JUNE
2010

Rhetoric and Reality

Countering Terrorism in the Age of Obama

By Marc Lynch

Center for a New American Security

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the dozens of current and former U.S. government officials for their time and willingness to discuss these issues with me, though by agreement I can not name them individually. Kristin Lord read multiple drafts of the report and improved it immeasurably. I would also like to thank the rest of the CNAS team for their comments and suggestions, particularly Brian Burton, Andrew Exum, Nate Fick, Richard Fontaine, John Nagl and Travis Sharp. In addition, David Kilcullen, Andrew Lebovich, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, and Bruce Hoffman provided timely advice. All errors or oversights are my responsibility alone.

Cover Image

Photo illustration by Shutterstock.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Executive Summary	3
II. Introduction	5
III. Continuity and Change	12
IV. Obama's Strategy	18
V. Assessing Effectiveness	25
VI. Recommendations	33

JUNE 2010

Rhetoric and Reality

Countering Terrorism in the Age of Obama

By Marc Lynch

About the Author

Dr. Marc Lynch is Associate Professor of Political Science and the Director of the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University, Elliott School of International Affairs; the editor of the Middle East Channel on ForeignPolicy.com; and a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Barack Obama took office determined to fight terrorist networks such as al Qaeda more effectively by moving away from the most visible symbols and rhetorical framework of former President George W. Bush's "Global War on Terror." The Obama administration seeks to rebuild relations with the Muslim mainstream, marginalize violent extremists and deprive them of popular support, strike hard at terrorist networks and their havens and undermine extremist narratives by restoring American adherence to the rule of law. It seeks to move away from the distorting lens of terrorism in its dealings with the Muslim communities of the world and to define the threat as violent extremism instead of radical Islam.

Though there are significant differences between this strategy and that of the Bush administration in the first half decade after the 9/11 attacks, there is also substantial continuity with the policies and philosophies adopted by the Bush administration in its final two years. The Obama administration built on those efforts, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by a presidential transition and increasing efforts in a range of key areas: engagement, outreach and a rhetorical commitment to restoring the rule of law on the one hand, and on the other, escalated (though not publicly acknowledged) drone strikes and counterterrorism partnerships in the ungoverned spaces where al Qaeda and its affiliated movements thrived.

Despite some potentially serious internal contradictions, this strategy is appropriate and already shows signs of success. While the recent wave of plots against the American homeland demonstrates that al Qaeda and its affiliated movements retain the ability to carry out terrorist acts, these terrorist networks have also faced major setbacks in their bid to attract widespread support and become a mainstream mass movement. They are under growing pressure. The administration's strategy has put the challenges posed by al Qaeda and affiliated movements into proper perspective, both maintaining effective counterterrorism

policies and making a major effort to engage with mainstream Muslim populations on issues that matter to them.

Yet success is not assured. Terrorist networks do not necessarily require mass support. Al Qaeda Central, though significantly degraded, continues to survive, operate as a propaganda machine and guide operations. Affiliated movements have taken root, especially in struggling states such as Yemen and Somalia but also in North Africa and beyond. Al Qaeda's narrative retains appeal to a small but committed radicalized base and continues to find outlets on the Internet and in distinct pockets on the margins of mainstream society. Attempted attacks continue to threaten the United States.

While the administration's policy has taken on clearer contours over the last year and a half, it is still easier to say what it is not rather than what it is. **President Obama has not yet articulated an effective strategy to the American public.** The administration must fill this void. If the strategy cannot be better articulated and a new approach institutionalized in a durable and robust set of institutional commitments and legal authorities, then there is a real risk that it will collapse in the face of challenges or setbacks. Now is the time for the Obama administration to lay out a clearly articulated strategic vision.

To fully deliver on the promise of its approach and create a durable and effective strategy, the administration should:

- ***Articulate and Institutionalize the Strategy.*** The 2010 National Security Strategy lays out a comprehensive approach to combating al Qaeda and its affiliates, but serious tensions remain between its constituent parts. The administration must move quickly to translate this guidance into practice, establish new legal and institutional foundations, and demonstrate that it can live up to its rhetorical commitments.
- ***Adapt, But Do Not Overreact, to New Domestic Threats.*** Rising concerns over domestic radicalization and the mobilization of transnational threats to the homeland should galvanize action across the government without causing overreaction. The domestic response should employ the same multi-layered, disaggregated strategy as in the international realm: broad-based engagement with Muslim communities, targeted efforts against violent extremists, continuing vigilance by law enforcement and renewed respect for the rule of law.
- ***Coordinate Efforts to Engage Publics and Counter Extremist Narratives.*** Global Muslim Engagement should be prioritized as a crucial part of an integrated strategy. The reasons for separating global engagement from combating violent extremism (CVE) are compelling, but they must be coordinated as part of an overall strategy for either to be fully effective.
- ***Think Holistically.*** Policymakers should consider the effects of counterterrorism decisions on the other key parts of the integrated strategy – global engagement, CVE and the rule of law – when calculating costs and benefits. This applies to everything from drone strikes to security partnerships with countries such as Yemen. Otherwise, the internal contradictions in the president's strategy may undermine his long term success.
- ***Prepare for the Worst.*** Even the most effective counterterrorism strategy cannot prevent every attack, and perfect security will never be achieved. The administration should prepare its response to a successful attack well in advance. This response should include clear communications designed to demonstrate American resilience and commitment to the current strategy.

II. INTRODUCTION

The United States is not, and will never be, at war with Islam. In fact, our partnership with the Muslim world is critical not just in rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths reject, but also to strengthen opportunity for all its people.

I also want to be clear that America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot, and will not, just be based upon opposition to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

– President Barack Obama, Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament, April 6, 2009

President Barack Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy declares that "this is not a global war against a tactic – terrorism or a religion – Islam. We are at war with a specific network, al-Qa'ida, and its terrorist affiliates."[1] His determination to move away from the language and the most visible symbols of the Bush administration's "Global War on Terror" rested on a conviction that this would be the most effective way to achieve the administration's stated goal "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its allies."[2] As part of this strategy, the administration sought to rebuild relations with the Muslim mainstream, marginalize violent extremists and deprive them of popular support, strike hard at terrorist networks and their havens and undermine extremist narratives by restoring American adherence to the rule of law. The administration sought to move away from the "distorting lens" of terrorism and launch a broad-based engagement effort with the Muslim communities of the world.[3] The 2010 National Security Strategy puts forward "a comprehensive strategy that denies [al Qaeda and its affiliates] safe haven, strengthens front-line partners, secures our homeland, pursues justice through durable legal approaches, and counters a bankrupt agenda of extremism and murder with an agenda of hope and opportunity."[4] Rather than focus on "militant radical Islam," it focused on "violent extremism" as a common enemy of both the United States and mainstream Muslim communities of the world. By addressing issues beyond terrorism, such as widely held political grievances, and restoring America's moral authority, the administration sought to build a more robust relationship with the vast Muslim mainstream and partner states in order to marginalize and degrade al Qaeda.

Though there are significant differences between this strategy and the strategy of the Bush administration in the first half decade after the 9/11 attacks, there is substantial continuity with the policies and philosophies adopted by the Bush administration in its final two years. Obama has retained most of the "hard" counterterrorism arsenal and legal foundations of the Bush administration's campaign against al Qaeda and affiliated movements. In some cases – most notably Predator strikes and the military campaign in Afghanistan – the administration even expanded efforts.[5] The repeated criticisms by former Vice President Dick Cheney of Obama's approach to terrorism, and the intense political struggles surrounding issues such as the Miranda rights of suspected terrorists, mask the fact that the Obama administration has retained or expanded many of the most successful elements of the previous administration's final years, even keeping many of the same personnel.[6] Moreover, it has increased America's efforts in a range of key areas: engagement and outreach, a rhetorical commitment to the rule of law, escalated drone strikes in Pakistan and military efforts in Afghanistan and counterterrorism partnerships in the ungoverned spaces where al Qaeda and its affiliated movements thrive. The administration has preferred to not highlight this continuity because of its desire to take advantage of a fresh start offered by the transition to a new administration. However, the continuity is real.

For the most part, this strategy is appropriate and already shows signs of success. It has put the challenges posed by al Qaeda and its affiliated movements into proper perspective, both maintaining effective

counterterrorism policies and making a concerted effort to engage with mainstream Muslim populations. It does suffer from unresolved contradictions, however, which if not dealt with soon could throw the long-term foundations of the strategy into question.

The shifts in American policy and philosophy that began towards the end of the Bush administration have contributed to al Qaeda's rapidly deteriorating position over the last few years. While the recent wave of domestic plots shows that al Qaeda and its affiliated movements remain adaptive and resilient, and retain the ability to carry out terrorist acts, they have faced major setbacks in their bid to attract widespread support. Moreover, they are increasingly marginal to Arab political discourse and isolated from potential allies. In particular, attacks on local targets, which kill innocent Muslims, alienate popular opinion and turn Arab regimes into much more active adversaries. At this point, it is unlikely that al Qaeda will ever recover its ability to appeal broadly to a mainstream Arab or Muslim audience.

Yet America's success is not assured. Terrorist networks do not necessarily require mass support or safe havens to survive and carry out devastating attacks. Al Qaeda Central, though significantly degraded, continues to survive, operate as a propaganda machine and guide operations. Affiliated movements have taken root, not only in struggling states such as Yemen and Somalia, but also in North Africa and beyond. Al Qaeda's narrative retains appeal to a small but committed radicalized base, even if it no longer appeals to the Muslim mainstream, and it continues to find outlets on the Internet and in particular communities. Drone strikes have devasted al-Qaeda's ranks, but claims of civilian casualties have fueled extremist propaganda narratives of an unaccountable America raining death from the skies. Attempted attacks continue to threaten the United States, from a thwarted plot to bomb the New York subway system and an attempted car bomb in Times Square to the Christmas Day attempt to bomb an airplane and the Fort Hood shootings. Indeed, domestic radicalization and the seeming pattern of attempts to target the American homeland are among the prime concerns of the counterterrorism community today. Of these recent incidents of terrorism, only the Fort Hood shootings led to American fatalities; however, the threat is serious and the government is poorly organized to handle terrorist networks crossing from abroad into the domestic arena.

The administration's strategy to defeat al Qaeda and its affiliated movements is conceptually multi-layered and robust, and in principle brings together the instruments of national power in a concerted strategy. While it has yet to be clearly articulated in these terms, there appear to be four major pillars to the administration's approach:

- ***Global Muslim Engagement:*** Broad-based outreach to the Muslim communities of the world designed to move those relations beyond the framework of counterterrorism by building networks and partnerships based on mutual interests and mutual respect and addressing issues of concern.
- ***Countering Violent Extremism (CVE):*** Messaging and programs designed to blunt and undermine extremist narratives that remain attractive to a small but potent pool of jihadists and populations vulnerable to radicalization; preventing the consolidation of perceptions that the United States is at war with Islam.
- ***Kinetic Counterterrorism:*** Enhancing military, intelligence and law enforcement efforts to capture, kill or disrupt active terrorists and their networks and to deny them safe havens through direct military actions such as drone strikes and through increased efforts to build counterterrorism capacities in partner states.
- ***Rule of Law:*** Committing to work within the rule of law to recapture America's global legitimacy and moral authority, to counter narratives of American hypocrisy and to put the campaign against violent extremism on durable legal and institutional foundations.

These four pillars are meant to work together in a mutually reinforcing way. The underlying philosophy is one that identifies terrorist networks as a serious threat but not one which defines America's foreign policy or relations with Muslim communities of the world. Global Muslim engagement aims to build positive, enduring relationships with mainstream Muslim societies that, in turn, should help to isolate and further marginalize violent extremists and reduce the appeal of their narrative. CVE programs keep violent extremists on the defensive, disrupting their messaging and their ability to recruit. Counterterrorism efforts physically degrade the networks and their members, while building state partners' capacity to constrict the ability of terrorists to find safe havens. Finally, stricter adherence to the rule of law restores U.S. moral authority abroad and ensures that policies are in line with American values and rest on solid legal and institutional foundations.

The administration has pursued this multi-layered strategy while simultaneously attempting to downplay the centrality of counterterrorism to its foreign policy. Obama vowed early in his administration that "we will relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security."[7] But at the same time, as current State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjamin argued last June, "the U.S. must shift away from a foreign and security policy that makes counterterrorism the prism through which everything is evaluated and decided."[8] In such a strategy, engagement should focus less upon al Qaeda and more on building broad support for American foreign policy goals and supporting engagement with mainstream populations in order to marginalize al Qaeda as the radical fringe movement that it is.[9] The rejection of the "Global War on Terror" as a unifying master frame for policies towards the Muslim world has not led the administration to abandon its efforts to "disrupt, degrade and defeat" terrorist networks. This framework is designed to more effectively

Terrorist networks do not necessarily require mass support or safe havens to survive and carry out devastating attacks. Al Qaeda Central, though significantly degraded, continues to survive, operate as a propaganda machine and guide operations.

"disrupt, degrade and defeat" al-Qaeda's networks, while more closely aligning American values and resources with the nature of the threat.

But if this is no longer a "global war on terror," then what exactly is it? While the administration's policy has taken on clearer contours over the last year and a half, it is still easier to say what the policy is not rather than what it is. The components of the strategy emerge clearly from official statements, documents and from the patterns of behavior, but President Obama has not yet clearly and effectively articulated this strategy. Tellingly, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review removed references to the "Global War on Terror" but did not replace it with a new intellectual framework.[10] The National Security Strategy explicitly says that the U.S. is not fighting a war against terror, but still repeatedly emphasizes an ongoing war against al Qaeda and its affiliates. The administration must fill this void, because the "Global War on Terror" has proven to be a remarkably resilient framework. Both the Bush administration and the Obama administration have tried to move away from this terminology, but it has persisted – as an organizing

While the administration's policy has taken on clearer contours over the last year and a half, it is still easier to say what the policy is not rather than what it is.

concept, as a justification for budgets and organizational structures, as a set of legal authorities and as a justification for a range of otherwise disparate practices, from enhanced interrogation techniques and domestic surveillance to military campaigns and democracy promotion. If the administration's strategy cannot be better articulated and a new approach institutionalized through a durable and robust set of institutional commitments and legal authorities, then there is a real risk that it will collapse in the face of challenges or setbacks.

The promise of fundamental change combined with significant continuity, even escalation, of controversial counterterrorism practices risks provoking a backlash by those at home and abroad who took the President's rhetoric of change seriously. The President came to office amidst stirring promises to close the Guantanamo Bay prison and end many of the controversial practices associated with his predecessor's unpopular "Global War on Terror." The National Security Strategy forcefully argues for stricter adherence to the rule of law in order to restore American leadership and establish durable legal foundations for the struggle against al Qaeda and its affiliates. That many controversial practices continue has undermined Obama's credibility. Even if useful in the short-term, continuing the "Global War on Terror" in practice threatens to undermine the President's ambitious longer term efforts to transform America's relations with the Muslim communities of the world.

The administration's strategy is therefore plagued by potentially serious internal contradictions. For example, effective means of counterterrorism – such as the Predator drone strikes, which have reportedly decimated the ranks of al Qaeda and affiliated movements in areas such as Pakistan and Yemen – may complicate global engagement and CVE efforts by energizing extremist narratives of a United States killing Muslim civilians while casting into doubt America's renewed commitment to working within the rule of law. Increasing security partnerships with key regimes (such as that of Yemen) risks once again viewing those countries exclusively through the lens of counterterrorism, while neglecting broader issues of governance. If restoring stricter adherence to the rule of law is as central to waging an effective struggle against extremist networks as the administration has claimed, then what have been the costs of embracing many principles of the Bush administration's "Global War on Terror" (such as controversial sections of the Patriot Act)? If the outreach to the Muslim communities of the world is not motivated by counterterrorism concerns, then why focus specifically on Muslims in global engagement initiatives such as April's Entrepreneurship Summit? Finally, can the administration continue its low rhetorical profile in the face of political controversies surrounding what appears to be a pattern of low-level, but potentially high-impact, attacks against the American homeland?[11]

Now is the time for the Obama administration to reconcile these internal contradictions and lay out a clearly articulated strategic vision. The pillars are there, but a strategy has yet to be effectively explained or translated into practice. If this is not accomplished soon, the window of opportunity could close.

Taking the threat posed by al Qaeda and its affiliated movements seriously does not mean advocating a return to the disastrous policies and rhetoric of the early Bush administration's "Global War on Terror." Even the Bush administration moved away from its earlier approach during its final years

precisely because they were not working. But all of these efforts take place under a shadow: The reality is that no matter how well the strategy is conceived and executed, another successful attack could well happen. A successful attack inside the United States could easily generate enough political pressure to force the Obama administration to overreact, though the administration clearly understands that over-responding would be a mistake.

The strategy must be made sufficiently robust and durable to sustain the likely shocks to come. Thus, a final element of strategic communications around terrorism must be to prepare the American people for a mature and careful response to the frightening but real possibility of an attack. As Obama said bluntly in his May 2009 speech on terrorism, "if we continue to make decisions within a climate of fear, we will make more mistakes." Obama expanded on this argument after the failed Times Square attack: "We know that the aim of those who try to carry out these attacks is to force us to live in fear, and thereby amplifying the effects of their attacks – even those that fail. But as Americans, and as a nation, we will not be terrorized. We will not cower in fear. We will not be intimidated."[12] This is exactly the sort of resilience the government needs to cultivate, but which can be extraordinarily difficult given partisan politics and a hyperactive media environment.

Former Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair has remarked that "the standard of success in countering violent extremism has to be incredibly high, because the stakes are incredibly high...I cannot promise you that the Intelligence Community will be able to discover and to stop every attack by a violent extremist group like al-Qaida. But as a country, we cannot allow a successful attack to damage our resolve or to diminish our way of life."[13] Perfect security is a myth, but it is also the expectation set by the media and the political environment. A successful attack will almost certainly unleash a political firestorm of the highest magnitude. Old habits die hard – especially those with a ferocious domestic political opposition determined to keep them alive, and a media and political class that has deeply internalized "Global War on Terror" framing. A durable and robust strategy must be designed to survive such challenges.

This report seeks to help the administration and the American public to avoid such an overreaction by articulating the essential contours of the administration's approach to al Qaeda and affiliated movements and offering specific recommendations to ensure the survival and success of the administration strategy. The report is based on reviews of publicly available documents and dozens of conversations with relevant policy officials, all on a not-for-attribution basis to ensure a frank exchange of views. Section II lays out the conceptual foundations of the Obama administration's approach to al Qaeda and the broader problem of violent extremism directed at the United States. Section III looks at the evolution of al Qaeda and its affiliated movements within the Arab world and beyond. Section IV then fleshes out the recommendations.

RISING THREATS TO THE U.S. HOMELAND

There is no more urgent issue facing U.S. counterterrorism and CVE efforts than domestic radicalization and the mobilization from abroad of attacks on the homeland by American citizens – a problem for which the U.S. government is poorly organized. Responding to domestic radicalization poses serious challenges given the thorny legal issues raised by applying counterterrorism tools to U.S. citizens. A growing number of alleged plots, failed attacks and incidents have led many to see the targeting of the American homeland with small-scale attacks on "soft targets" as a new al Qaeda strategy.[14] Among the incidents in this pattern include:

- Najibullah Zazi, who pled guilty in February to a plot allegedly directed by al Qaeda senior members to carry out "Mumbai on the Hudson" through simultaneous attacks on the New York subway system.[15]
- The failed Christmas Day airline bombing by the Nigerian Umar Abdulmutallab, reportedly under the direction of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
- The shooting spree by Major Nidal Hassan at Fort Hood, reportedly after contacts with the Yemen-based Internet jihadist Anwar al-Awlaki, who is also a U.S. citizen.
- The failed car bomb attempt in Times Square by the Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad.
- Chicago resident David Headley, who reportedly helped to plan the Mumbai attack and allegedly was contributing reconnaissance and planning to other plots.
- Coleen LaRose, also known as "Jihad Jane," who allegedly was recruiting Muslim men and women to wage violent jihad abroad.[16]
- Some 20 Somali Americans from Minnesota who reportedly traveled to fight with the al-Shabab movement.[17]

It is important to distinguish among the different kinds of plots and threats that make up this new trend. Very different challenges are posed by self-radicalization, recruitment by specific local insurgencies (e.g., those in Somalia and Yemen), and recruitment by al Qaeda Central. It is not yet obvious that there is even a real pattern, given the small numbers of cases involved. The pattern is older than it may appear, since there have been a number of similar plots in the past, including "shoe bomber" Robert Reid's attempt to blow up an airliner headed towards the United States as well as over 400 individuals convicted in civilian courts.[18] It is impossible to know at this point whether the spate of plots and arrests reflects an increased number of violent extremists in the United States (i.e., an increase in domestic radicalization), increased attempts to mobilize such attacks from abroad (i.e., no increase in domestic radicalization), the activation of existing extremists either through instructions from al Qaeda abroad or for their own reasons, or through law-enforcement activities wrapping up long-gestating plots.

While the pattern is alarming whatever the cause, these different possibilities would point to very different responses. For example, if the problem is one of increasing domestic radicalization, then increased outreach to the American Muslim community may be appropriate. To date, the Obama administration has not been especially engaged at the highest levels in reaching out to this community, perhaps because of its caution about possible political backlash. There are only a small number of Muslims in senior administration positions, even with the recent appointment of Rashad Hussain as envoy to the Organization of Islamic Countries, which limits (and also the number of points of contact for the American Muslim community) the communication of American Muslim perspectives at high policy levels.

In May 2008, a Senate Homeland Security Committee report concluded that the U.S. government "has neither developed nor implemented a coordinated outreach and communications strategy to address the homegrown terrorist threat."[19] Post-mortems on the recent failed attacks would suggest that little progress has been made.[20] This is not entirely fair. Since 2008, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have been working together to formulate a coherent strategy for combating domestic violent extremism, and the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties division of DHS has engaged in outreach efforts with the American Muslim community for years. Such outreach should follow the model of the overall strategy, emphasizing broad engagement around shared interests and the rule of law, rather than framing it explicitly in terms

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick discusses the FBI's investigation of a Watertown, Ma. man linked to the attempted Times Square bombing. (EUGENA OSSI/ Massachusetts Governor's Office).

of counterterrorism and law enforcement. Heightened suspicion of and pressure upon American Muslims will be counterproductive. It will be far more effective to engage such communities as partners, taking seriously their concerns about civil liberties and avoiding demonization.[21] Proposals such as Senators Joseph Lieberman's and Scott Brown's plan to strip suspected terrorists of their citizenship, and other efforts to limit rights guaranteed under the Constitution, should be vigorously opposed.[22]

The United States has been seeking to learn from the experience of European partners in designing appropriate domestic programs to combat violent extremism. What would an American version of, say, the British PREVENT program of community partnerships and engagement look like and how would it intersect with American ideals and civil liberties? Such efforts have been plagued by the perception that they are simply counterterrorism in disguise. As with the wider strategy, the administration needs to walk this tightrope of engaging on a broad set of issues of concern to the vast majority of American Muslims while also dealing with the threats posed by a microscopically small but dangerous minority.

However, if the problem is more one of growing transnational linkages to theaters abroad (e.g., al-Shabab recruiting American Somalis or al Qaeda guiding Najibullah Zazi's plan to attack the New York subway system), then the response must involve better coordination between agencies that primarily operate at home and those that primarily operate abroad. Dealing with a threat that crosses borders in this way poses a real challenge to the U.S. government. DHS has the congressionally mandated authority to take the lead in combating violent, ideologically-driven extremism inside the United States while the FBI plays a key role.[23] The National Joint Terrorism Task Force, which made an arrest in the Times Square car bomb attempt within days, coordinates the efforts of the FBI with local law enforcement and some 40 other partner agencies. But while many domestic agencies look abroad as part of their domestic mission, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence is extremely concerned with the threat posed by domestic extremists with foreign linkages, the NCTC is the only agency authorized to work on both the national and international dimensions of CVE.

III. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Obama administration's approach to al Qaeda and its affiliated movements represents a significant change from the early years of the "Global War on Terror." Nonetheless, many of the most important changes to America's strategy took place not in 2009, but between 2006 and 2008. The administration's approach does represent a fairly sharp break with the *early* years of the Bush administration, which perhaps explains the intense public criticisms by former Vice President Dick Cheney.[24] But those political controversies conceal the more fundamental continuity with the final years of the Bush administration.[25] Policies changed significantly in the last few years of the Bush administration as pragmatic leaders (such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates) sought to correct policies deemed to be failing. On other points, the executive branch's hand was forced by Supreme Court rulings (such as the 2006 Hamdan decision striking down military tribunals and the 2008 Boumediene ruling granting *habeas corpus* rights to Guantanamo detainees) or Congressional actions (such as the McCain Amendment to the 2006 Defense Authorization Act requiring interrogators to follow the U.S. Army Field Manual).

The changes from the Bush administration are most clearly seen in the high priority given to engagement with the mainstream Muslim world. The Obama administration has been able to move well beyond what the Bush administration could do in this regard. To be fair, Bush also said often that America was not at war with Islam and attempted to build networks linking America to moderates in the Muslim world, notably with efforts such as the Greater Middle East Initiative, the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, the Forum for the Future and the Middle East Partnership Initiative. However, actions such as the invasion of Iraq, support for Israeli actions such as wars against Hezbollah in 2006 and Gaza in 2008, prison abuse at Abu Ghraib, indefinite detention without trial at Guantanamo, extraordinary renditions and other policies undermined that message. Its perceived indifference to how mainstream Arab and Muslim public opinion viewed its policies as well as constant invocation of the "Global War on Terror" and "Islamic extremism" badly undermined those efforts.[26] Even when the Bush administration changed many of these policies, Muslim opinions had long since been fixed. As former Deputy National Security Adviser Juan Zarate ruefully acknowledged, "In some ways, it didn't matter what the president did or said. People weren't going to be listening to him in the way we wanted them to. The difference is, President Obama had a fresh start."[27]

The Obama administration seized this opportunity. Even if the administration shied away from saying so, as part of its desire to downgrade the centrality of terrorism in American foreign policy, its public Muslim engagement was meant to isolate and marginalize extremists by building robust interest-based networks across Muslim communities. It recognized that reaching out to the Muslim mainstream required taking seriously their grievances and engaging them respectfully. In his speech to the Muslim world in Cairo, President Obama tackled head on the major political grievances of many Arabs and Muslims – repeating his commitment to withdrawing from Iraq and sketching out a vision for a sustained American effort to achieve a just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace.[28] He has remained on course to withdraw from Iraq, and has certainly tried, albeit with little success, to push for Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The effort to address these political issues is a central part of efforts to address the concerns of mainstream Arabs and Muslims rather than allowing al Qaeda to set the agenda.

For all the rhetorical changes, a more detailed look at the Obama administration's practices suggest that there has been equally significant continuity with the last two years of the Bush administration. As Table 1 suggests, on virtually every issue related to the struggle against al Qaeda and its affiliated movements, the Obama administration has retained

Table 1: Comparison of Bush and Obama administration policies from 2001-present

FROM BUSH TO OBAMA: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE			
	Bush 2001-2006	Bush 2007-2008	Obama
"Global War on Terror"	Yes	No	No
Naming the Enemy	Radical Islam	Violent Extremism	Violent Extremism
World as Battlefield	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guantanamo	Open	Limited Efforts to Close	Limited Efforts to Close
Military Commissions	No	Attempts to set up failed	Beginning
"Black Sites"	Yes	Detainees transferred	Most, but not all, closed
Habeas corpus Rights	Yes	Limited, as per Supreme Court	Limited, as per Supreme Court
Indefinite Detention	Yes	Yes	Yes, but limited
Enhanced Interrogation	Yes	No	No
State Secrets	Yes	Yes	Yes
Patriot Act Provisions	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Security Letters (FISA)	Yes	Yes	Yes, restricted
Drones/Targeted Assassination	Yes	Yes	Yes, expanded
Warrantless Wiretapping	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extraordinary Rendition	Yes	Yes	Yes, in principle

or accelerated trends begun in the final years of its predecessor. The Obama administration has drawn upon the hard-earned expertise within the national security apparatus in countering violent extremism (CVE) and counterterrorism. The shift from "a war of ideas" with "radical militant Islam" to "countering violent extremism," which animates the Obama administration's approach, took hold across the U.S. government in 2007 and 2008, as did the "disaggregated" approach to understanding the

nature of Islamist challengers. And despite the raging controversies over civilian trials and Miranda rights for alleged terrorists, the Obama administration has largely worked within the Bush administration's legal framework on a range of issues, including domestic surveillance, state secrets, extraordinary rendition and targeted assassination abroad. Even on high profile policies there is some continuity. Obama's withdrawal from Iraq builds on Bush's December 2008 Status of Forces Agreement, while engagement on the Israeli-Palestinian issue resembles the Annapolis peace process overseen by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and begun in 2007 after years of American disengagement. The significant restrictions on enhanced interrogation techniques such as waterboarding, the emptying of the "black sites," the challenges to indefinite detention and denial of *habeas corpus*, the curtailing of extraordinary rendition and the moves to try to close Guantanamo began in those years as well. Meanwhile, Obama has retained many of the key tools of Bush's "Global War on Terror," including warrantless wiretapping and controversial sections of the Patriot Act.

There is therefore little to support the charge that the Obama administration has reduced its attention to terrorism or that it is "trying to pretend we are not at war."[29] The 2009 National Intelligence Strategy pointedly identifies "violent extremist groups...planning to use terrorism" as its top mission objective:

> Understand, monitor, and disrupt violent extremist groups that actively plot to inflict grave damage or harm to the United States, its people, interests, and allies. Violent extremist groups – primarily al-Qa'ida and its regional affiliates, supporters, and the local terrorist cells it inspires – will continue to pose a grave threat to U.S. persons and interests at home and abroad.[30]

Furthermore, the 2010 National Security Strategy repeatedly emphasizes the ongoing struggle against al-Qaeda and its affiliates as a top national security priority. The public debate has largely missed the point. The Obama administration has, for better or for worse, maintained almost all of the policies in place by the end of the previous administration, and kept on the same people to run them. It has put those pieces together differently, under a new rhetorical and conceptual framework, but the tools and the strategic objectives remain similar.

There are some areas, however, where there has been real and/or widely perceived change:

Democracy Promotion

One perceived change has been the Obama administration's rhetorical downgrading of the promotion of democracy, which the Bush administration considered to be an integral part of its counterterrorism strategy. It argued that this would "drain the swamp" by breaking the noxious nexus between repressive governments, economic stagnation and extreme ideologies.[31] But here the change is less than it seems. The rhetorical downgrading of democracy promotion predated the Obama administration, with the Bush administration largely abandoning its democracy focus after the victory by Hamas in the January 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections. While the Obama administration has reduced America's rhetorical support for democracy promotion in the region, it still sees the need for political, economic and social reform. As such, it focuses on building partnerships with civil society around areas of shared interests, such as economic opportunity and education, on the grounds that the previous approach clearly had not succeeded in producing more democracy in the Middle East. In fact, Obama has actually increased funding for democracy promotion efforts, including the Bush administration's signature program, the Middle East Partnership Initiative.[32]

Countering Violent Extremism

Another, more significant change has been the move to a broader strategic public engagement

campaign not focused on al Qaeda or violent extremism.[33] Toward the end of the Bush administration, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James Glassman advocated an approach to combating violent extremism that would tightly focus on tarnishing al Qaeda's image rather than trying to promote America's image:

> While educational exchanges and other such efforts seek over the long term to encourage foreigners to adopt more generally favorable views of the United States, the war of ideas today should have a different, specific focus. The aim must be to ensure that negative sentiments and day-to-day grievances toward the U.S. and its allies do not manifest themselves in violence. We want to create an environment hostile to violent extremism, especially by severing links between al Qaeda and like-minded groups and their target audiences.[34]

This communications strategy focused upon exposing al Qaeda's real extremism and attacking its narrative, especially highlighting its role in killing growing numbers of innocent Muslims rather than Americans. It worked through credible third parties rather than through direct American spokesmen.[35] The lower U.S. profile allowed it to benefit from al Qaeda's self-inflicted wounds, while the direct and indirect negative messaging campaign contributed to its struggles.

The Obama administration was not satisfied with the narrow approach of focusing solely on al Qaeda's negatives. It also sought to rebuild America's image and relationships, independent of the fate of its extremist adversary. It was correct to do so. A negative campaign against al Qaeda could only work for so long. At a certain point, building up a more positive image for the United States would again become necessary in order to advance the strategy and further undermine extremist narratives. Obama continued the focus on violent extremism and the negative messaging against the al Qaeda narrative, but also prioritized positive outreach to the Muslim mainstream. Obama focused on core political issues of concern to non-extremist Arabs and Muslims: promising to withdraw from Iraq, push for Israeli-Palestinian peace, close Guantanamo and restore America's commitment to international law and prevailing global standards of morality. Such efforts were the price of admission to a wider dialogue with the vast Arab and Muslim mainstream, helping to isolate extremists and open the door to building cooperative relations on a wider set of issues.

The Obama administration has, for better or for worse, maintained almost all of the policies in place by the end of the previous administration, and kept on the same people to run them. It has put those pieces together differently, under a new rhetorical and conceptual framework, but the tools and the strategic objective remain similar.

Shifting Rhetoric

A third significant change has been the shift in

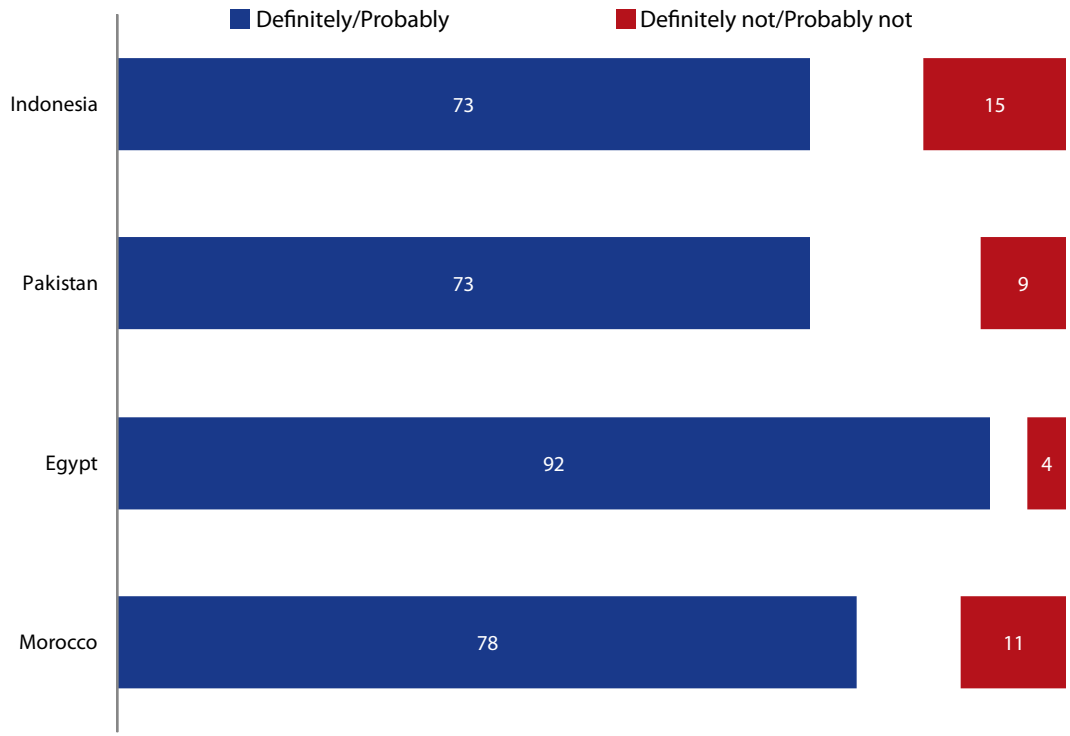
American rhetoric and policy toward the Muslim communities of the world, and the way the administration identifies al Qaeda and its affiliated movements. Bush's 2006 National Security Strategy declared that "the struggle against militant Islamic radicalism is the great ideological conflict of the early years of the 21st century."[36] Obama has rigorously avoided such talk. Like the Bush administration in its final years, his administration recognized the urgent strategic need to prevent the consolidation of a "clash of civilizations" narrative that empowered extremists. As White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan put it:

> Why should a great and powerful nation like the United States allow its relationship with more than a billion Muslims around the world be defined by the narrow hatred and nihilistic actions of an exceptionally small minority of Muslims? After all, this is precisely what Osama bin Laden intended with his Sept. 11 attacks – to use al Qaeda to foment a clash of civilizations in which the United States and Islam are seen as distinct enemies that are in conflict. In his approach to the world and in his approach to safeguarding the American people, President Obama is determined not to validate al Qaeda's twisted worldview.[37]

The guiding principle was to isolate and marginalize extremists, rather than magnify their voices, while offering a positive American message rooted in common interests and deflating the perception of a Western war on Islam. Again, this entailed a major move away from the "war of ideas" and "generational war of ideas with radical Islam" of the early Bush administration, which reached its apogee with President George W. Bush's invocation of the intensely controversial concept of "Islamofascism" in a 2006 speech. This "war of ideas" approach, by focusing on Islam as the problem, advanced a global "clash-of-civilizations" narrative that arguably played into al Qaeda's hands.[38] It elevated al Qaeda's extreme ideas to a status far beyond their actual weight within the Muslim world and conflated a wide range of very different movements and ideas. The "war of ideas" framing also led the response to be framed in terms of religion, with Americans scrambling in search of "moderate Muslims" who might credibly confront their "radical" brethren, and seeking answers to extremism in discussions of "salafism," "takfiri doctrine" and "jihadism." Yet the more that U.S. officials spoke about Islam and framed the struggle in terms of religion, the more the Muslim mainstream came to see the "Global War on Terror" as a war on Islam. For instance, in a survey conducted in early 2007 nearly three quarters of Muslims surveyed in four countries – including 92 percent of Egyptians – believed that the goal of U.S. foreign policy was to "weaken and divide the Islamic world."[39]

By the last years of the Bush administration, the United States had already begun to shift its approach toward a more disaggregated approach aimed at marginalizing al Qaeda and dividing it from its potential sympathizers in the Muslim communities of the world.[40] The evolving approach sought to disaggregate the challenge into specific organizations and ideologies rather than to lump them together into a single, coherent adversary because "[c]ollapsing all terrorist organizations into a single enemy feeds the narrative that al Qaeda represents Muslims worldwide."[41] Even the rhetorical shift from "the Muslim world" to "the Muslim communities of the world" in official discourse reflected this shift.[42] In March 2008, for example, NCTC's Counterterrorism Communications Center issued a guidance that suggested that "we should offer only minimal, if any, response" to bin Laden since this would "raise their prestige in the Muslim world." It advised that "although the al-Qaida network exploits religious sentiments and tries to use religion to justify its actions, we should treat it an illegitimate political organization, both terrorist and criminal." And, it warned, "avoid labeling everything 'Muslim.'"[43] The Bush administration attempted to recast the "Global

Figure 1: Global Poll of Muslims: Does the United States Seek to Undermine Islam?



Source: WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Muslims Believe US Seeks to Undermine Islam" (24 April 2007).

War on Terror" as the "global struggle against violent extremism," but had little success in changing popular usage.

Failing States and Safe Havens

A final significant change is in the increased use of military force and engagement in zones where al Qaeda and its affiliates have taken root. While the Bush administration had been virtually consumed by the war in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan took a sharp turn for the worse and al Qaeda Central reconstituted itself in Pakistan. Few resources were devoted to Somalia and Yemen, despite growing concern about the emergence of al Qaeda affiliates in weak or shattered states. The Obama administration has focused much more heavily on these zones. President Obama justified the escalation in Afghanistan in terms of al Qaeda and tried to dramatically increase the pressure on al Qaeda's network in Pakistan through drone strikes and cooperation with the Pakistani government. And as early as the spring of 2009, a major strategy review had already been carried out to increase attention to Yemen and Somalia, with a focus on building effective counterterrorism partnerships and developing local capacities. This approach has its own problems, including the daunting expense of attempting to build effective states in such areas and the risk of overly focusing on al Qaeda as the challenge while neglecting other factors such as repressive governments to local insurrections that have little to do with al Qaeda.

IV. OBAMA'S STRATEGY

The Obama administration's overall strategy to "disrupt, degrade and defeat" violent extremists is a multi-layered one. It conceptualizes the problem as one of "violent extremism" rather than "radical militant Islam," and seeks to detach relations with the Muslim communities of the world from the struggle against violent extremists. It combines a major outreach campaign to the Muslim mainstream with a continuing effort to counter extremist narratives and ongoing or accelerated "hard" counterterrorism efforts to disrupt the virtual and physical networks of al Qaeda. It sees restoring stricter U.S. adherence to the rule of law as essential to waging an effective long-term campaign against extremism without compromising American values, institutions, global leadership and moral authority. All of these efforts combine in an effort to deny al Qaeda's narrative of an American war on Islam, and thus to disrupt its ability to recruit, mobilize or shape environments conducive to violent extremism. Together, they move the United States closer to the goal of a strategy against violent extremism that is "sustainable, properly resourced, grounded in bipartisan political support, and bolstered by a dense network of partnerships that engages actors both inside and outside of government. This strategy must provide broad strategic direction as well as a coherent roadmap to guide government-wide planning, day-to-day decision making, and budgeting."[44]

Operationalizing an indirect, disaggregated strategy poses real challenges for the national security agencies of the United States. For all the flaws of the Bush administration's approach, its "Global War on Terror" frame offered a clear, overarching framework for guiding the activities across the government. Bush-era budgets and authorities continue to set the parameters for government practice. And old rhetorical habits die hard. For instance, after nearly a year of downplaying al Qaeda, Obama framed his December 1, 2009 speech announcing the decision to escalate in Afghanistan around al Qaeda's growing menace. After the Christmas Day bombings, the administration scrambled for a rhetorical position that would deflect political attacks, leading it to resurrect some long-dormant "war on terror" terminology. The Obama administration correctly wants to move away from a counterterrorism focus. **But can the "whole of government" approach necessary for achieving the administration's strategy be achieved without falling back into the counterterrorism framework?** To combat terrorist threats and radicalization, it may be necessary to restore the connections between Muslim engagement and counterterrorism, at least within the government, in order to avoid fragmentation of the strategy and failures in coordination.

The administration's strategy to defeat al Qaeda and its affiliated movements is built on four strategic pillars: global Muslim engagement, countering violent extremist narratives, focused counterterrorism, and restoring the rule of law and U.S. credibility.

Global Muslim Engagement

The Obama administration views a broad, robust relationship with the Muslim mainstream not only as important on its merits and as a way to heal the wounds of the post-9/11 period, but also as essential to the task of isolating and marginalizing violent extremists such as al Qaeda. As White House Counterterrorism Adviser John Brennan put it, counterterrorism should not be allowed to define broad U.S. policy in the Muslim world: "Rather than looking at allies and other nations through the narrow prism of terrorism – whether they are with us or against us – the administration is now engaging other countries and peoples across a broader range of areas."[45] The attempt to "reset" the relationship with the Muslim communities of the world was most clearly expressed in Obama's June 4, 2009 "A New Beginning" address in Cairo. In a long, frank discussion of the U.S.-Muslim relationship, explicitly designed to be a riveting global public

spectacle, Obama pointedly did not mention al Qaeda or Osama bin Laden. Nor did he call for a war against "jihadist" or "Islamist" ideas, as his predecessor might have. Instead, he spoke about issues about which the vast majority of Muslims actually care – from economic opportunity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Iraq – demonstrating that he would no longer allow al Qaeda or terrorism to define the relationship. More than any other document, this speech has become the template for the administration's global engagement efforts, cited frequently across the government as a guide to action and as an organizing framework for policy.

The Global Engagement Directorate at the National Security Council (NSC) has taken the lead in developing this pillar of the overall strategy, coordinating efforts across the government, along with the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. Its efforts to follow up on the president's Cairo speech to the Muslim communities of the world were broadly designed to rebuild America's standing, in part by organizing diverse relationships with Muslims around the world in areas of common interest, such as education and jobs. The Office of the Special Representative to Muslim Communities, led by Farah Pandith, focuses on building networks to address these issues among Muslim youth and women around the world. U.S. embassies have been directed to prioritize Muslim engagement, and to design new programming tailored to the local context. Social media has been integrated into these network-building efforts in a number of creative ways. These projects aim to marginalize al Qaeda implicitly by contrasting its negative message with a more positive message about America, while countering the idea that Americans only see Muslims through a lens of terrorism or are "at war with Islam."

These efforts suffered from an inability to immediately meet exceptionally high expectations in the weeks following the Cairo speech. With a long silence following the president's speech, many wondered why there had been no follow-up. The high-stakes political battle over the Israeli settlements distracted from the other issues and sucked the air out of the fresh start. But after that slow start, the administration has begun, with little public attention, to deliver on some of the Cairo speech's promise of new relationships: expanding business and education exchange programs, creating the public-private Partners for a New Beginning,[46] starting a fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries, appointing science envoys, launching health initiatives including a new global effort to eradicate polio and appointing Rashad Hussain to be the American envoy to the Organization of Islamic Countries. Similarly, Pandith has traveled widely, convening groups on issues related to economic and social opportunity. The April 2010 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship brought many of these approaches together. Some 250 entrepreneurs from around the Muslim world convened in Washington to discuss partnerships and ideas to promote economic opportunity and social change.

The administration's strategy to defeat al Qaeda and its affiliated movements is built on four strategic pillars: global Muslim engagement, countering violent extremist narratives, focused counterterrorism, and restoring the rule of law and U.S. credibility.

While global engagement should be part of an integrated strategy, it is downplayed in the National Security Strategy and in practice has had an uneasy relationship with CVE and counterterrorism efforts. The administration also focused on reaching out to Muslim youth, the broad mainstream of Muslims who often opposed U.S. foreign policy but had little sympathy with al Qaeda or other violent extremists, and to Muslims around the world rather than only in the Middle East. Conversely, it has done less to engage American Muslims. Administration officials view the next generation as key to shaping the long-term future of America's relationship with the Muslim world, arguing that this rising politically and economically frustrated youth bulge can be reached through practical programs focused on areas such as jobs, entrepreneurship, education, technology and innovation. They also view social media and the internet as key instruments for building new networks and maintaining warm engagement with this generation.

Such efforts are unlikely on their own to cut into the pool of violent extremists, but can be useful to develop and build upon existing networks and establish productive relationships. The focus on relatively non-political issues such as entrepreneurship strikes many Arabs and Muslims as an effort to sidestep the more difficult political issues, especially as American efforts to push for Israeli-Palestinian peace have faltered. The choice of whom to partner with and include in these networks is extremely delicate and should be done in the same kind of disaggregated, highly local way as in CVE efforts. Where indigenous civil society partners are found, care must be taken not to undermine these partners through association by labeling them as American proxies, and not to push them into efforts outside their primary area of expertise. For example, a development non-governmental organization (NGO) should not be urged to deliver counter-extremist messages. The possible role of non-violent Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, remain particularly controversial and largely unresolved. Finally, these youth and entrepreneur networks may prove fragile and are unlikely to survive a major political setback, such as the collapse of Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts or a war involving Iran.

Global engagement, CVE and counterterrorism have had an uneasy relationship in the Obama administration. Officials focused on global engagement are adamant about it not being tied to those frames. Their resistance is understandable, given that many of the mainstream Muslims with whom they hope to engage would not do so were cooperation with the United States framed in terms of security or terrorism, and given that, in their view, moving away from the Global War on Terror was the point of their efforts. As Senior Director for Global Engagement Pradeep Ramamurthy puts it, "You take a country where the overwhelming majority are not going to become terrorists, and you go in and say, 'We're building you a hospital so you don't become terrorists.' That doesn't make much sense."[47] But at the same time, whether explicitly stated or not, engagement activities would seem to be a necessary part of an integrated strategy to marginalize extremists. Why, after all, would the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship include only Muslims were this not the case? Despite the protestations, the administration's Muslim engagement should be recognized as a crucial part of its integrated counterterrorism strategy.

Countering Violent Extremism

The second pillar of the administration's strategy is to continue to counter extremist narratives across old and new media environments, and build on the initiatives of the last years of the Bush administration to empower, support and amplify credible voices inside the Muslim world speaking out against extremists.[48] CVE has become the term of art in the U.S. government for efforts to combat extremist narratives and the radicalization that leads to terrorism. CVE focuses on delegitimizing the ideologies and ideas that animate violent extremists, countering

extremist arguments and narratives. It actively seeks to exploit divisions and fissures among extremist groups, forcing them onto the defensive and causing problems that they must address within their own target audience. Where global engagement indirectly weakens al Qaeda, CVE works directly to disrupt al Qaeda's ability to spread its message, attract recruits or gain support. Ultimately, CVE aims to render the al Qaeda narrative irrelevant to the Muslim mainstream and ineffective for the remaining extremists.

Rather than a wide-ranging "war of ideas" focusing on Islam, more recent CVE efforts focus on understanding the specific drivers of radicalization within particular communities and on the articulation and dissemination of the narratives that underlay extremist worldviews.[49] As NCTC Director Michael Leiter describes, "[this] involves deeper causes and root causes of radicalization and terrorism," with a particular focus on countering extremist messaging.[50] Rather than a grand struggle of ideas on the global stage between the United States and al Qaeda, this approach seeks to tailor CVE efforts to local contexts and specific challenges without overwhelming or distracting from broader Muslim engagement efforts. This means doing more to create spaces and opportunities for Muslim voices that challenge extremist doctrines, recognizing the limitations of America's credibility as a messenger, especially on issues related to Islam.[51] CVE efforts increasingly are tailored to specific environments, and emphasize the need to counter radicalization perpetrated through mass media and the Internet, as well as face-to-face interactions, social networks and charismatic local personalities. The goal is to identify specific populations at risk of radicalization – such as alienated youth – and to carefully tailor outreach and messaging efforts to local conditions, drawing on credible local authority figures.

The administration, like its predecessor, has struggled to stand up an effective "whole of government" approach to CVE. A wide range of agencies have a stake in CVE. Department of Defense (DOD) strategic communications and various covert efforts play a key role in these CVE campaigns, particularly in "hot" war zones. The Pentagon has established a new organizational structure, with strategic communications (including CVE) coordinated by a Global Strategic Engagement Team located in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. DOD has reined in controversial information programs from the previous administration and is reviewing its information operations programs after a recent scandal involving contractors engaged in covert activities. The NCTC takes the lead in coordination and support of CVE efforts.[52] In the State Department, the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy has shied away from a lead role in CVE efforts, and the Coordinator for Counterterrorism has stepped into a lead role, installing a seven-person team dedicated to identifying and disrupting the drivers of radicalization. State Department country teams within embassies design appropriate templates for outreach and messaging, ideally in parallel with efforts by other agencies. Other agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), have drafted plans to assist in CVE efforts.[53] To coordinate this across the government, the administration has opted for an NSC-led interagency process, with weekly Interagency Policy Coordination meetings.

The need for coordination is urgent. Global engagement and CVE should be part of an integrated strategy to increase pressure on extremist networks by shaping environments in ways hostile to extremist tactics and ideas, and by drying up the pool of potential extremists. But there are concerns that the administration may have over-corrected, prioritizing engagement while neglecting the still vital CVE dimension and failing to effectively coordinate the two. Within the NSC, CVE is located within the Counterterrorism Directorate, which is separate from

the Global Engagement Directorate, and the two do not routinely participate in the same interagency committees at the NSC. Coordination between global engagement and counterterrorism offices elsewhere in the government also appears to be limited. The breaking apart of "global engagement" on the one hand and CVE and counterterrorism on the other has been a major advance on the part of the Obama administration and an essential part of its efforts to move beyond the "Global War on Terror." Yet, CVE and global engagement efforts must be reinforcing.

Kinetic Counterterrorism

The third pillar of the administration's strategy has been to increase pressure on al Qaeda Central and its affiliates through military, law enforcement and "hard" counterterrorism efforts. Much of this effort has involved continuing, and in some cases escalating, policies begun under the previous administration – including a crackdown on terrorist financing, international cooperation on information sharing and policy coordination, surveillance and so forth. Terrorist no-fly watch lists reportedly have continued to expand.[54] The escalation in Afghanistan announced in the president's December 2009 West Point speech was framed explicitly as a move directed at al Qaeda's leadership and its ability to operate freely. This escalation involved both an increased troop presence to contest Taliban power in Afghanistan and a push for more Pakistani cooperation in denying al Qaeda safe havens in its territory. This included a dramatically escalated campaign of drone strikes against al Qaeda leadership and cadres. Where there has been appreciable change in areas of "hard" counterterrorism, it has usually been in the direction of escalation rather than diminution.

The administration has employed drone strikes in growing numbers and reportedly with great efficacy, targeting al Qaeda not only in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also in various ungoverned spaces such as Yemen.[55] This has proven effective at killing al Qaeda leaders and disrupting their ability to operate freely in the open, but is rife with potential problems. Drone strikes can lead to the deaths of innocent civilians, fueling anger against the United States and undermining other efforts to win popular support against insurgents or local extremists.[56] It is unlikely that this tool will be discarded, given the administration's heavy usage thus far, but the costs must be carefully calibrated against the benefits. At a minimum, the program should be publicly acknowledged so that an honest debate can address its legal foundations and its strategic costs and benefits.

Another prong of the administration's response has been to build the capacity of foreign governments to counter terrorist networks. A primary element of this approach is security assistance to governments in countries such as Yemen, and working with local governments in efforts such as the Joint Military Staff Committee recently formed by four countries in the Sahel (Algeria, Niger, Mali and Mauritania) to coordinate counterterrorism efforts.[57] Ideally, these efforts build local capacity, empowering the police, judiciary and counterterrorism agencies of home countries to tackle their own terrorism problems, thereby weakening the global al Qaeda movement in the process. In practice, there are numerous challenges. Efforts to implement this approach often struggle to take into account the local dynamics and the underlying grievances fueling those violent struggles – grievances often fueled by the practices of the very governments with which the United States seeks to partner. Security assistance can be counterproductive if not embedded within the rule of law and respect for human rights, and can easily be redirected to pursue regime interests that may not align with those of the United States. Economic assistance and development are worthy goals, but rarely respond directly to immediate threats, and can be counterproductive in cases where government corruption and patronage networks fuel the conflict. More broadly, the costs of comprehensively building state capacity to deny havens to terrorists are staggering and well beyond the

resources of the United States, even if the strategy were appropriate. Finally, focusing primarily on building counterterrorism capacity in these states risks reproducing precisely the "distorting lens of counterterrorism" that the administration sought to leave behind. The pressure to "do something" about al Qaeda affiliates can lead to fitful bursts of activity driven by the news cycle – such as the sudden attention to Yemen after the Christmas Day failed airplane bombing attempt – that ultimately hurt rather than helped those countries.

It is important to acknowledge the potential tension between the necessary kinetic side of counterterrorism – capturing and killing terrorists with the combined resources and power of the Pentagon and multiple intelligence agencies – and the need to counter the narrative that the United States is at war with Islam. It would be a mistake to resort to overt U.S. military force on the ground in places such as Yemen and North Africa because this could easily fuel a renewed narrative of a United States at war with Islam around the globe. The use of drone strikes is arguably a less intrusive way of pursuing/attacking terrorist networks in areas where governments are unable or unwilling to do so themselves.

The Obama administration worried from the beginning about the potential for "failed states" or ungoverned spaces to become new safe havens in which al Qaeda and affiliated movements could reconstitute. The growing use of Predator drone strikes is a way of effectively working without an effective government partner. Another way, which has been a major administration priority, is to work with those governments to build capacity and effective cooperation. These efforts, like the rest of the strategy, must avoid being framed solely around counterterrorism, since the problems of countries like Yemen and Somalia are far deeper and more multifaceted than violent extremism. Finding such a balance is difficult, but essential for an effective strategy.

Rule of Law and U.S. Credibility

The fourth pillar of the administration's strategy has been to restore American credibility and moral authority by embedding its response to terrorism within a robust legal framework. The Guantanamo Bay prison camp and the use of torture, Obama argued firmly throughout his election campaign and after his inauguration, were wrong on both moral and strategic grounds. "They are not who we are, and they are not America," he declared in May 2009. And they do not work: "rather than keeping us safer, the prison at Guantanamo has weakened American national security. It is a rallying cry for our enemies. It sets back the willingness of our allies to work with us."[58] Obama's administration viewed adhering to a stricter interpretation of the rule of law as an essential part of the wider strategy: restoring America's moral authority and turning a page on the past while rooting effective CVE and counterterrorism efforts within a more durable, legal foundation.[59] The 2010 NSS doubles down on this commitment, with repeated reference to the centrality of restoring America's adherence to the rule of law to its moral authority and international leadership.

This is not a new position. Even President Bush, after Supreme Court rulings forced his hand, acknowledged that Guantanamo had harmed the war on terror by allowing al Qaeda to say that "the United States is not upholding the values that they're trying [to] encourage other countries to adhere to."[60] U.S. Central Command Commander GEN David Petraeus has called Abu Ghraib a "nonbiodegradable" stain on America's image.[61] BG Joseph Cullen (Ret.) articulates the logic of linking the rule of law and counterterrorism clearly: "The rule of law is the best defense we possess, and the weapon that brings the most people to our side."[62] Obama made this contention a centerpiece of his publicly declared strategy against terrorism.

For all his emphasis on change, Obama largely built on reforms begun in the previous administration. On enhanced interrogation techniques, for

instance, which Obama powerfully opposed, Bush had already signed a 2007 executive order banning "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,"[63] and the McCain Amendment to the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act spelled out more stringent guidelines for interrogations.[64] In summer 2009, the Obama administration authorized a High Value Detainee Interrogation Group, an interagency team that would operate without those controversial enhanced interrogation techniques, (although it reportedly only became operational in January 2010).[65] Bush largely emptied the "black sites" (secret prisons operated by the U.S. outside of its territory and legal jurisdiction) in the face of legal challenges, before Obama issued an Executive Order closing them.[66] Obama issued an executive order on January 22, 2009 ordering Guantanamo to be closed within a year, but failed to meet this target in the face of legal and political challenges. Bush faced similar obstacles when he directed in a Principal's Committee meeting in April 2006 that Guantanamo be closed within a year; i.e., by April 2007.[67] Although Guantanamo remains open, the administration argues, conditions for detainees have improved and the military commissions were made fairer by the reforms in the 2009 Military Commissions Act.[68] It remains to be seen whether the new military commissions will live up to the expectations of rule-of-law advocates. Reportedly, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates only approved the new manual providing guidelines for the new commissions on April 27, the day before Omar Khader's much-anticipated hearing was scheduled to begin.[69]

To date, the Obama administration has also retained several major Bush administration initiatives that he previously pledged to change. Obama has retained the Bush administration's legal conception of a global war, which provides the foundation for the continuation of a wide range of practices.[70] It supported the extension of three controversial Patriot Act provisions scheduled to be sunseted in December 2009, including Sec. 206, allowing roving wiretaps with FISA approval, and Sec. 215, allowing the seizure of "tangible things" related to an investigation.[71] Obama's changes to American policy on indefinite detention have been mixed, particularly with the decision to not extend the right of *habeas* reviews to detainees at Bagram Air Base.[72]

The dramatic escalation of drone strikes against alleged leaders in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere has been seen as a serious potential gap in the administration's commitment to the rule of law. The administration has strongly defended the legality of these drone strikes, but the legal foundations as to how drone strikes are carried out remain hotly contested.[73] Drone strikes against sovereign territory, rather than battlefield zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, can only draw legal legitimacy either from a bilateral agreement with the host state or from a doctrine such as the Bush administration's – which essentially declares the entire world a potential combat theater in a "Global War on Terror." While strikes outside an active war zone could arguably be justified, especially by the Bush-era claim of a global battlefield, there would still be serious objections around targeted killings. The revelation that Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen residing in Yemen, had been added to the "hit list" raised even more legal concerns.[74]

Where Obama has made efforts to push beyond those areas of change already enacted by the Bush administration, he has faced considerable opposition. The administration struggled to defend its plans to put Khaled Shaikh Mohammed on civilian trial in New York, which it had cast as a key demonstration of its greater commitment to the rule of law and, in Attorney General Eric Holder's words, "a strong message, both to those who want to work with us and those who seek to do us harm."[75] Similarly, the administration took a great deal of (unjustified) political abuse for the Justice Department's decision to treat the Christmas Day airplane bomber as a criminal with Miranda rights.[76] On key issues, the administration has found itself trapped by the legacy of the previous administration, and has found

it harder to deliver on some of its key promises than expected. The decisions made surrounding the creation of Guantanamo and the "Global War on Terror" formulation employed an architecture of entrenched interests, legal rulings, Congressional authorities and institutional practices that defied easy change through directives from the top. The bipartisan support that might have been expected given the real continuities between the two administrations has not materialized.

Administration officials bristle at the charge that they have failed to keep these promises given their considerable efforts to deliver in the face of strong opposition. But at the same time, the failure is on a standard they themselves set through public promises invested with presidential prestige. They also argue that quiet changes are taking place within the parameters of existing law: higher standards of evidence for National Security Letters, more rigorous review processes, refraining from extraordinary rendition even while reserving the right to do so, better treatment of Guantanamo detainees and so forth.[77] The prisoner population at Guantanamo continues to shrink steadily as detainees are slowly repatriated or transferred to other countries. At this point, the jury is very much out. If the administration believes its original arguments about the importance of the rule of law for creating a durable and legitimate strategy, then it needs to act accordingly. The National Security Strategy reinforces the importance of these rule of law and civil liberties issues, insisting that "we need durable legal approaches consistent with our identity and our values." The administration's limited ability to live up to this self-proclaimed commitment to this point is arguably the single largest hole in the current strategy.

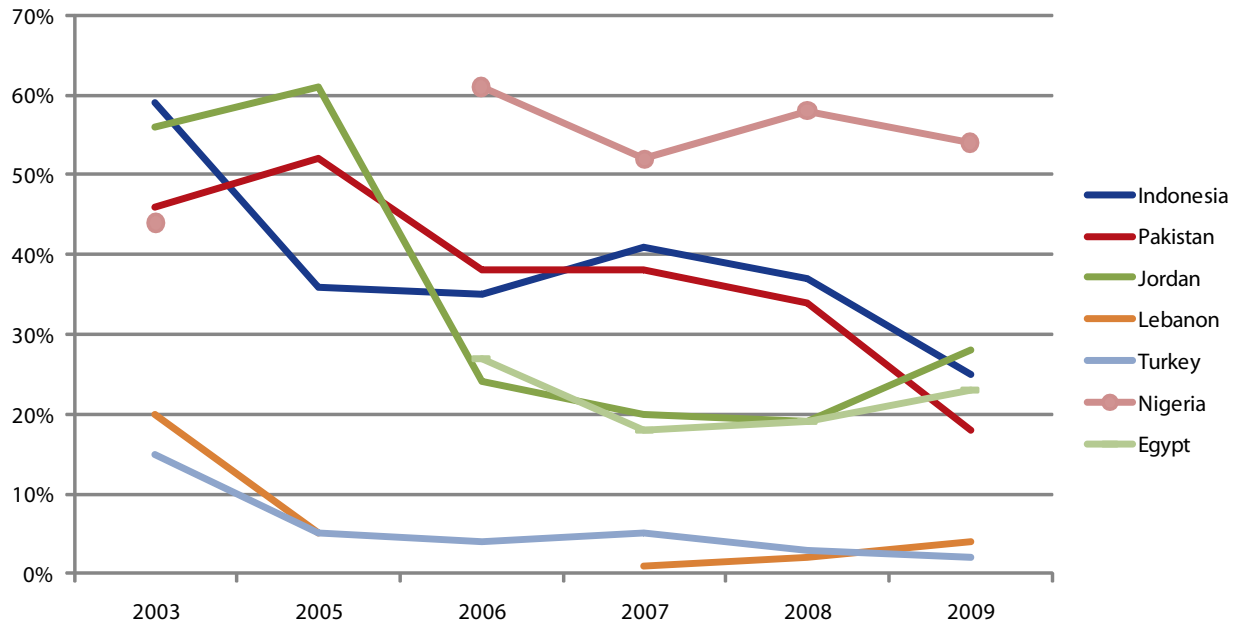
V. ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS

This report has thus far focused on the administration's philosophy and approach to countering terrorism. But has the U.S. strategy been working? This section examines al Qaeda's evolution over the years, how it has been affected by American policy choices and how it has adapted. The enemy, as they say, gets a vote.

The nature of the threat posed by al Qaeda has changed significantly in the years since 9/11. There are at least three interlocking dimensions to the al Qaeda challenge: the central organization, often termed al Qaeda Central; a network of affiliated movements; and a decentralized network of like-minded groups and individuals. Al Qaeda in any variant is no longer capable of attracting mass Arab support as it may have appeared back in 2001 and 2002. Its ability to appeal to mainstream Muslims as the avatar of resistance to the United States has dramatically declined since peaking mid-decade. However, its ideology and networks have taken root in several capable and resilient local affiliates, and in an increasingly active Western milieu. Despite years of pressure and the recent escalation of drone strikes that have reportedly decimated its leadership, the core of the organization remains intact – presumably in Pakistan – as does its ability to craft and disseminate narratives attractive to specific populations susceptible to radicalization. Recent plots against the American homeland suggest the possibility of a new strategy. U.S. strategy has begun to adapt, and should continue, to adapt to the evolving nature of the threat.

Al Qaeda's reduced mass appeal should not be taken for granted. In the months after 9/11, even as American forces were destroying al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan, many feared that it was the vanguard of a mass movement capable of uniting Muslims against the West. Many Muslims who knew little about al Qaeda or bin Laden found the narrative it presented – of an America leading a

Figure 2: Declining Support for Osama bin Laden and Suicide Bombings According to Polls in Select Muslim Countries

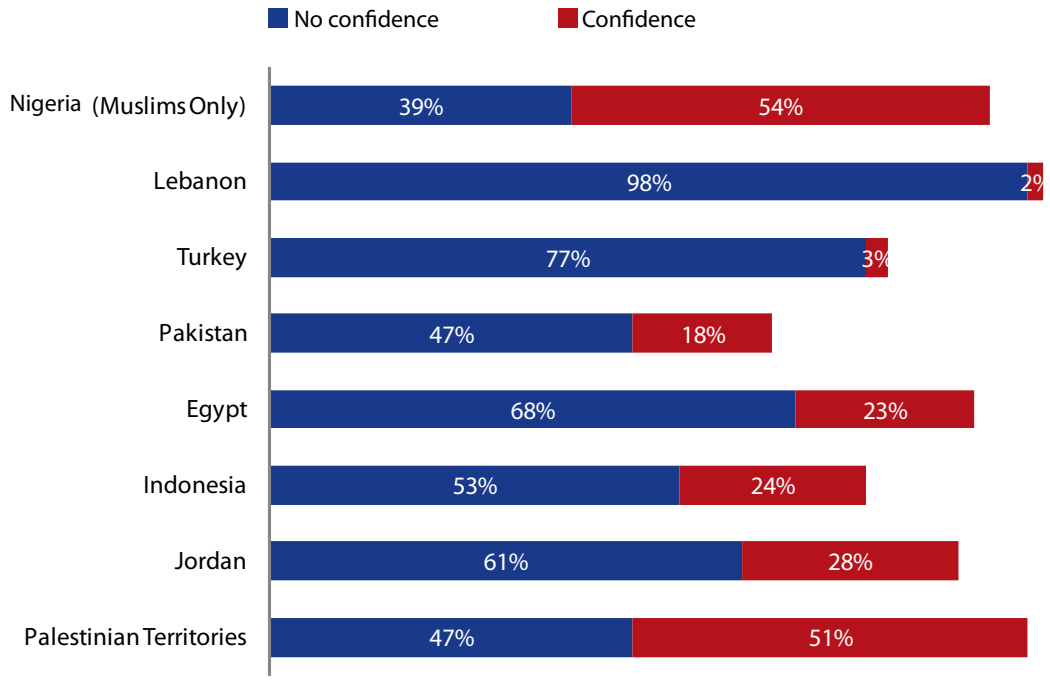


Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Declining Support for bin Laden and Suicide Bombing" (10 September 2009).

global campaign against Islam – plausible. While al Qaeda was motivated by a distinctive salafi-jihadist ideology, bin Laden's public rhetoric and the propaganda videos directed toward mainstream Arab audiences focused on issues of widely-shared Arab and Muslim concern: Palestine, Iraq, domestic corruption and American hegemony. After 9/11, this narrative gained strength even as al Qaeda's core leadership was scattered and damaged by the American invasion of Afghanistan. Israel's bloody re-occupation of the West Bank in April 2002, the invasion of Iraq, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and American rhetoric all fueled al Qaeda's narrative. Its propaganda wove such developments together to argue that the United States was in fact at war with Islam – a belief that became alarmingly widespread across the Muslim world – and that al Qaeda represented the authentic leader of the Islamic world in that struggle.

By 2004, al Qaeda appeared to be on the rise around the world. Its ideas, once confined to a tiny fringe, had become common knowledge across a vast Arab, Muslim and international audience. Al Qaeda leaders and propaganda videos appeared regularly in the mainstream media with well-timed releases aimed at shaping the global agenda. For example, a tape of Osama bin Laden was released just before the 2004 American presidential election. The rising insurgency in Iraq made it appear that al Qaeda was fighting the United States to a standstill and steadily draining its resources. Meanwhile, al Qaeda's ideas seemed to find resonance with a rising generation, leading many analysts to argue that al Qaeda had morphed from a single organization into a movement of loosely-connected, like-minded individuals and small groups. The Internet, with its thriving forums, seemed a prime recruiting ground for like-minded networks.[78] A series of bloody attacks around the world, including the 2004 train bombing

Figure 3: Confidence in Osama bin Laden According to Polls of Muslims in Select Arab Countries, February 2010



Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Little Enthusiasm for Many Muslim Leaders" (4 Febraury 2010)

in Madrid and the 2005 terror attack on the London subway, all created the impression of al Qaeda as a force gaining in strength, aided by American missteps and a radicalized environment. As late as September 2006, President Bush warned of al Qaeda's ambitions to establish a global caliphate.[79]

Al Qaeda's declining ability to attract mainstream Muslim support is significant, even if it does not prevent it from continuing to plot and carry out terrorist attacks. Today, al Qaeda has become increasingly marginal in Arab and Muslim public discourse and politics. Public opinion, to the extent that it can be measured, has turned sharply against al Qaeda, and it faces a wide range of challengers from across the Islamist and broader political spectrum. The terms of debate in the Arab world today are more political and less doctrinal, more focused on issues of mass concern than on the obsessions of the radical fringe. Furthermore, al Qaeda's challenge is more localized and limited in scope, with far more active opponents within the Islamic world. Increasingly, al Qaeda's activities happen outside the Arab heartland as it has largely lost its ability to break into the Arab mainstream. The decline in al Qaeda's mass appeal does not mean that it has lost its potency in the narrower realm of plotting terrorist attacks from within a small, radicalized network. Yet it is a significant setback for al Qaeda's grander vision of inspiring a global Islamic caliphate united by a shared faith in opposition to the West.[80]

The turning point for al Qaeda likely came when affiliates returned their attention from the "far enemy," the United States, back to the "near enemy," apostate governments in Muslim majority states. Attacks in Muslim states, while more easily carried out than attacks against the United States or Europe, were useful in the short term to

ARAB GOVERNMENTS VERSUS AL QAEDA

Arab regimes proved increasingly effective against al Qaeda and its affiliated movements in the years after 9/11 – albeit, in many cases, only after a domestic attack on their own territory. Saudi Arabia, for instance, after years of minimizing the significance of al Qaeda and defending its religious establishment against Western criticism, reversed course after al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) launched a terror campaign in the Kingdom.[81] Saudi Arabia launched a massive and sophisticated counterterrorism campaign, rapidly arresting or killing most of the AQAP leadership and cadres. It began a significant rehabilitation program, with credible religious figures engaging in dialogues with extremists and offering them new opportunities. It also produced a massive media campaign against Islamic extremism, using its considerable local and regional newspaper, Internet and television assets to flood such messages to Saudi and other Arab audiences. After the 2005 hotel bombings, Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate (GID) similarly took a tough line in cracking down on extremist networks, while the Hashemite Kingdom lowered the ceiling on permissible salafi-jihadist activity. Two Muslim Brotherhood members of parliament had their immunity stripped and were jailed for praising Zarqawi during his funeral ceremony. The media heavily promoted the patriotic backlash against al Qaeda, nudging its citizens to identify al Qaeda with the mass murder of innocent Muslims rather than with resistance to the United States. King Abdullah also convened a wide range of Islamic authorities to sign the Amman Message opposing extremism and terrorism.[82] In public opinion surveys, support for al Qaeda dropped sharply. Such campaigns have become a template for Arab governments, a model for how to turn al Qaeda's "soft target" terrorism successes into strategic liabilities.

demonstrate its continued existence and ability to strike but repeatedly alienated the local public. Muslim regimes quickly learned how to exploit those attacks through cultivated outrage amplified by local media and other communications. The Saudi response to the terrorist campaign launched in May 2003 grew to a full-spectrum counter-insurgency at home and an ideological offensive abroad that badly damaged al Qaeda's image and capabilities. The bombing of an Amman hotel in November 2005 led to widespread revulsion that allowed the Jordanian authorities to convert the attack into public support for its counterterrorism efforts in textbook fashion.

The Muslim death toll from al Qaeda attacks became a major and effective theme in countering its narrative and discrediting it in the eyes of Muslims.[83] However, these effects did not just happen. Strategic communications and information operations framed these attacks in a coherent and compelling counter-narrative. Arab governments carried out an aggressive media campaign and facilitated the publication of a range of denunciations of al Qaeda by former jihadists. With the help of the United States, Arab governments spread the images and narrative of al Qaeda's brutality against fellow Muslims in Iraq, as well as in Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

The Bush administration's decision during its last few years to stand back in public while quietly promoting local Muslim voices and pursuing a more subtle and disaggregated approach significantly contributed to al Qaeda's mounting problems. The less the argument was about America, the more al Qaeda's true extremism and marginality came dramatically to the forefront. It was far more difficult for al Qaeda to win local Muslim support when arguing against Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood or local religious authorities than against the United States.

Al Qaeda's ideological battles with other, more popular forces also hurt its appeal. Al Qaeda found

itself on the losing side of a succession of internal battles in Middle East politics. Its anti-Shi'a animus led it to not support Hezbollah in 2006 and kept it at odds with Iran, despite the great popularity of both across the Arab world. Its salafism and frustration with its inability to gain a foothold in Palestine led it to oppose Hamas in 2008. Its long-standing hostility toward the Muslim Brotherhood led it to pick a series of public battles with that deeply rooted, popular organization.[84] In 2009, the influential Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradawi published an important book outlining a jurisprudence of jihad which dismissed al Qaeda's "mad declaration of war on the entire world."[85] A series of well-promoted "recantations" by former jihadists created the impression of internal fissures within the jihadist movement. By 2008, U.S. intelligence assessments increasingly noted the toll these trends were taking on al Qaeda, as it appeared increasingly on the defensive in Muslim debates and unpopular among the Muslim public writ large. While this does not mean that the small, radicalized pockets cannot continue to be effective terrorists, it does suggest that al Qaeda faces a much more hostile environment across much of the Muslim world and that its ability to "break out" and appeal to a vast Muslim audience has largely come to an end.

Al Qaeda Central

Al Qaeda Central appears to remain intact, albeit increasingly hemmed in and under pressure in its presumed Pakistani location. Its propaganda arm continues to operate, and it has reportedly played a role in planning or inspiring a number of plots directed at the American homeland. Its top leaders remain alive and active and are cultivating a new generation of public faces – occasional tapes by Osama bin Laden still capture public attention. The United States claims to be seriously degrading its leadership and networks by its aggressive use of Predator drones, its escalation in Afghanistan and placing pressure on the Pakistani government. Al Qaeda is reportedly experiencing increasing difficulty in replacing its lost cadres with comparably skilled and experienced personnel along with growing challenges in operating above ground even in safe havens. It also continues to struggle with the layers of multilateral and unilateral action against terrorist financing, communications and cross-border movement which constrict – though do not eliminate – its ability to operate. In short, while al Qaeda Central has survived and adapted, it faces a far different strategic vista than it did five years ago.

Arab regimes proved increasingly effective against al Qaeda and its affiliated movements in the years after 9/11 – albeit, in many cases, only after a domestic attack on their own territory.

Affiliated Movements

Much of the energy and initiative now seems to come from al Qaeda's local affiliates or from the decentralized network of local cells and radicalized individuals.[86] The rise of these local affiliates has expanded the ability of al Qaeda branded groups to inflict damage and to establish presence broadly. In some ways this represents a return to the 1990s, with local insurgencies capable of doing harm at home but not mounting a global threat. This in itself should not be terribly alarming. Compared to the 1990s, local regimes are far more prepared to handle insurgencies. Insurgents enjoy far less popular support, are far fewer in numbers and, in general, face a more hostile environment. As in the 1990s, bloody local attacks on soft targets tend

The Bush administration's decision during its last few years to stand back in public while quietly promoting local Muslim voices and pursuing a more subtle and disaggregated approach significantly contributed to al Qaeda's mounting problems.

to alienate local populations and accelerate the marginalization and loss of popularity to both the local affiliate and the al Qaeda organization that lent its name to the efforts. The difference from the 1990s is the overlay of a global network linked by personal and organizational networks, a shared ideological narrative and the Internet. As a result, these affiliates seem increasingly willing and able to find ways to strike the American homeland and to draw on the guidance of al Qaeda Central in support of their local agendas.

After the failed Christmas Day airplane bombing attempt, American public attention briefly focused on Yemen. However, Yemen's problems, and the Obama administration's efforts, long predate that incident.[87] Yemen was the site of the 2000 bombing of the U.S.S. *Cole*, and Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) reconstituted in Yemen after the successful Saudi campaign against the movement and the escape of a number of senior al Qaeda leaders from a Yemeni prison in 2006. AQAP's alleged role in the Christmas Day bombing focused attention on its calls to attack the United States and its hosting of clerics such as Anwar al-Awkali, who broadcast propaganda into the United States over the Internet. While the Bush administration had neglected Yemen for years, the Obama administration prioritized Yemen from the beginning. A major review in the spring of 2009 culminated in a strategy of building the ability of the Yemeni state to confront its security threats by increasing development and security assistance from 17.2 million dollars in 2008 to around 63 million dollars in 2010. However, there are some concerns that this renewed aid and attention will fall into the very trap the Obama administration set out to avoid: focusing too much on al Qaeda and neglecting the wider political context. Al Qaeda is only one very small part of the various challenges facing Yemen, which include an ongoing secessionist campaign in the south, the Zaidi insurrection in the north and the increasingly repressive and abusive Yemeni regime itself.

Somalia has emerged as another major focus, as several Islamist movements of varying radicalism compete for influence and power in the wreckage of the Somali state.[88] The problems there have arguably been compounded by counterterrorism policies that failed to appreciate the internal differences among Somali Islamists and neglected the wider political and social context.[89] An American-backed Ethiopian military campaign ousted the relatively moderate Islamist Transitional Federal Government in 2007, creating renewed chaos that opened the door to the more radical al-Shabab movement. Although al-Shabab is not officially affiliated with al Qaeda, it reportedly has received training and support from them.[90] The participation of several individuals from the American Somali community in fighting for al-Shabab has raised fears that this could become a dangerous source of radicalized U.S. citizens. As in Yemen, the United States has responded by working to strengthen the Somali government, both in direct partnership and through cooperation with the African Union, and has also carried out drone strikes against alleged al Qaeda leaders.[91] And as in Yemen, the Obama administration must resist the temptation

to view the problems solely through the lens of counterterrorism.

Other areas of concern include North Africa, where al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has evolved over the last half decade into a resilient organization with a persistent presence. AQIM operates across the Sahel, targeting Westerners for kidnapping or killing and attacking government symbols. It has reportedly set up networks throughout the Maghrebi immigrant communities in Europe. However, it has suffered considerable setbacks in the face of a sustained counterterrorism campaign by the Algerian government.[92] Likewise, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) recently recanted its support of al Qaeda in exchange for prison amnesty.[93] However, there are growing concerns about al Qaeda affiliates emerging in the Sudan and Mauritania. In May, the United States began a major joint military exercise, Operation Flintlock in the Sahara, focusing on seven sub-Saharan African countries including Mauritania and Nigeria.[94] This combined operation, under the rubric of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, involved several European partners including the UK, Germany, France and Spain.

Iraq has gone from a major source of strength for al Qaeda to a weakness. From 2003-2006 al Qaeda gained tremendously from its role in resisting the U.S. occupation of Iraq.[95] Its efforts tapped into widely shared sentiment among an Arab and Muslim public that overwhelmingly opposed the war and the subsequent U.S. occupation. The images of Abu Ghraib were seared into the collective Muslim consciousness.[96] But when the jihad splintered and the tides of battle and Iraqi internal opinion turned, so did the benefits al Qaeda accrued from its role in the resistance. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's targeting of innocent Shi'a civilians and Internet videos of gory beheadings appalled many mainstream Muslims who had supported the insurgency. The graphic horrors drew criticism from even such quarters as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the popular Islamist cleric and al-Jazeera fixture associated with the Muslim Brotherhood; Abu Mohammed al-Maqdessi, a leading jihadist intellectual and Zarqawi's former mentor; and Ayman al-Zawahiri.[97] When Iraqi tribes and more nationalist insurgency factions turned against al Qaeda in its efforts to assert local supremacy, significant portions of the Arab media turned with them. Finally, as the civil war abated and violence declined, al Qaeda's presence in Iraq became less galvanizing. The flow of foreign fighters reportedly dried up and in April 2010, the top leadership of al Qaeda's Islamic State of Iraq was killed, throwing its future into doubt even as it continues to carry out acts of horrific violence.

There are some areas where al Qaeda has not yet been able to establish a presence where one might be expected, including Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, several of the small Gulf states, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and much of Southeast Asia. Its inability to gain a foothold might be explained by the strength and counterterrorism efforts of those states, by the presence of a strong competing Islamist movement or by a tacit or explicit modus vivendi. Al Qaeda has a long-standing desire for a presence in the Palestinian arena, for instance, but thus far Hamas has prevented al Qaeda-like salafi-jihadist organizations from establishing themselves in areas under its control. Al Qaeda and salafi-jihadist figures have engaged in an escalating war of words with the Palestinian Islamist movement, slamming Hamas for restraining attacks against Israel and participating in democratic elections under Israeli occupation. The weakening of Hamas – or its "taming" through acceptance of a two-state solution and pragmatic governance – may actually improve al Qaeda's chances of obtaining its much-desired foothold in Gaza.98 More broadly, across the Arab world, the United States suffers from the lost legitimacy of its state partners – particularly

THE JIHADIST MOVEMENT ONLINE

FBI Director Robert Mueller recently described the jihadist Internet as a great and rising threat. This follows in a long line of such declarations. The Internet has long played a crucial role in connecting al Qaeda's leadership with a vast decentralized base of like-minded individuals and movements. Al Qaeda uses its Internet presence for a number of important functions.[99] First, Internet forums are used to disseminate propaganda, videos, speeches and images broadly, both directly to online followers and indirectly through mass media outlets that take material from the sites.[100] Second, Internet forums are a prime location for members of the jihadist community to carry out semi-public debates about doctrine, strategy and news.[101] Third, they serve as a vehicle for identifying potential recruits: from mobilization and radicalization to actual terrorist operations.[102] Fourth, they play a role in fundraising.[103] Fifth, they use the forums for training and plotting, as well as for consolidating and disseminating information relevant to terrorism.

Al Qaeda's vaunted Internet presence has suffered serious blows, however. Al Qaeda Central, through its al-Sahab production arm, continues to distribute videos through the forums, but otherwise it plays a declining role in the content and discussions.[104] While some forums retain a large following and have impact, a number of major forums have been taken offline for unverifiable reasons, depriving the network of its premier online focal points for discussion, recruitment and mobilization. New forums have appeared to fill the vacuum, but they lack the credibility and membership of the older, more established forums. Widespread rumors of the infiltration and manipulation of the forums by Western and Arab intelligence agencies reduced their utility for communication. Meanwhile, the Arab media (including al-Jazeera) have turned hostile to al Qaeda, and are less willing to broadcast videos or messages found on the forums without a clear news angle.

Generally speaking, the Internet is better for reaching an already radicalized base than it is for reaching a mass public that is not likely to search out difficult to access, specialized Internet sites.[105] Jihadists have attempted to counter this limitation by using YouTube and other mainstream platforms to disseminate their materials more widely. Internet radicalization efforts now exist more to radicalize Muslims at the micro level and reinforce the beliefs of a small, already radical core than to serve as the sinews of a transnational network with mass appeal and organizational coherence or as the vehicle for effective outreach to the mass public.[106] As terrorism analyst Evan Kohlmann puts it: "It is increasingly second- and third-tier extremist social networking forums managed by unaffiliated fringe activists – many of them offering dedicated English-language chat rooms – that appear to play pivotal roles in the indoctrination and radicalization of some of today's most notorious aspiring terrorists."[107] The role of English-speaking Internet jihadists such as Anwar al-Awlaki feeds the fears that domestic radicalization is a coherent new al Qaeda strategy to flood the American homeland with a variety of plots from diverse individuals.[108] Maj. Nidal Hassan, the Ft. Hood shooter, was connected to Awlaki, with evidence of considerable contact over the Internet. A generation is emerging of influential English-language recruiters for jihadist groups, such as Awlaki from AQAP, Adam Gadahn for AQC and Omar Hammami for Shabaab. This evolution of the jihadist movement online should be carefully monitored, though its significance should not be exaggerated.

as those regimes avoid democratic reforms, fail to deliver economic growth and are unable to deliver on foreign policy interests important to their populations, such as the Israel-Palestine issue.

This catalog of new fronts should not be used to recreate the specter of a unified global Islamist menace – quite to the contrary. The zones of conflict tend to be increasingly on the margins and involve highly local, distinctive movements, even where there is a light overlay of global rhetoric and support. It is less that al Qaeda is on the march than that local movements have taken advantage of conditions to assert themselves. The proliferation of fronts actually reinforces the argument for a differentiated approach. The strategic imperative continues to be: to highlight and accelerate the marginalization of the violent extremism movement; disaggregate the challenge of countering violent extremism; work to facilitate the existing trends toward local rejection of extremist violence; rebuild relations with the Muslim mainstream and strengthen state partners while pushing them to deliver on reform. In confronting al Qaeda's affiliated movements, the Obama administration must keep front and center its own commitment: avoiding the distorting lens of counterterrorism and developing more broadly based, holistic approaches to each national and local case.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Obama administration's strategy has been multifaceted and well-conceptualized, building clearly upon the successful adaptations made by the Bush administration in its final years, and has seen success in a number of ways. The administration has struggled, however, to communicate this new approach in a clear way or to change significantly the legal foundations of the "Global War on Terror." The new rhetorical focus and practices do not yet seem either durable enough to withstand a major setback, such as another unpopular war in the Middle East or a successful terrorist attack on the American homeland. Problems remain with coordinating counterterrorism efforts across the government and with unresolved tensions about the appropriate relationship between global engagement and CVE. Furthermore, it is not clear that the United States is adapting well to the new domestic aspect of the challenge.

To fully deliver on the promise of the Obama administration's approach and create an effective strategy, the administration should:

ARTICULATE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE THE STRATEGY

The National Security Strategy clearly lays out a guiding framework for combating al Qaeda and its affiliates within a broader foreign policy vision. A new counterterrorism strategy should then reshape the legal authorities and programming which have, for the last eight years, been framed around the "Global War on Terror." Coining a new term for the administration's strategy is not simply an exercise in public relations or branding. An old frame will not be displaced without something credible to replace it, and the administration needs to provide that alternative. To do this, the administration needs to articulate a compelling alternative that makes sense of its disparate actions to relevant domestic and foreign audiences, and that can guide the reorganization of government programs and authorities.

ADAPT, BUT DON'T OVERREACT, TO NEW DOMESTIC THREATS

The rising concerns surrounding domestic radicalization and the transnational mobilization of threats to the homeland should galvanize action across the government without causing overreaction. The National Security Strategy rightly warns of the need to "resist fear and overreaction" in the face of terrorist attacks and provocations.[109] The administration should resist, and push back hard against, public demands to respond to domestic threats by taking actions that would alienate American Muslims and threaten civil liberties; an example would be Senator Joseph Lieberman's suggested legislation to strip suspected terrorists of their American citizenship.[110] Internationally- and domestically-oriented agencies need to work together and overcome cultural and legal barriers. The domestic challenge should employ the same multi-layered, disaggregated strategy as in the international realm: broad-based engagement with Muslim communities, targeted efforts against violent extremists, continuing vigilance by law enforcement and renewed respect for the rule of law.

BETTER INTEGRATE GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The reasons to separate global engagement from CVE are compelling, but they must be coordinated as part of an overall strategy for both to be fully effective. The United States should continue its efforts to reach out to mainstream Muslim communities by building networks around issues of common interest, and to make progress on core political issues that galvanize the mainstream of the Arab and Muslim worlds and affect their willingness to cooperate with America – including the Israeli-Palestinian issue. At the same time, CVE efforts should seek to prevent the extremist narrative from hijacking those mainstream grievances and multiplying the appeal of extremists who seem to offer better explanations for those problems than do their more mainstream rivals. These efforts should not ease up on disrupting and challenging extremist messaging and propaganda. Engagement and CVE efforts help to eliminate the "demand side" for extremist appeals and help create environments in which extremist groups and ideas are rejected. Even if this engagement is not framed around counterterrorism, global engagement and CVE should be coordinated as part of a coherent strategy for marginalizing al Qaeda and building support for U.S. objectives and interests around the world.

THINK HOLISTICALLY

Difficult counterterrorism decisions should take into consideration the effects on other parts of the integrated strategy – global engagement, CVE and the rule of law – when calculating costs and benefits. For example, if drone strikes inflame local sentiments against the United States, fuel extremist narratives or compromise efforts to restore the rule of law, then those potential costs should be taken fully and explicitly into account during the decision making process. Similarly, the costs, in terms of both Muslim engagement and CVE, of not living up to rule-of-law commitments – such as closing Guantanamo or bringing suspected terrorists to trial in civilian courts – should be included in those difficult decisions. Policies designed to confront al Qaeda's affiliates in places such as Yemen, Somalia, and the Maghreb must not fall into the trap of focusing exclusively on al Qaeda. Taking a holistic approach will ensure that various layers of the strategy reinforce one another. The NSC-led interagency process should include representatives of each priority in discussions of such policies in order to ensure coherent cooperation toward a common strategic objective.

PREPARE FOR THE WORST

A successful attack linked to an Islamist network in the United States seems likely at some point given the plethora of soft targets and the evident interest by al Qaeda and its affiliated movements. Even the most effective counterterrorism strategy cannot prevent every attack, and perfect security

will never be achieved. The administration should prepare its response to such a successful attack well in advance, with clear communications designed to demonstrate American resilience and commitment to its current strategy.

All of these recommendations point toward one final master imperative: **preventing the return to a spiral of conflict between the United States and an undifferentiated "Islam."** Abroad and at home, the U.S. goal must be to dispel al Qaeda's narrative that the United States is at war with Islam and to prevent extremist voices from again hijacking America's relationship with the Muslim world. The spate of recent terrorist incidents should not lead the United States to jettison what has been working and bring back "Global War on Terror" rhetoric and practice that only serves to strengthen al Qaeda's hand. The Obama administration is on the right track, but much remains to be done to translate strategic commitments into operational practice and bureaucratic reality. It must soon adapt to the changing nature of the threat or risk seeing its comprehensive strategy collapse.

ENDNOTES

1. National Security Strategy (May 2010): 20.

2. Barack Obama, "On a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan," (27 March 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-on-a-New-Strategy-for-Afghanistan-and-Pakistan/.

3. Daniel Benjamin, "Strategic Counterterrorism," *Beyond Bullets: Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism* (June 2009); Kristin Lord and Marc Lynch, "America's Extended Hand," Center for a New American Security (May 2010).

4. National Security Strategy (May 2010).

5. Peter Baker, "Obama's War Over Terror," *The New York Times* (4 January 2010).

6 Richard Cheney, "Remarks by Richard Cheney at American Enterprise Institute" (1 May 2009), http://www.aei.org/speech/100050; Richard Cheney, "Interview with Former Vice President Cheney on Face the Nation" (10 May 2009); Mike Allen, "Dick Cheney: Barack Obama 'Trying to Pretend,'" *Politico* (30 December 2009).

7. Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo (4 June 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-by-the-president-at-cairo-university-6-04-09/.

8. Daniel Benjamin, "Strategic Counterterrorism," *Beyond Bullets: Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism* (June 2009): 117.

9. Marc Lynch, "Engaging the Muslim World Beyond al-Qaeda," *American Foreign Policy: Regional Perspectives* (13-15 May 2009): 179-187.

10. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report,* February 2010, Department of Defense, http://www.defense.gov/QDR/.

11. Bruce Hoffmann, "American Jihad", *The National Interest* (20 April 2010).

12. Obama, "Remarks by the President to the Business Council" (4 May 2010), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-business-council.

13. Dennis Blair, "Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues" (22 February 2010), http://www.dni.gov/speeches/20100222_speech.pdf.

14. Bruce Hoffmann, "American Jihad", *The National Interest* (20 April 2010).

15. Department of Justice, "Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy to Use Explosives Against Persons or Property in U.S., Conspiracy to Murder Abroad, and Providing Material Support to al Qaeda" (22 February 2010).

16. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, Pennsylvania Woman Indicted in Plot to Recruit Violent Jihadist Fighters and to Commit Murder Overseas (9 March 2010).

17. Adam Serwer, "The Recruits," *The American Prospect* (2 March 2010).

18. Susan Crabtree, "Justice Department gives Republicans requested info on terrorism convictions," *The Hill* (26 March 2010); and Brian Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001*, RAND (2010), http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP292/.

19. *Violent Islamist Extremism, The Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Majority & Minority Staff Report* (8 May 2008), hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/IslamistReport.pdf.

20. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, declassified report released 18 May 2010, http://intelligence.senate.gov/press/record.cfm?id=325036.

21. Thanks to Daveed Gartenstein-Ross for this discussion.

22. Jean Spencer, "Lieberman, Brown Unveil Bill to Strip Citizenship," *Wall Street Journal* (6 May 2010), http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2010/05/06/lieberman-brown-unveil-bill-to-strip-citizenship/.

23. Department of Homeland Security, *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Report: A Strategic Framework for a Secure Homeland* (February 2010).

24. Richard Cheney, "Remarks by Richard Cheney at American Enterprise Institute" (1 May 2009), http://www.aei.org/speech/100050; Richard Cheney, "Interview with Former Vice President Cheney on Face the Nation" (10 May 2009); Mike Allen, "Dick Cheney: Barack Obama 'Trying to Pretend,'" *Politico* (30 December 2009).

25. Jack Goldsmith, "The Cheney Fallacy," *The New Republic* (18 May 2009).

26. Marc Lynch, "Taking Arabs Seriously," *Foreign Affairs* 78:5 (September/October 2003).

27. Associated Press, "Obama Bans Islam, Jihad From National Security Strategy Document," Fox News (7 April 2010).

28. Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning" (4 June 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-by-the-president-at-cairo-university-6-04-09/.

29. Mike Allen, "Dick Cheney: Barack Obama 'Trying to Pretend,'" *Politico* (30 December 2009).

30. National Intelligence Strategy (August 2009): 6.

31. Dalia Dassa Kaye, Frederic Wehrey, Audra K. Grant and Dale Stahl, *More Freedom, Less Terror?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008).

32. Stephen McInerney, "The Federal Budget and Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2011: Democracy, Governance, and Human Rights in the Middle East," *Project on Middle East Democracy* (April 2010).

33. Kristin Lord and Marc Lynch, "America's Extended Hand," Center for a New American Security (May 2010).

34. James K. Glassman, "How to Win the War of Ideas," *Wall Street Journal* (24 June 2008): A19.

35. Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah, Muhammad al-Obaidi, "Deadly Vanguards: A Study of al-Qa'ida's Violence Against Muslims," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (December 2009).

36. The National Security Strategy, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006/.

37. John Brennan, "A New Approach to Safeguarding Americans" (6 August 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-John-Brennan-at-the-Center-for-Strategic-and-International-Studies/.

38. Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Constructivist Strategy," *Praeger Security International* (May 2006).

39. "Muslims Believe US Seeks to Undermine Islam," www.worldpublicopinion.org (24 April 2007).

40. Emile Nakhleh, *A Necessary Engagement: Reinventing America's Relations with the Muslim World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 29 December 2008); Sherifa Zuhur, *Precision in the Global War on Terror: Inciting Muslims through the War of Ideas* (Strategic Studies Institute, 18 April 2008).

41. Department of Homeland Security: Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, *Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims* (January 2008).

42. For example, the State Department named Farah Pandith to be "Special Representative to the Muslim Communities of the World," the first time such a position has ever existed.

43. Counterterrorism Communications Center, *Words that Work and Words that Don't: A Guide for Counterterrorism Communication*, 2:10 (14 March 2008).

44. Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl and Seth D. Rosen, "Beyond Bullets: Strategies for Countering Violent Islamist Extremism," Center for a New American Security (June 2009): 9.

45. John Brennan, "A New Approach to Safeguarding Americans" (6 August 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-John-Brennan-at-the-Center-for-Strategic-and-International-Studies/.

46. Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Announcing Partners for A New Beginning" (27 April 2010), http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/April/20100427171003xjsnommis0.7708856.html.

47. Associated Press, "Obama Bans Islam, Jihad From National Security Strategy Document," Fox News (7 April 2010).

48. Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism,Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization* (March 2009).

49. House Armed Services Committee, International Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee, Testimony of Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism (20 January 2010).

50. Michael E. Leiter, "Remarks by the Honorable Michael E. Leiter," Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (9 April 2009), http://www.nctc.gov/press_room/speeches/2009-04-09_aspen-inst-speech.pdf.

51. James Glassman, "Public Diplomacy 2.0" (12 December 2008).

52. The White House and National Security Council, *National Framework for Strategic Communication* (March 2010).

53. United States Agency for International Development, *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming* (October 2009).

54. Mike McIntire, "Ensnared by Error in Growing U.S. Watch List," *The New York Times* (7 April 2010): A1.

55. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "Year of the Drone," New America Foundation (24 February 2010). Peter Finn and Joby Warrick, "Under Panetta, a More Aggressive CIA," *Washington Post* (21 March 2010): A01; Christopher Drew, "Drones Are Playing a Growing Role in Afghanistan," *The New York Times* (20 February 2010): A6.

56. Jane Mayer, "The Predator War: What are the risks of the CIA's covert drone program?" *The New Yorker* (26 October 2009); David Kilcullen and Andrew McDonald Exum, "Death from Above, outrage Down Below," *The New York Times* (17 May 2009): WK13.

57. "Saharan states to open joint military headquarters," *BBC News* (21 April 2010).

58. Obama, "Remarks by the President on National Security" (21 May 2009), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-On-National-Security-5-21-09/.

59. Harold Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law" (25 March 2010), http://www.state.gov/s/l/releases/remarks/139119.htm.

60. Laura Parker, "Bush: Guantanamo's future up to Supreme Court," *USA Today* (14 June 2006), http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-06-14-bush-gitmo_x.htm.

61. Mark Bowden, "The Professor of War," *Vanity Fair* (May 2010).

62. James Lamond, "Conservatives Ignoring Important Tools," *Democracy Arsenal* (4 May 2010).

63. "Bush bans terror suspect torture," *BBC News* (20 July 2007).

64. Michael John Garcia, "Interrogation of Detainees: Overview of the McCain Amendment," *Congressional Research Service* (24 January 2006), http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/RS22312.pdf.

65. Walter Pincus and Carrie Johnson, "Interagency teams can now question terror suspects," *Washington Post* (6 February 2010); A03.

66. "Secret prisons: Obama's order to close 'black sites,'" *The Guardian* (23 February 2009), http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/23/secret-prisons-closure-obama-cia.

67. Melissa McNamara, "Bush Says He Wants to Close Guantanamo," *CBS News* (8 May 2006).

68. Adam Serwer, "A Kinder, Gentler Gitmo," *The American Prospect* (22 April 2010).

69. Andrew Lebovich "The LWOT: Khadr trial off to a rocky start; Abdulmutallab and Awlaki videos released," *Foreign Policy* (29 April 2010).

70. Jack Goldsmith, "The Cheney Fallacy: Why Barack Obama is Waging a More Effective War on Terror Than George W. Bush," *The New Republic* (18 May 2009); Eli Lake, "The 9/14 Presidency," *Reason* (6 April 2010).

71. Charlie Savage, "Battle Looms Over the Patriot Act," *The New York Times* (20 September 2009); Glenn A. Fine, "Statement of Glenn A. Fine, U.S. Department of Justice, before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary Concerning Reauthorizing the USA Patriot Act" (23 September 2009), http://www.justice.gov/oig/testimony/t0909.pdf..

72. Jack Goldsmith, "The Cheney Fallacy: Why Barack Obama is Waging a More Effective War on Terror Than George W. Bush," *The New Republic* (18 May 2009).

73. Eli Lake, "'Permission' needed to kill U.S. terrorists," *The Washington Times* (4 February 2010); Matt Cover, "House Committee Questions Legality of Drone Strikes Against Terrorists," *CNS News* (29 April 2010).

74. Scott Shane, "U.S. Approves Targeted Killing of American Cleric," *The New York Times* (6 April 2010).

75. Charlie Savage and Jodi Kantor, "Holder Interviews Excerpts," *The New York Times* (14 February 2010); Jane Mayer, "The Trial: Eric Holder and the Battle Over Khalid Sheikj Mohammed," *The New Yorker* (15 February 2010).

76. Office of the Attorney General, Attorney General Eric Holder Letter in Response to Senator Mitch McConnell (3 February 2010); John Brennan, "Opposing view: 'We need no lectures,'" *USA Today* (9 February 2010).

77. Harold Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law" (25 March 2010).

78. Marc Sageman, Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

79. George W. Bush "Remarks on the War on Terror" (5 September 2006), http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/05/AR2006090500656.html.

80. Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Brookings Institution Press: 2008); Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 2004); Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge University Press: 2005).

81. Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Arabia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Hegghammer, "Saudi Arabia's Soft Counterterrorism Isn't So Soft," *Foreign Policy* (11 March 2010).

82. The Amman Message (1 March 2007), http://www.ammanmessage.com/.

83. Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah, Muhammad al-Obaidi, "Deadly Vanguards: A Study of al-Qa'ida's Violence Against Muslims," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (December 2009).

84. Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided Between Salafi-Jihad and the Ikhwan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 33, no.6 (2010), 467-87.

85. Marc Lynch, "Qaradawi's Revisions," *Foreign Policy* (9 July 2009).

86. In a recent presentation at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, CENTCOM Commander GEN David Petraeus listed 12 distinct affiliated movements.

87. Daniel Benjamin, "Remarks at Jamestown Yemen Conference" (15 April 2010), http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/April/20100416143153bpuh0.7049219.html.

88. "Somalia's Divided Islamists," International Crisis Group (18 May 2010).

89. "Counterterrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?" International Crisis Group (11 July 2005).

90. Andre Le Sage, "Peacebuilding and Terrorism: Fragile Gains in Somalia," Washington Institute for Near East Policy (27 October 2009).

91. Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.S. Aiding Somalia in Its Plan to Retake Its Capital," *The New York Times* (5 March 2010).

92. Andrew McGregor, "Algeria Launches Nation-Wide Counterterrorism Offensive," *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* 8:16 (23 April 2010).

93. Omar Ashour, "De-Radicalizing Jihadists the Libyan Way," The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation; Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "New Jihad Code Threatens al Qaeda," CNN (10 November 2009).

94. "U.S. Starts Anti-al-Qaeda Exercise Military Exercise in Sahara," *BBC News* (3 May 2010); Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Strike in Somalia Targets Al-Qaeda Figure," *The Washington Post* (9 January 2007).

95. Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge University Press: 2005); Thomas Hegghammer, "Global Jihadism After the Iraq War," *Middle East Journal* 60:1 (2006).

96. Mark Bowden, "The Professor of War," *Vanity Fair* (May 2010).

97. Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies," *The National Interest* (1 March 2006).

98. Yoram Cohen and Matthew Levitt, "Deterred but Determined: Salafi-Jihadist Groups in the Palestinian Arena," Washington Institute for Near East Policy (January 2010).

99. Maura Conway, "Terrorism and the Internet: New Media – New Threat?" Parliamentary Affairs (10 February 2006); Gabriel Weimann, Terror on the Internet, The New Arena, the New Challenges (Washington: The United States Institute of Peace, 2006); Hanna Rogan, Al-Qaeda's Online Media Strategies: From Abu Reuter to Irhabi 007 (Norwegian Defense Research Establishment/FFI, 12 January 2007).

100. Steven R. Corman and Jill S. Schiefelbein, "Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas," Consortium for Strategic Communication (20 April 2006).

101. Gabriel Weimann, "Virtual disputes: The Use of the Internet for Terrorist Debates," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:7 (October 2006).

102. Evan Kohlmann, "The Real Online Terrorist Threat," *Foreign Affairs* (September 2006).

103. Michael Jacobson, "Terrorist Financing and the Internet," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33:4 (April 2010): 353-363.

104. Daniel Kimmage, "Al-Qaeda Central and the Internet," New America Foundation (16 March 2010).

105. Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies," *The National Interest* (1 March 2006).

106. United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat* (8 May 2008); Ted Gistaro, "Remarks by Ted Gistaro, National Intelligence Officer for Transnational Threats" (12 August 2008), http://www.dni.gov/speeches/20080812_speech.pdf.

107. Evan Kohlmann, "A Beacon for Extremists: The Ansar al-Mujahideen Web Forum," *CTC Sentinel* 3:2 (25 February 2010): 1-4.

108. Bruce Hoffmann, "American Jihad," *The National Interest* (20 April 2010).

109. National Security Strategy: 22.

110. Kasie Hunt, "Joe Lieberman Bill Would Strip Suspects' Citizenship," *Politico* (5 May 2010).

About the Center for a New American Security

The mission of the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) is to develop strong, pragmatic, and principled national security and defense policies that promote and protect American interests and values. Building on the expertise and experience of its staff and advisors, CNAS aims to engage policymakers, experts and the public with innovative fact-based research, ideas, and analysis to shape and elevate the national security debate. A key part of our mission is to help inform and prepare the national security leaders of today and tomorrow.

CNAS is located in Washington, D.C., and was established in February 2007 by Co-founders Kurt M. Campbell and Michèle A. Flournoy. CNAS is a 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization. Its research is nonpartisan; CNAS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the authors.

Center for a New American Security
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 403
Washington, DC 20004

TEL 202.457.9400
FAX 202.457.9401
EMAIL info@cnas.org
www.cnas.org

Center for a
New American
Security

STRONG, PRAGMATIC AND PRINCIPLED
NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICIES

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 403
Washington, DC 20004

TEL 202.457.9400
FAX 202.457.9401
EMAIL info@cnas.org

www.cnas.org