us to withdraw from Saudi Arabia.) We have assumed an active military role around the world, from Colombia to the Philippines. We act as a broker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where our mediation may be essential to a settlement but where it will also expose us to recrimination should the peace process fail. We are more closely linked to Pakistan and its problems than we were before the war in Afghanistan. And we should not forget that Afghanistan remains volatile.

A more useful policy implication of explaining terrorism as the strategic choice of small conspiratorial undergrounds (typically non-states, although state bureaucracies can perform a similar function) is that we have no choice but to end their ability to act. In some



cases this task requires removing leaders and key operatives, depriving them of money and weapons, and blocking their ability to recruit. In other cases the same goal might be accomplished by convincing them that terrorism against the United States is not worthwhile. This change of direction could be accomplished through deterrence and coercion based on threats or through persuasion based on making other options more attractive. We need a fine-tuned policy that is sensitive to local contexts.

Unfortunately, some consequences of our position in Iraq could undermine the effort to defeat al Qaeda, even though the war against Iraq was originally justified as part of the struggle against terrorism. For example, the war on terrorism would suffer if our unilateralist policies cause the allies on whom we rely for intelligence and law enforcement cooperation to become reluctant to share information, track down and prosecute suspects, and restrict terrorist fundraising. The United States has squandered some of the goodwill it enjoyed in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. In Iraq itself insecure conditions and porous borders have apparently permitted the infiltration of al Qaeda associates and other foreign groups. For American policymakers, managing the occupation may be a distraction from the war on terrorism. It will certainly be a drain on resources, since the reconstruction of Iraq will be both lengthy and costly.

In sum, policies designed to prevent terrorism by changing people's attitudes toward us will be difficult and slow. We cannot expect instant transformation, even if our policy in Iraq is successful. Nor will terrorism necessarily disappear if anti-Americanism fades or the poor become less so. In the short term our operations in Iraq, an integral part of the post 9/11 strategy of threat preemption, may well complicate both facets of the war on terrorism. The tensions of occupied Iraq may make it harder to promote a positive image as well as to sustain both the international cooperation and the internal focus that are essential to defeating al Qaeda. In the future, a successful reconstruction of Iraq would benefit the Iraqi people and enhance regional stability. It might well change the political dynamics of the Middle East. However, this otherwise positive outcome could sharpen the desperation of the radical minorities who practice terrorism.

*We need a fine-tuned policy that is sensitive to local contexts.*

## **Phase Three in the War on Terror, by Daniel Byman**

With the toppling of Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the world is watching where the United States will go next. Senior administration officials, and Republican policy advisers close to the White House, have warned Iran and Syria that their meddling in Iraq, support for terrorist groups, and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction may make them the next targets. Florida senator Bob Graham, who is also campaigning for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, has called for striking Lebanese Hezbollah's terrorist training camps, declaring that the group is even more lethal than al Qaeda. Still other officials murmur that supposed friends such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan pose the gravest threat to the United States, requiring Washington to push regime change throughout the greater Middle East.

### ***The Case for Expansion***

The logic of expanding the war on terrorism appears sound at first glance. As senior Bush administration officials repeatedly noted, after September 11, it seems foolish to wait for a gun to be fired before looking for the smoke. Iran and Syria, like Iraq, have acquired chemical weapons and are seeking biological and (in Iran's case) nuclear weapons as well. Indeed, Tehran may have accelerated its nuclear program in recent months. Both countries have far stronger links to terrorist groups than did Iraq, and these links remain strong today. Although Saddam Hussein was in a class of his own with regard to brutality and repression, Bashar al-Asad's government in Syria and the clerical regime in Iran are both harsh and unrepresentative.

The Lebanese Hezbollah, until September 11, had killed more Americans than any terrorist group in history, and its rhetoric against the United States remains vehement while it continues to foster attacks against Israel. Several media reports indicate the group may be sending operatives to Iraq. Since the outbreak of the second *intifada* in September 2000, Hezbollah has trained and armed various Palestinian groups, making them more lethal and better able to disrupt any moves toward peace.

Perhaps most disturbingly, even friends of the United States are cause for grave concern. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the past promoted radical charities, educational institutions, and political movements that nourish groups like al Qaeda. Both countries have cooperated with the United States against terrorists since September 11, but these efforts have been incomplete at best. Even today, these countries remain supportive of a range of anti-U.S. causes. Pakistan represents a particularly terrifying concern, as its lethal mix of domestic Islamic radicalism, political instability, and nuclear weapons raise the specter of truly apocalyptic scenarios.

### *Challenges for Phase Three*

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The next phase in the war on terrorism, however, is likely to prove quite different from, and far more challenging than, the first two phases. Unlike Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Iran and Syria are not diplomatically isolated. Although the clerical regime in Tehran is unpopular, and the Baath regime in Damascus is widely scorned, they are not universally loathed as was Hussein's regime. Moreover, both countries' populations are highly nationalistic and are likely to unite behind their government in the event of a crisis. U.S. pressure might strengthen the hands of the regimes we oppose.

Limited bombing would almost certainly fail to disrupt the terrorist infrastructure significantly. There is simply too little to bomb. As the U.S. cruise missile attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 demonstrated, limited attacks usually have a negligible effect on terrorists and can even lead to their lionization. Putting boots on the ground is necessary to root out terrorists, and even then they are more likely to be displaced than destroyed.

More robust military action would certainly have more of a chance of killing terrorists and disrupting their operations, but it carries with it numerous political, diplomatic, and operational burdens. For Iran, the number of forces needed to occupy Iranian territory would dwarf those required for the Iraq campaign, given the country's large size and the probable hostility of the population. The military effort in Syria could be far less massive, but here too occupation would be difficult given the nationalism of the Syrian people. Moreover, Syria's firm position in the Arab world would make an attack extremely difficult for U.S. diplomacy, driving the few friends the United States has in the Arab world away from Washington.

Expanding the war to terrorist groups beyond al Qaeda and its affiliates appears to be a simpler approach at first, but a closer look reveals it to be even more difficult. The Lebanese Hezbollah, in addition to being highly skilled and dedicated, would be able to blend in among the Lebanese people, unlike the al Qaeda cadre in Afghanistan. Directly striking at the terrorists would be almost impossible, requiring superb intelligence (which is almost always lacking). To have any chance of success, a military effort would require a sustained counter-insurgency effort in Lebanon. Israel has tried a military solution to the Hezbollah problem for 20 years, but its efforts only made the group stronger, strengthening its resolve and increasing its political appeal to many Lebanese. Meanwhile, Hezbollah would activate its cells in Asia, Europe, and Latin America—and probably unknown cells in the United States—to strike at Americans worldwide.

With troubled allies like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the United States faces a no-win situation if it pursues regime change. Despite being victims of terrorism from al Qaeda and other groups themselves, these allies' support is often half-hearted, and they remain committed to fostering an intellectual and political environment that helps Islamic radi-

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calism flourish. However, the regimes in these countries are far more pro-American and hostile to radicals than any likely alternative. Their cooperation has proven vital to the many successes against al Qaeda so far.

Most important, the United States itself is in a far more difficult position than it was before the war in Iraq. U.S. military forces are overstretched, tied down in Iraq as they fight the war on terror. Special operations forces, often the most important for counter-terrorism operations, are particularly strained. Hopes for a quick withdrawal from a stable, democratic Iraq were quickly dashed. Each week brings additional casualties, with no end in sight. Indeed, the United States may have engendered a backlash in Iraq, with the remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime allying with international radicals and angry Iraqi nationalists to oppose the occupation. In essence, Iraq is becoming a new "swamp" that breeds terrorists. As a result of these troubles, the U.S. occupation may last a decade or more, requiring tens of thousands of U.S. troops to keep the peace and promote democratization.

Politically, the war with Iraq exposed the United States to charges of arrogance from our friends and imperialism from our enemies. The failure to uncover robust weapons of mass destruction programs has hurt U.S. credibility, making it far more difficult for the United States to justify another war. Yet another military struggle would damage America's reputation even more, confirming a reputation of the United States as a trigger-happy cowboy. Even staunch allies such as Britain have blanched in the face of U.S. rhetoric against Syria and Iran. The international sympathy and support for the United States that grew after September 11 are gone.

Even more troubling, the war against al Qaeda is far from over. To be clear, the United States has scored important successes. Afghanistan is no longer a terrorist sanctuary—the United States has denied al Qaeda a secure haven where it could recruit and train new members and fellow radicals. The intelligence campaign has led to the arrest of hundreds of radical Islamists, including numerous senior lieutenants. In addition, dozens of cells worldwide have been disrupted. To the surprise of many, there has not been a major attack on the U.S. homeland since September 11, offering grounds to hope that al Qaeda's effectiveness is impaired. Nevertheless, Afghanistan is anarchic, and pockets of resistance from Taliban and al Qaeda remnants remain strong.

The long term looks bleak. The United States is losing its campaign for the hearts and minds of the Arab world. Poll after poll suggests that opinions of the United States in the Middle East range from suspicion to loathing. Al Qaeda itself is under siege, but its ideas are flourishing.

### ***Caution, Not Inaction***

These problems are grounds for caution, not inaction. Just because the United States would find it difficult to dramatically expand the war on terrorism does not mean its hands are tied completely. Sustained pressure on Iran and Syria is essential, as is trying to build a case against their weapons of mass destruction and support for terrorism. When coupled with the visible threat of military force, such pressure would help coerce Tehran and Damascus into cutting their support for terrorists and abandoning their weapons programs. Already, open pressure on the Asad regime led it to shy away from initial steps toward aiding the anti-U.S. effort in Iraq and to take limited steps to reduce the visibility of the terrorist presence in Syria. If these regimes do not go far enough (and, so far, Tehran remains defiant on its nuclear program), efforts to build a case internationally today will make military measures easier tomorrow.

The Lebanese Hezbollah is best countered indirectly. Syria alone has the intelligence on Hezbollah and the forces in Lebanon to shut down the group completely. Hezbollah is a tactical tool for Damascus, not an ideological soulmate. The right combination of carrots and sticks would lead it to crack down on Hezbollah, pushing it to become a relatively tame Lebanese political organization. Pressure on Iran, while less effective, would

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also help cut Hezbollah's global network and might make it more prone to focus its efforts on Lebanese politics, not anti-American jihad. For both countries, pressure should also include demands that Hezbollah halt its efforts to arm and train Palestinian groups.

Developing a better policy toward troubled "allies" is the hardest challenge, as things could easily get worse before they get better. For Pakistan, the United States should continue to push an array of financial and security measures to bolster the Musharraf government, binding it more to the United States while making it better able to withstand domestic pressure from radicals. Recent promises of aid are a sensible first step. Riyadh will prove even trickier. However, shaming and embarrassing the Saudis over their support for radical causes has proven effective in the past, and the current leadership also seeks U.S. backing for economic reforms. The May attacks in the kingdom were an embarrassment to the Saudi regime and drew little sympathy from ordinary Saudis, suggesting that the royal family may move against radicalism more decisively than in the past. Moreover, the removal of U.S. military forces will give the United States additional freedom in its negotiations, no longer leaving Washington hostage to its military needs in the region.

"Winning" the campaigns against al Qaeda and in Iraq is also necessary and should be the focus of current U.S. government efforts. Al Qaeda's ability to continue attacks, as demonstrated most recently by its May strikes in Saudi Arabia and Morocco, suggests that this threat is far from diminished. Even more important, restoring order and building democracy in Iraq is essential. If Iraq slides toward anarchy, it will become a breeding ground for anti-U.S. radicalism and cost the lives of many Americans. Moreover, the failure to establish good government in Iraq would be viewed by many Arabs as proof that the tactics of guerrilla war and terrorism that al Qaeda espouses do indeed work and that they should be used elsewhere in the region.

How the United States pursues Phase Three will shape the world for decades. Coming after two regime removals in 18 months, an aggressive policy would dispel any lingering doubts that the United States is willing to act alone, even if it is viewed as a global bully or hegemon. A more cautious policy that tries to gain international support, in contrast, might repair some of the diplomatic ravages of the war against Iraq while putting terrorist groups and pariah regimes on notice that the clock is ticking. Given the difficulties of military action, and the current anger and resentment toward the United States in much of the world, cautious pressure may be the only practical option at this point.



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