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An Evaluation of Counterinsurgency as a Strategy for Fighting the Long War

Baucum Fulk

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AS A STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING THE LONG WAR

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 632 Wright Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5046.

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PREFACE

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ABSTRACT

The single greatest national security question currently facing the U.S. National Command Authority is how best to counter violent extremism. The National Command Authority has four broad strategies through which it may employ military forces to counter violent extremism: counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, support to insurgency, and antiterrorism. The Long War is anticipated to continue for decades, perhaps generations. Thus, it is imperative to select the best strategy or strategies for employing military forces. Based on historical lessons in combating terrorism, the best strategy is efficient and sustainable and avoids overreacting, acting incompetently, or appearing to be either over reactive or incompetent.

Counterinsurgency is neither efficient nor sustainable from a military, economic, or political perspective. It is a high risk strategy because it is a large, highly visible undertaking through which the United States may easily overreact, act incompetently, or be perceived as overreacting or being incompetent. Counterterrorism, support to insurgency, and antiterrorism are each both efficient and sustainable from a military and economic perspective. These three strategies each have inherent political concerns, hazards, or constraints. However it is considerably less likely that the United States will overreact, behave incompetently, or be perceived as overreacting or being incompetent through engaging in one or more of these three strategies than by engaging in counterinsurgency. Support to insurgencies is economically and militarily efficient and sustainable, but it carries substantial political risks. Thus, an overall strategy combining counterterrorism and antiterrorism is the best means of employing military forces to counter violent extremism.

AN EVALUATION OF COUNTERINSURGENCY AS A STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING THE LONG WAR

INTRODUCTION

The single greatest national security question currently facing the U.S. National Command Authority is choosing the best, sustainable strategy to combat al Qaeda and its affiliates.[1] The U.S. national strategy against al Qaeda is far broader than the Department of Defense (DoD) mission.[2] Nonetheless, DoD's contribution to the fight is substantial, both in terms of resource allocation and the net effect in reducing the al Qaeda threat.[3]

The National Command Authority has at least four broad means of employing military resources in the overall strategy to combat al Qaeda. These choices include conducting counterinsurgency, waging counterterrorism, supporting insurgency, and strengthening antiterrorism. This Carlisle Paper focuses on counterinsurgency because that is the strategy through which the United States has expended the greatest level of military resources since September 11, 2001 (9/11). The paper also briefly highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the other three strategies.

Counterinsurgency does not appear to be a wise, long term strategy for the United States to employ in combating al Qaeda. As discussed in detail below, focusing U.S. military resources on counterinsurgency ignores historical lessons in successfully combating terrorism and fails to utilize military resources in the most efficient, sustainable manner possible.

DEFINING AND BRIEFLY EXPLORING COUNTERINSURGENCY, COUNTERTERRORISM, INSURGENCY, AND ANTITERRORISM

Counterinsurgency (COIN) is defined as "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency."[4] COIN is well known from its use during the latter stages of the second U.S. war in Iraq and from General Stanley McChrystal's 2009 recommendation as to the best means to prevail in Afghanistan.[5] The most notable characteristics of COIN are its indirect approach to combating terrorism and its cost. COIN focuses on the local civilian population, seeking to secure the population from the enemy and to obtain popular support through effective governance, including public services,[6] eventually defeating insurgents or making them irrelevant.[7]

Counterinsurgency's high cost begins with the large number of counterinsurgents required to provide security.[8] Large expenditures for personnel, equipment, and materials also are required for civil works programs to support the host government.[9] COIN conducted in a remote, rugged, insecure area, such as Afghanistan, increases costs exponentially, based on transportation and transportation security costs.[10] Ideally, COIN should be conducted by the whole of government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), not merely military forces. In practice, the DoD has conducted the vast majority of the U.S. Government's portion of the COIN efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan for a variety of reasons, including DoD resources and its ability to operate in unsecure environments.

Counterterrorism is defined as "operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism."[11] Reported U.S. counterterrorism operations include missile strikes from unmanned aerial systems (drones), and special operations raids against high value targets, including senior leaders.[12] Many counterterrorism successes are publically unknown because they are classified. Counterterrorism also includes nonkinetic efforts to secure weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including those held by nonallied countries, in order to deny these weapons to terrorists. Counterterrorism is conducted by the DoD, especially the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and also by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Insurgency is the inverse of counterinsurgency, namely, "[t]he organized use of subversion and violence by a group or movement that seeks to overthrow or force change of a governing authority. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself."[13] This definition includes the overthrow of legitimate and illegitimate governments. Almost immediately after 9/11, the United States openly supported an Afghan insurgency, the Northern Alliance, against the Taliban, which tolerated or supported al Qaeda. Earlier, the United States more quietly provided military aid to insurgents including the Mujahedeen who fought Soviet military forces entering Afghanistan beginning in late 1979. Since 2002, U.S. support to insurgency as a means of fighting terrorism has received little public discussion.

Antiterrorism is defined as "defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist acts, to include limited response and containment by local military and civilian forces."[14] The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the primary U.S. federal antiterrorism agency. The DoD can and does support domestic antiterrorism efforts. DoD contributions to the U.S. antiterrorism efforts include providing armed National Guard Soldiers in airports shortly after the 9/11 attacks and providing support to other government agencies for high profile events, such as presidential inaugurations and Super Bowls.[15]

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Four questions are worth considering before examining COIN as a strategy to combat al Qaeda. First, do historical lessons suggest an appropriate U.S. strategy to combat al Qaeda? Second, for how long will the United States be fighting the "Long War" against al Qaeda? Third, what does al Qaeda need to function, and especially what does al Qaeda need to function effectively in killing Americans and destroying their property? Fourth, why should the National Command Authority conduct a cost benefit analysis in selecting a particular military strategy?

What Historical Lessons Exist Regarding Combating Terrorism?

Historically, the vast majority of all terrorist organizations fail to achieve their objectives and cease to exist.[16] National victories against terrorists have been achieved not by winning, but through long-term patience and avoiding losing.[17] Terrorists, by a disproportionate amount, lack the resources of the state they are attacking. This disproportion-

ate lack of resources is why terrorists fight through terrorism—they lack the means to fight conventionally.[18] Since terrorists lack the strength to defeat a more powerful state, they must rely on the state to make significant strategic mistakes, with the state eventually defeating itself.[19]

The most important rule in fighting terrorism is to avoid being perceived as over-reacting.[20] The perception of overreaction can make a terrorist organization's claims appear more legitimate, delegitimize the government which is perceived to be overreacting, or both.[21] As a terrorist organization gains legitimacy, it gains resources: People join its ranks and provide financial support. As a terrorist organization gains strength, it may also gain state support through the principle of "the viable enemy of my enemy is my friend."

A government which is perceived to be overreacting stands to lose domestic popular support, support from its allies, and potentially even the loss of allies. The loss of domestic support makes domestic antiterrorist actions more difficult. For example, the loss of domestic support may make it difficult to increase law enforcement powers that may reduce civil liberties. The loss of domestic support also makes it more difficult to obtain a consensus for subsequent international action. The loss of allied support or allies makes actions against the terrorist organization more costly and more difficult, or possibly even impossible. Without allies, the costs of international actions cannot be shared. Actions within a strong country's borders may be prohibitive in cost or impossible without that country's consent or cooperation.

The second most important rule for a government fighting terrorism is to avoid being or appearing to be incompetent.[22] An incompetent government squanders resources, opportunities, or both. A government that appears to be incompetent stands to lose popular support and its allies' support. As noted above, diminished domestic popular support makes internal and foreign initiatives more difficult to accomplish; diminished allied support or lost allies makes international actions more costly or impossible.

How Long is "Long"?

> There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.
>
> – Sun Tzu[23]

Inherent in any strategy to win the "Long War" is an understanding of how long a period of time the United States will be at war with al Qaeda and its allies. When did the Long War begin? From the U.S. perspective, the Long War began on 9/11; from al Qaeda's perspective, the Long War began many years before 2001.

Of course, no one knows when the Long War will end. Reasonable estimates are that the Long War will last for decades. Michael Howard states that the Long War "may well take decades, perhaps as long as the Cold War."[24] Major General (Retired) Robert Scales has stated that the Long War "might last a generation."[25] These estimates are in keeping with historical lessons, since terrorist campaigns that surpass initial hurdles are typically measured in decades, not years.[26] If these estimates are correct, in a best case scenario the war is not yet at the half-way mark, and may have only just begun.

If the estimates listed above are correct, they suggest that the strategy the United States adopts in fighting the Long War probably should be based on the historical precedents of success through long-term patience. Thus, the strategy should focus on not losing, rather than winning per se, and avoiding overreaction, incompetence, and the perception of either. Sustainability is also key; if the United States must be involved in a generational or multigenerational struggle, it is essential to keep the "burn rate" low.

What Resources Does al Qaeda Need?

General David Petraeus, Commander, Central Command, has stated publicly that al Qaeda in Iraq needed eight categories of resources: senior leader guidance, money, command and control, ideology, popular support, safe havens, foreign fighters, and weapons.[27] Al Qaeda's need to strike Americans on U.S. soil likely would differ from al Qaeda in Iraq's needs in some ways, but many needs would be the same, even if they were satisfied differently. For example, the skills required for al Qaeda operatives within the United States likely would differ from the skills required of foreign fighters in Iraq, as might the specific weapons they would use.

The greatest al Qaeda threat on U.S. soil likely would be a biological, nuclear, or chemical WMD. To conduct a WMD attack on U.S. territory, al Qaeda first would need the weapon itself. This would require purchasing, stealing, or building such a weapon, or some combination of these three. Unless the weapon or all its components were acquired within the United States, al Qaeda also would have to transport the weapon or components into the United States. Finally, al Qaeda would have to transport the weapon to the target and employ the weapon. This would require at least senior leader guidance, money, command and control, ideology, terrorist operatives, and a weapon.

How Important is Efficient Resource Use?

Again, if the campaign is protracted, the resources of the state will not be equal to the strain.

– Sun Tzu[28]

Critics of cost benefit analysis in national security matters argue that such calculations are inappropriate because a price for national security cannot be assigned; national security, in other words, is worth any price. This argument has existed in the United States from the inception of cost benefit calculations in national security matters beginning after World War II. Critics of cost benefit analysis in national security matters are wrong for multiple reasons. First, excessive spending for war is itself a potential U.S. national security threat. Second, because resources are finite, it is essential to expend them in the most effective manner possible.

Military power ultimately derives from economic prosperity.[29] Stated more bluntly, is the golden rule of power: He who has the gold, rules. The United States did not defeat the Soviet Union through direct military conflict, but Soviet leadership decisions to spend more on defense than it could afford may have played a significant part in the Soviet Union's collapse.[30] Al Qaeda might lead the United States to spend more money

fighting it than the United States can afford.[31] The estimated financial cost to conduct the 9/11 attacks was about $500,000.[32] A reasonable estimate of U.S. financial cost to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2008 is between $1 to $3 trillion.[33] In February, 2009, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence stated, "The primary near-term security concern of the United States is the global economic crisis and its geopolitical implications."[34] He also concluded that defending the nation at a reasonable financial cost is necessary for U.S. national security.[35]

Second, even assuming the Long War is a war of necessity and not a war of choice, the United States must still make wise choices about how it fights the war.[36] The world is a very large place, and there are a large number and variety of people who would like to harm the United States. According to some authors, over 90 million Muslims largely agree with Osama bin Laden's world view.[37] Those who lack the ability or will to harm the United States directly can contribute financially and in other ways to al Qaeda. Moreover, the United States faces other threats. Both China and Russia pose a nuclear threat to the United States, and other nations hostile to the United States may soon have the ability to strike us with nuclear weapons. Additionally, China is believed to have initiated cyber attacks against the United States.[38]

COUNTERINSURGENCY AS A STRATEGY

It likely is impossible to quantify exact al Qaeda threat reduction benefits to the United States from specific COIN operations. Not knowing whether successful al Qaeda attacks in the United States would have occurred if a COIN operation had not been conducted hinders quantification. Additionally, some al Qaeda threat reduction information from COIN operations is likely classified. Consequently, this analysis evaluates the resources al Qaeda needs to successfully attack the United States and the al Qaeda resource reductions a COIN may provide through the force's presence and by solving fundamental underlying problems in an unstable society.

Reducing al Qaeda's Means to Harm the United States.

COIN has immediate effects on some al Qaeda resources and also has second and third order effects. Returning to the previously discussed elements al Qaeda presumably needs to operate, it needs senior leader guidance, funding, command and control, ideology, popular support, safe havens, fighters, and weapons. How should a successful COIN affect each of these elements?

Senior Leader Guidance. Al Qaeda senior leaders do not appear to arise from the ills a COIN should fix. Osama bin Laden grew up in a wealthy family in Saudi Arabia.[39] Ayman Al-Zawahiri was born to a prominent Egyptian family and is a doctor.[40] Saudi Arabia and Egypt are stable states, with relatively legitimate governments, providing a middle of the world level of freedom and opportunity to their citizens.[41] Saudi Arabia and Egypt are not Switzerland, but nor are they North Korea. Bin Laden and Zawahiri's countries of origin and economic and professional status are relatively typical for al Qaeda senior leaders.[42]

It is possible, though by no means sure, that COIN operations might indirectly affect potential future al Qaeda senior leaders through influencing their ideology. Specifically, Western COIN operations might convince potential al Qaeda senior leaders that Western ideology, evidenced through good works in Islamic and other third world countries, is not evil. This idea is discussed in greater detail in the "Ideology" section.

Information developed during COIN operations may help locate al Qaeda leaders. Counterterrorism operations have killed a substantial number of deputies and middle level leaders.[43] Intelligence sources that led to these counterterrorism successes are classified, and there are reasons to question whether the information leading to these successes did or did not come from COIN operations in Afghanistan or Iraq. And even if COIN operations *are* the basis for intelligence successes, the intelligence would have come at very high economic, military, and political costs.

Funding. Criminal enterprises and some governments are believed to be the primary al Qaeda funding sources.[44] Criminal enterprises tend to flourish in failed and weak states, so COIN has the potential to diminish or destroy one of the two primary funding sources for al Qaeda.[45] Unfortunately, COIN does not appear to destroy criminal enterprises, in either the short or long term.

In the short term, COIN tends to ignore or to strengthen major existing criminal organizations, and it also spawns new criminal enterprises. The indigenous population's "hearts and minds" is the center of gravity for counterinsurgents.[46] Because they cannot afford to alienate a large segment of the population, counterinsurgents are very hesitant to target criminal organizations that are supported by a significant segment of the indigenous society, even if the criminal enterprise causes substantial harm world-wide. For example, in Afghanistan counterinsurgents largely ignore rather than destroy poppy fields, which provide 95 percent of the world's illicit heroin[47] and up to $400 million to the Taliban.[48]

Warlords have long controlled critical passes and roads in Afghanistan, exacting illegal payments from merchants seeking safe passage of goods. As previously discussed, COIN requires huge amounts of resources, and in Afghanistan logistics travel is over land, via roads controlled in places by warlords and the Taliban. Illegal toll charges increase with the value of the commodities transported,[49] and thus COIN has vastly strengthened the existing warlord and Taliban criminal enterprises.[50] Transportation contractors for the DoD in Afghanistan received $2.2 billion from the United States during 2008-09 and are generally understood to pay some percentage of the logistics contract funds to insurgents.[51] If 10 percent of the contracts were spent on "security" payments to insurgents to avoid attacks, this would be $220 million for 2008-09 alone.

The civil works aspect of COIN spawns new criminal enterprises. For example, development projects in Afghanistan before 2002 were so insignificant that they did not merit exploitation by significant criminal enterprise. As development in Afghanistan grew following the overthrow of the Taliban, a new criminal enterprise grew to take advantage of it. Some fraction of the billions of dollars spent in Afghanistan for development is diverted to corruption, much of it eventually flowing to warlords and the Taliban. Some estimates are that 10 to 15 percent of development funds end up with the Taliban.[52] Similarly, in Iraq, billions of dollars in reconstruction funding could not be accounted for, and it is probable that a substantial fraction of the missing funds was lost to corruption.[53]

It is doubtful that COIN reduces funding for criminal enterprises, and by extension to al Qaeda, in the long term. A successful COIN transforms a failed or failing state into a weak state emerging from conflict. A weak state emerging from conflict lacks the resources or the motivation to fight entrenched, well-funded criminal enterprises when there are many other more obvious, urgent priorities affecting the people. Moreover, strong links and even co-dependence between criminal enterprises and state governments may ensure that as long as the new government is in power, criminal enterprises that developed or expanded during the war will continue to flourish during peace.[54] The narcotics and human trafficking enterprises in Albania and beyond during and after the Bosnia-Herzegovina War provide a stark example of this phenomenon.[55] Many similar examples exist in Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[56] Anticorruption measures in a post conflict society often lead to instability and renewed fighting which makes anticorruption actions against powerful criminal enterprises all the more unpalatable, both within the nation itself and internationally.[57]

Thus, even if a counterinsurgency is successful, it is unlikely to extinguish entrenched, highly profitable criminal enterprises. The vast funding COIN operations provide to criminal enterprises, insurgents, and al Qaeda is particularly troubling, given the small amount of money necessary to finance serious terrorist plots.[58]

Command and Control. Other than al Qaeda cells whose purpose is to attack counterinsurgents, it is unlikely that COIN operations will significantly disrupt al Qaeda command and control. Al Qaeda operatives appear to be organized into discrete cells, and command and control structures from the senior leaders to the cells may be indirect, infrequent, or electronic.[59] Al Qaeda leaders appear to relocate when COIN operations begin in their locales, as evidenced by al Qaeda leaders moving from Afghanistan to Pakistan as the insurgency in Afghanistan began in late 2001 and thereafter when the counterinsurgency commenced in earnest.[60] Similarly, al Qaeda in Iraq leaders moved from Iraq after the "awakening." [61]

Moreover, there is no command and control between al Qaeda leaders and an increasing number of self-selected, self-radicalized, self-directed individual terrorists and terrorist cells. To the extent al Qaeda senior leadership has influence over many of these "fellow travelers," the influence is indirect and electronic, such as through terrorist websites or media broadcasts of video or audio tapes prepared by senior leadership. Some self-selected terrorists might work part way up the al Qaeda chain of command to request and obtain a specific mission or to obtain training or direction in a self-selected mission.[62] An al Qaeda leader located in an area where COIN is being conducted who attempts to provide training to a self starter might have his efforts disrupted by counterinsurgents, but the most significant leaders will likely relocate.

Ideology. Well-executed, well-perceived COIN strikes at the heart of al Qaeda's ideology. It is far easier for al Qaeda to portray Westerners and Western ideology as evil to populations who are unfamiliar with the many positive aspects of Western people and practices. COIN provides personal contact between indigenous people, whom al Qaeda seeks to influence, and counterinsurgents whose ideology is said to be evil, but who are engaged in good works on behalf of the local people. Reporting, in the broadest sense of the word, extends the ideological effect of a COIN fought in a Muslim country to Muslims throughout the world.

At the international level both within and beyond the Muslim world, COIN has the potential to increase or decrease U.S. "soft power," which Joseph Nye defines as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments."[63] Soft power is created through the attraction other governments or citizens may have to a country's culture, political ideals, and legitimate policies.[64] A COIN providing good works, for sincere purposes, during a just war, particularly through international organizations or in conjunction with other nations, may increase U.S. soft power. Objectively, poor performance, not meeting expectations (reasonable or not), or international belief that an operation is unjust for any reason may diminish U.S. soft power rather than enhancing it. Increasing U.S. soft power is important because it increases the U.S. ability to obtain other nations' assistance in fighting al Qaeda.

For several reasons, it is no easy task to perform COIN well under the best of circumstances, even without interference from insurgents. General McChrystal's description of the immense complexity involved in building one well, in a single village in Afghanistan, suggests that the overall task of conducting COIN in countries with radically different cultures from the West is nearly insurmountable, even in the abstract.[65] A second, equally important, challenge is to convince an indigenous population that the purpose of COIN is altruistic, not imperialistic or crusading. A third, great problem is finding capable, indigenous leaders who are focused on advancing the national interest rather than enriching and empowering themselves and a small inner circle. Austere conditions because of nonexistent or destroyed infrastructure and unrealistic expectations from the indigenous population round out the primary difficulties before considering the insurgents' "vote."

Of course, al Qaeda and other insurgents do not sit idly by while Western counterinsurgents do good works for the local populace and publicize COIN successes. Al Qaeda and other insurgents conduct operations against the counterinsurgents and those who support or are allied with the counterinsurgents. This causes at least three problems for COIN in the ideological realm, some of which may have strategic effects throughout the world, and all of which, if the COIN operation is defeated, have a profoundly negative strategic effect.

First, fighting between counterinsurgents and insurgents and al Qaeda is among the people,[66] killing local civilians and destroying their property. The number of local civilians who die during fighting between counterinsurgents and insurgents or al Qaeda can be reduced by counterinsurgent combat strategies, but it cannot be eliminated.[67] Each civilian death related to Western forces' operations may turn the family and friends of the victim, as well as the broader populace, toward the ideology the terrorists espouse. Al Qaeda propagandists work to publicize deaths, blaming counterinsurgents alone for them, and work to discredit the overall effort, ascribing improper motives, such as a Christian conquest of the Muslim world.[68]

Second, insurgents and al Qaeda target those who align with or support counterinsurgents. This causes direct harm to those who are targeted and their families. The people also are indirectly, but tangibly, harmed when their local leaders are killed for aligning with counterinsurgents. Additional indirect harm flows from insurgents targeting NGOs which have provided long-term local aid. As expressed in a Taliban "night letter," written to a mid level aid agency supervisor: "You are an American slave. You

take money from Americans and work in a malicious campaign against Muslims, so we are warning you. . . . People who work with and are slaves of Americans are worth killing. You are all worth killing."[69] Negative repercussions within the international aid community and beyond from insurgents targeting aid agencies in response to COIN may delegitimize COIN ideologically.

Third, within the local and regional communities, counterinsurgent forces may be blamed for casualties caused solely and directly by insurgents or al Qaeda. For example, General McChrystal described how the death of 30 Afghan civilians whose bus struck an insurgent placed improvised explosive device (IED) may be blamed on counterinsurgents: But for the presence of the counterinsurgents, the insurgents would not have planted the IED, and the counterinsurgents did not prevent the IED detonation. Therefore, the counterinsurgents were to blame for the 30 civilian casualties.[70] This sentiment, correct or not, may carry weight within the broader ideological debate.

The end result in a COIN may shape the ideology of fence sitters, both individuals and nations who might directly or indirectly support al Qaeda, remain neutral, or support the United States. Because of its resource intensity, COIN is inherently perceived as a major commitment and test of the will and competence of a nation that wages it. If Osama bin Laden is correct that "people . . . will like the strong horse,"[71] the side that is perceived as having won a COIN stands to gain in its ideological followership and soft power. Thus, a nation or coalition that wages a counterinsurgency as part of a larger overall campaign stands to gain or lose in the overall campaign if it is perceived to have won or lost a specific COIN fight.

The Mujahedeen versus Soviet Union campaign illustrates the importance of perception in winning an insurgency-counterinsurgency. The Mujahedeen were perceived to have defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The fact that the Soviet Army was defeated by a coalition that included critical covert U.S. assistance, especially Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, did not become part of the common perception within the Muslim world. Consequently, as the ideology behind the Mujahedeen movement gained followership, the perception of bin Laden's link to the success against the Soviets appears to have assisted him in extending al Qaeda beyond that of an organization geared to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.[72]

Popular Support. Popular support is necessary for more far reaching al Qaeda ends such as establishing a radical international Islamic Caliphate or smaller versions of it. Consequently, as previously discussed regarding ideology, well-conducted COIN operations that generate positive perceptions could effectively combat such far reaching terrorist ends. However, the probability of al Qaeda establishing a radical international Islamic Caliphate appears remote, irrespective of any COIN operations.

Future national and subnational radical Islamic governments, such as the pre-9/11 Taliban in Afghanistan, remain possible. Counterinsurgency might prevent such governments, but at considerable cost and strategic risk. Enthusiasm for radical Islam often declines rapidly among host populations, as evidenced in both pre-9/11 Afghanistan and the Anbar area of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq.[73] As next discussed, support to an insurgency in such a nation or subnation may be a less costly, less risky, but equally or more effective means of displacing a radical Islamic government that supports al Qaeda.

Very small quantities of physical and human resources are required to conduct terrorist attacks with strategic effects within the United States.[74] Thus, popular support is not a prerequisite for al Qaeda attacks that could cause great physical or psychological harm to the United States or potentially lead it into additional overseas military operations. Consequently, COIN cannot realistically prevent al Qaeda attacks within our nation.

Safe Havens. COIN is regarded as greatly diminishing an area's ability to serve as a safe haven for al Qaeda.[75] Large-scale al Qaeda training camps likely are impractical in areas where a COIN campaign is underway. Even more modest al Qaeda undertakings potentially could become known to the local civilian populous and be reported to COIN forces, or discovered independently by counterinsurgent forces.

However, the significance of safe havens in enabling al Qaeda operations is questionable. The strategic plan for the 9/11 attacks likely could have been formulated in a variety of locations other than Afghanistan. After all, the tactical and operational planning for the 9/11 attacks was undertaken in U.S. flight schools and in the first class sections of domestic commercial aircraft, as well as at a variety of other locations in the United States and Germany.[76] Similarly, it appears that much, if not all, of the Madrid and London mass transit bombings were planned in Spain and England, respectively.[77] Moreover, al Qaeda has used the Internet as a virtual sanctuary from which to carry out activities that were formerly carried out from Afghanistan before 2002.[78] A friendly third world government, failed state, ungoverned area, or under-governed area is not a prerequisite for terrorist strategic, operational, or tactical planning.

To the extent ungoverned or under-governed territory enables al Qaeda, it is a mistake to believe the United States or a coalition of nations can eliminate all such areas of the world. The 2009 Failed State Index lists 60 states as critical or in danger of failing.[79] Moreover, many nations regarded as generally sound contain ungoverned regions. For example, Mexico, which is neither critical nor in danger according to the 2009 Failed State Index, contains significant regions over which the national and state governments lack control.[80] Moreover, transforming a failed or failing state into a weak state does not destroy al Qaeda elements within the state. Instead, there is reason to believe that weak states are significantly more conducive for al Qaeda than are failed states.[81]

Al Qaeda members may move from areas in which counterinsurgencies are being waged to areas in close proximity, such as moving from Afghanistan to western Pakistan. Proximity, presumably, is beneficial for al Qaeda leadership associated with opposing a COIN, particularly in an area with limited means for electronic communication, such as Afghanistan. In such cases, the area in which the COIN is being waged (Afghanistan) may serve as a base for operations against al Qaeda in the adjoining area (western Pakistan). Similarly, intelligence developed in the area where the COIN is being waged may help in identifying and locating targets in the adjoining area. Nonetheless, even for al Qaeda members who move from areas in which COIN campaigns are underway to unrelated regions (from Afghanistan to Yemen, for example) the COIN likely has only temporarily disrupted the al Qaeda member's work.

Because of its high cost and large intrusive footprint on the countries in which it is practiced, COIN is not suitable as an overall strategy to disrupt al Qaeda by keeping its members perpetually on the move. Al Qaeda already has cells in an estimated 60 coun-

tries,[82] and the United States and its allies could never conduct COIN operations in the vast majority of these countries.

Fighters. "Fighters" for al Qaeda encompass people with a wide variety of skills, just as soldiers include people whose primary mission is combat, combat support, or combat service support, with a wide variety of specific duties within each category. Al Qaeda operatives align approximately with combat soldiers. Combat al Qaeda operatives include spies, kidnappers, gunmen, suicide bombers of various types, bomb placers, remote bomb detonators, and body guards. Al Qaeda also employs combat support members such as planners, trainers, and bomb makers, as well as combat service support members such as recruiters, propagandists, and electronic information technologists.[83]

Some al Qaeda fighters and potential recruits live in areas where counterinsurgencies are being waged or might be waged. On balance, a well-executed COIN would be expected to kill more al Qaeda members and dissuade more potential members than it inadvertently recruits for al Qaeda through collateral casualties and serving as a basis for al Qaeda propaganda. Of course the reverse likely is true for a poorly executed COIN.

Assuming counterinsurgencies are well executed, it is still unclear how significant they are in reducing important fighters for al Qaeda. Areas in which counterinsurgencies are waged presumably have significant numbers of certain types of combat and combat support personnel, as well as a few specific types of combat service support personnel. For example, Afghanistan is a superb location for al Qaeda to obtain gunmen who are well trained for infantry operations in Afghanistan. Similarly, men with rudimentary bomb making skills may be available there.

However, Afghanistan likely is not a good area for al Qaeda to obtain sophisticated propagandists, skilled cyber hackers, accomplished information technologists, or those whose skills would be useful in producing any variety of a WMD or transporting it into the United States. Moreover, operatives who are highly skilled in infantry operations in Afghanistan do not necessarily have skills that would translate even to a Mumbai-style attack in the United States.[84] Such operatives would first have to make their way into the United States and then obtain the necessary weapons and other equipment, not an easy task for a person who only speaks Pashtu or Dari and who can neither read nor write any language.[85]

Thus, while places in which counterinsurgencies are waged are excellent locations for al Qaeda to obtain fighters who are skilled in combating local counterinsurgents, these fighters' skills likely do not translate to different missions or similar missions in significantly different environments. Once the counterinsurgents have departed the area, al Qaeda likely will have limited use for large numbers of narrowly skilled, indigenous fighters.

Weapons. Biological, nuclear, and chemical WMD pose the greatest destructive capability against the United States. A sophisticated cyber attack on key U.S. infrastructure, particularly if timed to have maximum effect, also could cause great damage to the United States. Do successful counterinsurgencies prevent al Qaeda from obtaining or developing WMD or cyber warfare capabilities? The answer depends on where and when a COIN is fought.

The COIN fought in Iraq appears to have had no effect in reducing al Qaeda's access to WMD or cyber-attack capability. When the United States invaded Iraq, Iraq had nei-

ther WMD nor WMD capability. Presumably, Iraq also lacked meaningful cyber-attack capability.[86] Thus, because there was no WMD and no WMD or cyber capability at risk in Iraq, there was nothing to secure.

As was the case in Iraq, the COIN in Afghanistan is having no direct effect in reducing al Qaeda's access to WMD or cyber-attack capability. Afghanistan has never possessed either WMD or capabilities for WMD. Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan has a significant nuclear arsenal and mid range ballistic missiles.[87] Advocates of a 21st century "domino theory" argue that if the Afghanistan COIN fails, instability and al Qaeda's return to robust operations in Afghanistan will destabilize Pakistan and place Pakistan's nuclear arsenal at risk.

The current Afghanistan domino theory appears as flawed as the 20th century communist version. First, there is insufficient evidence that the Afghanistani insurgents will attempt to overthrow the Pakistani government. During the years it was in power, the Taliban made no attempt to overthrow the Pakistani government. Al Qaeda's announced strategy requires defeating the United States before attempting to overthrow secular Middle Eastern governments,[88] and al Qaeda made no attempt before or concurrent with the 9/11 attacks to attack the Pakistan government.

Second, counterinsurgent activities in Afghanistan and supporting Pakistani actions appear to have been the catalyst for terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Thus, the COIN in Afghanistan appears to be a destabilizing rather than a stabilizing force in Pakistan.

Third, regardless of the Afghanistan COIN outcome, it is highly improbable that the Taliban and al Qaeda can overthrow the Pakistani government, if they seek to do so. The Pakistani military and intelligence service are both highly capable, and believe, as evidenced by their actions in Afghanistan and western Pakistan, that India threatens Pakistan far more than the Taliban and al Qaeda.[89] It is unlikely that Pakistan will control the Federally Administered Tribal Area of western Pakistan, but Pakistan has never controlled this area, and the area has not been an existential threat to the Pakistani government and is unlikely to be so in the future. Unless the Pakistani military is defeated, Pakistan's nuclear weapons are safe from terrorist organizations.[90]

In short, it is possible that COIN might reduce al Qaeda's access to the weapons that could most harm the United States, but that has not been the case so far. COIN is most useful in unstable second or third world countries, countries that are not apt to possess WMD, WMD production infrastructure, and accompanying delivery systems necessary to strike the United States. Personnel with the skills to build and use WMD within the United States or to launch cyber attacks against the United States are also rare in the areas counterinsurgencies are fought. Thus, as a general proposition, COIN is unlikely to deny al Qaeda the weapons that would most harm the United States.

Costs to the United States in Employing Counterinsurgency to Combat al Qaeda.

Conducting COIN operations has an effect on the United States that is equally as important as the effect COIN operations have on al Qaeda. As discussed above, the Long War likely will be a decades-long endeavor, and the keys to prevailing are conducting the war in an efficient, sustainable manner and avoiding defeat more than achieving

victory, by avoiding overreaction, incompetence, or the *perception* that the United States is either overreacting or incompetent in prosecuting the war.

It is highly unlikely that the United States can continue to conduct the Long War at its present pace for decades to come. To be sustainable, the war must be sustainable economically, politically, and militarily. At the present time, it is questionable whether the present pace for conducting the Long War is sustainable in *any* of these three aspects, much less sustainable in all three aspects.

Moreover, even if the Long War were sustainable in its current mode, the continued use of COIN still would not be the best U.S. strategy. Waging COIN entails twin risks. First, waging repeated counterinsurgencies is likely to make the United States appear to be overreacting to the damage al Qaeda has done and the threat it poses. Second, waging COIN runs a great risk of failure, making the United States appear to be incompetent.

Regarding overreaction, the presence of a small to moderate U.S. force in Saudi Arabia allegedly first prompted bin Laden to target the United States.[91] The continued presence of large numbers of U.S. and allied forces in a series of Muslim countries, operating under the express purpose of transforming the hearts and minds of the indigenous populations, could easily be seen as an imperialist overreaction or a modern day crusade against the Muslim world.[92]

Regarding incompetence, waging COIN is a very high risk strategy because it does not employ U.S. strengths, and ultimate success is far from U.S. control. From an economic perspective, it places an enormous burden on the nation, not only in physical resources, but also in lives lost, physical and mental damage to many returning service members, and the lost productivity of mobilized Reserve and National Guard service members. Federal government spending may also distort markets.

From a domestic political perspective, the American people are notoriously hostile toward long wars involving large numbers of troops, large expenditures, no significant battle victories, and unclear or vacillating objectives. Regardless of whether U.S. operations in Afghanistan are or are not similar to the Vietnam War, the fact that such comparisons have been seriously considered by many Americans, including at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, highlights the difficulty of sustaining domestic political support for COIN.[93] Coalition COIN partners share similar domestic political problems.[94]

From a military perspective, COIN does not allow the United States to employ its overwhelming technological superiority. Massing fires and maneuvering large elements is nearly irrelevant in a COIN. Instead, very large numbers of culturally and linguistically capable troops are the key elements of military power. Moreover, conventional military power is only one element in a COIN campaign, and it is not the critical element. The key, creating a viable government accepted by the indigenous people, is primarily a Department of State (DoS) mission, requiring DoD support. Unfortunately, the U.S. interagency process is far from seamless, or even efficient. Even if the DoS and DoD each perform well, and perform well together, creating a successful indigenous government is beyond their control. In the typical military campaign, the complication is the enemy's "vote." In COIN, the enemy has a vote, the indigenous government has a vote, and the people have a vote. Winning all three elements to prevail in the COIN presents a high risk of failure, with failure carrying grave consequences.

ALTERNATIVES TO COUNTERINSURGENCY FOR WAGING THE LONG WAR

As noted above, military resources may be used in three other broad categories in addition to COIN: counterterrorism, support to insurgency, and antiterrorism. A discussion of each of these three strategies as they might affect the eight categories of resources al Qaeda needs to attack the United States exceeds the scope of this paper. Instead, this section will use the shorter framework offered above: Specifically, I will examine the strategic utility of counterterrorism, support to insurgency, and antiterrorism in conducting the Long War in a way that avoids losing by being sustainable, avoiding overreaction, avoiding incompetence, and not creating the perception of either overreaction or incompetence.

Counterterrorism as a Strategy.

Counterterrorism operations fit within what Michael Howard describes as "[t]he qualities needed in a serious campaign against terrorists — secrecy, intelligence, political sagacity, quiet ruthlessness, covert actions that remain covert, above all infinite patience. . . ."[95] Moreover, counterterrorism can be conducted in conjunction with COIN or support to an insurgency, as well as concurrently with antiterrorism. Counterterrorism can be conducted by both the DoD and the CIA. Counterterrorism can be conducted where the United States has a substantial, formal military presence, such as Afghanistan, and where the United States lacks a military presence, such as Pakistan. Counterterrorism can be conducted remotely via unmanned aerial systems (drones) and directly by U.S. personnel, from the air, ground, or sea. These characteristics make counterterrorism a versatile, flexible strategy that may be useful for a variety of missions in a variety of areas.

Benefits of Counterterrorism. Compared to COIN, offensive counterterrorism uses minimal total resources and is extremely sustainable. Drones, a large and rapidly increasing component of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy,[96] are inexpensive to build, operate, and maintain compared to conventional aircraft. Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) forces are a precious, limited resource, but unlike COIN, which is a relatively "all or nothing" proposition and needs to be an "all" effort to succeed, counterterrorism operations may be modulated depending on available resources. For missions that cannot be achieved via drones, conventional aircraft, or offshore missiles, if the supply of JSOC forces is too small, then these forces can be reserved for the highest value targets only, passing up lower value targets. Defensive counterterrorism, such as the work conducted by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, is similarly easily modulated, depending on the perceived threat and available funding. The United States should be able to sustain counterterrorism operations for generations.

Offensive counterterrorism is a very precise, limited strategy compared to COIN and, thus, has a much smaller chance of constituting an overreaction. Where counterinsurgency entails tens if not hundreds of thousands of troops stationed in a foreign nation, the total counterterrorism force is exponentially smaller and not stationed prominently

or hostilely. Both COIN and counterterrorism on occasion mistakenly target innocent civilians or kill innocent civilians in the process of targeting insurgents or terrorists. It is unclear whether COIN or counterterrorism operations kill more innocent civilians, but the numbers may be comparable.[97] Defensive counterterrorism, because it is preventative and nonviolent is very unlikely to be over reactive.

Counterterrorism should pose a vastly lower risk of acting in an incompetent manner compared to COIN. Both offensive and defensive counterterrorism decisions are made at a very high level, and the total number of decisions to be made is small.[98] On the other hand, the total number of decisions that must be made daily during a COIN is orders of magnitude greater than for counterterrorism, and the average decisionmakers in COIN, including "strategic corporals," are vastly junior to counterterrorism decisionmakers.[99] Not surprisingly, inane actions with strategically negative consequences such as the torture at Abu Ghraib and the use of a Quran for target practice occurred during COIN operations, not counterterrorism operations.

In terms of international or domestic perceptions of overreaction or incompetence, an overarching consideration for both offensive and defensive counterterrorism operations is the publically quiet manner in which they are conducted. Many offensive counterterrorism operations are publically unknown because they are conducted with great stealth and are highly classified. The overall outline of many defensive counterterrorism operations is available, but these activities do not generate headlines because of their bureaucratic nature or classified status.

Costs of Counterterrorism. The most significant costs for counterterrorism appear to be intangible, potential costs, rather than quantifiable costs that are evident today. Offensive counterterrorism operates in a legally murky realm, and often is referred to as "extra judicial killing," "unlawful killing," "assassination," or "murder."[100] Through its counterterrorism operations, the United States may be moving toward forging new customary international law regarding how a nation may pursue members of a terrorist organization that does not follow the law of war and whose members reside in an area that lacks a functioning government, or where the government is incapable or unwilling to take action against the terrorist organization or its members.

The process of making new customary international law is slow and uncertain. If the international community concludes that counterterrorism operations as currently practiced by the United States are illegal, counterterrorism operations may be unsustainable based on a perception that they are inherently an overreaction because they are illegal. If a consensus emerged that U.S. counterterrorism operations were illegal and the United States ignored international law and continued its counterterrorism operations, the United States would risk the loss of allies and soft power and create a strategic communications bonanza for terrorist organizations. Similarly, counterterrorism or specific counterterrorism measures might be seen as inherently so odious that they might serve as a basis to recruit terrorists who are willing and able to harm the United States. There is some evidence that predator drone strikes might have served as a catalyst for the attempted May 1, 2010, Times Square car bombing.[101]

Covert action, even if legal, also carries significant potential strategic risks for a democratic nation. George Kennan asserted that clandestine operations are out of character for the United States because they "conflict with our own traditional standards and compromise our diplomacy in other areas."[102] Kennan did not rule out ever conducting clandestine operations, but believed regular, routine covert operations were fundamentally corrosive to what the United States stands for as a nation. U.S military operations long have been shaped to a greater or lesser degree by public opinion, subject to the press' access to information and its opinion of the justness of a given war. A virtual absence of public information to enable public debate on a counterterrorism war waged covertly could lead decisionmakers to routinely authorize or direct military action that would be unacceptable to an informed public.

Counterterrorism in governed areas without at least the tacit permission of the foreign sovereign may be unsustainable based on such actions being perceived as an overreaction. For example, Israeli Mossad agents killed a "senior field operative for Hamas" in Dubai, apparently without either the express or tacit permission of the Dubai government.[103] Negative international reaction appears to have been enhanced because the Mossad agents used forged British and German passports in conducting the counterterrorism operation, but the incident highlights the risks and potentially unsustainable use of counterterrorism when it is perceived as an overreaction.

The use of counterterrorism in foreign nations with only tacit, conditional permission from the foreign sovereign also may be problematic. Unclassified sources postulate that U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan have the Pakistani government's tacit approval and support, with the proviso that the Pakistani government will never publicly acknowledge that it has authorized U.S. drone attacks in western Pakistan, and the Pakistani government reserves the right to condemn any particular U.S. drone attack that creates excessive collateral damage.[104] Whether an arrangement such as this is sustainable in the long term remains an open question.

Supporting Insurgency as a Strategy.

In late 2001 and early 2002, U.S. support to an insurgency, namely the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, almost immediately succeeded in overthrowing the Taliban government, which had supported or tolerated al Qaeda and refused to surrender its members to the U.S. after the 9/11 attacks. The success of the U.S. support to the Northern Alliance in displacing the Taliban government suggests that support to insurgency is worthy of consideration as a means to employ military power in fighting the Long War.

Benefits of Supporting Insurgency. Low economic and military costs, in dollars spent, U.S. service members' lives lost or harmed, and equipment destroyed or degraded are the primary benefits of supporting an insurgency against a hostile government, compared to invading, occupying, and waging COIN. The process of routing the Taliban militarily in late 2001 and driving it from power was achieved with minimal U.S. casualties, using air power and a relatively small number of special forces ground troops. Al Qaeda's assassination of Ahmed Shah Masoud, the Northern Alliance commander, on September 9, 2001, suggests al Qaeda may have feared the U.S. might provide support to the Northern Alliance after the 9/11 attacks as a means of attacking al Qaeda.[105] Covert,

rather than open, military assistance to the Mujahedeen drove the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in the 1980s. Based on the experience in Afghanistan, there is also a basis to believe that open, direct U.S. support to an insurgency might result in rapid results.

The potential for the United States to displace a hostile government through support to an insurgency at a minimal economic cost and with relatively few U.S. casualties, carries with it a number of potential benefits in fighting the Long War. First, it should deter foreign governments from supporting al Qaeda or tolerating al Qaeda and its affiliates openly operating in their countries, and it may make foreign governments more apt to surrender terrorists who have attacked the United States. Nations typically harbor or sponsor terrorist organizations based on pragmatic rather than altruistic reasons,[106] and likely are focused upon the stability of their regimes. A viable, low cost, low casualty strategy available to the United States to displace a regime significantly alters the calculation of whether it benefits a foreign government to harbor or sponsor al Qaeda.

Second, support to insurgencies meets the criteria of fighting in a manner that avoids losing. From an economic and military perspective, support to an insurgency is sustainable for a very long time. From a perception point of view, supporting an existing insurgency against a regime is less likely to be perceived as overreacting than is invading a nation, occupying it, and attempting to refashion the nation to U.S. liking. The danger of appearing incompetent in supporting an insurgency that fails is substantially smaller than the danger of appearing incompetent in invading, occupying, and waging a COIN. Insurgencies are apt to fail, and investing in one is a vastly smaller undertaking than the major U.S. combat operations in Iraq or our COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Costs of Supporting Insurgency. "Sleep with Dogs, Awake with Fleas." Support to an insurgency does entail political risk. First, there is risk in supporting an insurgency that may be perceived as being no more legitimate than the government it displaces, for example, the Northern Alliance displacing the Taliban. In such a case, if international and domestic audiences perceive the United States as being sufficiently aggrieved, as was the case in late 2001 and 2002, support to an illegitimate insurgency fighting an illegitimate government likely will be seen as acceptable. On the other hand, if the United States is not perceived as being sufficiently aggrieved, the perception of support to an illegitimate insurgency may be hostile.

As noted above, if an insurgency the United States openly supports fails, there is some element of incompetence that will adhere to the United States. Covert support, in theory, might reduce the stigma of incompetence, but in practice, it likely is difficult to keep significant covert assistance to an insurgency secret.

Support to an insurgency is also risky in that the leadership characteristics that make for successful insurgent leaders likely do not translate well to a government of which the United States or the international community will be proud. Thus, when the United States supports an insurgency, it usually is best to immediately dissociate from the insurgency once it has seized power, limiting the problem of guilt by association. To the extent the United States seeks to influence a successful insurgency it has supported toward making democratic choices, this is best done via inducements from afar, treating the new government as an independent sovereign.

Likely the worst approach is to assist an illegitimate insurgency, continue to station forces in the nation, and be seen as propping up an illegitimate government or dictating

its illegitimate actions. It is better to allow a new government to fail, even if this means a potential return of a government that previously harbored al Qaeda or its affiliates. In such a case, support to a new insurgency or counterterrorism measures in the country remain possible courses of action if al Qaeda is allowed to return and operate openly.

Antiterrorism as a Strategy.

It is difficult to imagine a rational U.S. strategy against al Qaeda that does not include antiterrorism. The four primary antiterrorism issues are determining how much to spend, determining priorities, ensuring a rational and coherent federal, state, and local interaction, and determining how much and in what ways to employ military resources. Answers to these four complicated issues will not be addressed here, instead overarching benefits and costs of antiterrorism as a strategy, and specific benefits and costs of employing military resources for antiterrorism will be considered.

Benefits of Antiterrorism. Antiterrorism is an economically sustainable strategy. The resource commitment to antiterrorism can be modulated relatively easily. If resources or the perceived threat diminish, annual expenditures can be reduced by diminishing funding to the lowest priority antiterrorism measures, making pro rata cuts to all programs, or some combination of lowest priority and pro rata expenditure reductions.

The cost for individual active duty or mobilized service members stationed in the United States who are performing antiterrorism duties is far less than the cost of service members stationed in remote areas overseas who are performing COIN, counterterrorism, or support to insurgency missions, primarily because of the difference in logistical support costs.[107] Further, the costs for Reserve and National Guard service members who work at civilian jobs in local communities but are available for antiterrorism duties on an as needed basis are a fraction of the costs for an active duty service member.

Antiterrorism is a politically sustainable strategy. Because antiterrorism measures are within the United States, they are subject to great scrutiny and great debate by the U.S. electorate and its elected officials. The U.S. democratic process minimizes the possibility of overreaction through antiterrorism actions. The modulation of antiterrorism based on the public's tolerance for inconvenience and civil liberties infringements, versus safety, ensures overall perceptions of overreaction are remedied promptly. Antiterrorism also is unlikely to be perceived as an overreaction by foreign audiences, who experience the antiterrorism measures only if they travel, or attempt to travel, to the United States. This greatly diminishes the foreign audience which may perceive U.S. antiterrorism measures as an overreaction. Additionally, it is universally accepted that nations may much more freely engage in actions within their borders than would be acceptable elsewhere.

Displays of governmental incompetence certainly are possible with antiterrorism measures, but unlike some other strategies, greater antiterrorism efforts should reduce the number of failures. Moreover, unsuccessful efforts to prevent terrorist attacks on U.S. soil and to minimize the consequences of completed attacks evidence a lower level of potential error than failure to foresee threats at all or to undertake any measures to forestall or mitigate them. The potential for the perception of governmental incompetence both within the United States and abroad exists if there is a successful terrorist attack by al Qaeda, particularly if the attack is serious. However, there appears to be a

growing understanding both domestically and internationally that complete safety from all terrorist attacks is impossible.

From a military perspective, antiterrorism includes at least four key specific benefits. First, antiterrorism is potentially effective against an organization and individuals who cannot be deterred. Second, antiterrorism constitutes the final layer in the overall means of preventing al Qaeda from inflicting harm on the United States and its citizens. Third, antiterrorism serves as a means to limit the effects of any successful attack within the United States. Fourth, some antiterrorism measures intended to prevent a successful al Qaeda attack in the United States, or to minimize the consequences of a successful attack, serve beneficial purposes in preventing or responding to other threats and events.

The effective Cold War strategy of mutual assured destruction succeeded because both the U.S. and Soviet governments placed a high value on the continued existence of their nations. It is unclear, however, whether al Qaeda might not willingly end its existence in exchange for destroying the United States. Members of al Qaeda who successfully conduct suicide bombings are clearly willing to end their existence in the present world to achieve their missions. Antiterrorism measures that prevent al Qaeda operatives from trading their existence for the existence of the United States or its citizens thus are an essential part of the U.S. war against al Qaeda.

Antiterrorism also is essential as the last line of defense against al Qaeda operatives who have not been dissuaded by counterinsurgency, destroyed by counterterrorism, or destroyed or controlled through support to an insurgency. If a terrorist bomb is analogized to an exploding soccer ball, antiterrorism is the goalie who prevents the proximate bomb from entering the United States, or who covers the ball that has entered the United States before it explodes.

If or when a terrorist event occurs in the United States, antiterrorism is the mechanism for managing and mitigating the event's consequences, preventing a bad event from becoming far worse. In some ways the consequence management aspect of antiterrorism is a quasi second chance opportunity. After not preventing an al Qaeda attack, federal, state, and local governments have an opportunity to respond promptly, competently, and courageously to help survivors, avoid additional casualties, clean up the wreckage, and return an affected area to normal or as near normal as is possible.

Many antiterrorism measures that might prevent or mitigate the consequences of a completed al Qaeda attack also are beneficial for preventing or minimizing the consequences of other potential or actual disasters, both manmade and naturally occurring. Terrorists who are not affiliated with al Qaeda may be thwarted by antiterrorism measures, and for any attacks they complete, the quasi second chance consequence management principles apply. Many natural disasters and some human caused accidents cannot be prevented. The same consequence management systems that are beneficial for mitigating the effects of a completed terrorist attack are equally beneficial for mitigating disaster effects.

Military resources have the potential to be beneficially employed in both the preventive and consequence management aspects of antiterrorism. Forces with specialized training and equipment may be able to perform missions that civilian forces either cannot perform or that would require expending inordinate amounts of resources to obtain specialized equipment and training that rarely would be used. Military forces

with specialized training and equipment may be beneficial for both preventing domestic al Qaeda attacks and also responding to completed attacks. Military forces may also provide much larger numbers of personnel and larger quantities of logistical support more rapidly than nonmilitary forces. Rapidly available, large numbers of forces, with substantial logistical support capability are particularly beneficial for the consequence management aspect of antiterrorism.

Costs of Antiterrorism. The greatest cost of antiterrorism is political. Domestic antiterrorism actions meant to prevent al Qaeda attacks would be fundamentally incompatible with U.S. values that cherish individual liberties if these actions transform the United States from a free, open society into a police state. Civil liberties activists see even changes such as the Patriot Act as a victory for al Qaeda against the American way of life. Many antiterrorism actions designed to reduce domestic vulnerability to al Qaeda attacks may be seen by many Americans as too costly to civil liberties, absent more severe attacks.

If transforming the United States into a police state is unacceptable to the American people, transforming it into a military state is at least doubly unacceptable. Consequently, the domestic use of military resources within U.S. antiterrorism measures is significantly constrained. The Posse Comitatus Act[108] places legal limits on the use of federal forces for police purposes, but political constraints based on the ideological underpinnings of the Act also impose constraints. A majority of the U.S. public was relatively comfortable with the presence of National Guard soldiers armed with M-16s in airports in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Similarly, the use of National Guard and Army Reserve units during the post Hurricane Katrina response also was acceptable to the American people. Nonetheless, it is essential to never employ military resources in domestic antiterrorism efforts beyond what the American people consider to be acceptable.

Domestic antiterrorism measures may be substantially cheaper on a per service member basis than overseas deployments, but antiterrorism measures nonetheless carry a substantial economic cost. Additionally, the efficiency of domestic antiterrorism expenditures arguably is reduced by political considerations which may dictate the division of federal expenditures based on electoral considerations and political seniority and power, rather than based solely on an impartial weighting of vulnerability, probability of attack, and magnitude of harm from a completed attack.[109] Additionally, for each dollar expended, the bureaucracy necessary to implement and monitor expenditures in a federal, state, and local system may exceed the bureaucracy necessary to implement and monitor military expenditures for counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and support to insurgency.

CONCLUSION

Success in the Long War is neither measured nor achieved merely by doing more, spending more, or involving more service members. Instead, success is measured and achieved by implementing the most efficient, sustainable strategies that allow the United States to maintain a given effort level for generations, even if the Long War continues only for decades. It is critical for the United States not to cause greater harm to itself in the process of attempting to destroy al Qaeda than the harm al Qaeda could cause to the

United States. Sustainability has three overall components; each is essential. The means used to wage the Long War must be economically, politically, and militarily sustainable.

The most efficient, sustainable strategies to combat al Qaeda are counterterrorism and antiterrorism. Each has an important role in the overall strategy, subject to their inherent risks and limitations. Employed together, they form a complementary overall strategy, employing both offense and defense, attacking the enemy at a distance and defending both internationally and domestically. The United States must be mindful that the clandestine nature of counterterrorism does not become a means to engage in actions that are antithetical to American values. Counterterrorism must be executed, like all war, consistently with the values of America, and many antiterrorism measures carry with them potential civil liberties concerns.

Support to insurgencies is a second tier strategy in fighting the Long War. It is economically and militarily efficient and sustainable, but it carries substantial political risks. It must be employed very carefully, mindful that insurgents, particularly those who have the greatest capacity to win, may be no better in many ways than the governments they replace. The greater the U.S. involvement in supporting an insurgency, the greater may be its international and domestic political responsibility for the insurgents' actions after they become rulers. Enduring U.S. support to an insurgent formed government engaged in unsavory actions continues and deepens the political harm to the United States.

COIN is a third tier strategy because it is the least efficient, least sustainable strategy for fighting the Long War. COIN consumes enormous economic and military resources, whether executed well or poorly. It also consumes enormous political resources if executed poorly, and a medium quantity of political resources if it is executed neither particularly well nor especially poorly. COIN is a high risk strategy in terms of success, because its nature favors al Qaeda, pitting insurgent strengths against U.S. weaknesses. COIN is also a high risk strategy because it is a very public endeavor in which the United States employs enormous total resources.

ENDNOTES

1. "For the foreseeable future, winning the Long War against violent extremist movements will be the central objective of the U.S." *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, p. 7, available from *www.defense.gov/news/2008%20National%20Defense%20Strategy.pdf*. Subsequent references to al Qaeda include its affiliates, unless otherwise specified.

2. *Ibid*., p. 9; Mike Mullen, *CJCS Guidance for 2009-2010*, p. 1, available from *www.jcs.mil/content/files/2009-12/122109083003_CJCS_Guidance_for_2009-2010.pdf*.

3. The 2010 budget for the Department of Defense (DoD) is about $712.8 billion. *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY, 2010*, p. 6, available from *comptroller.defense.gov/defbudget/fy2010/Green_Book_Final.pdf*. The fiscal year 2011 budget request for the DoD is $708 billion. *United States Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request*, available from *comptroller.defense.gov/defbudget/fy2011/FY2011_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf*.

4. *Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, April 12, 2001 (as amended through 31 October 2009), available from *www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf*.

5. Stanley McChrystal, "Commander's Initial Assessment,"August 30, 2009, available from *media. washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf*.

6. *U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) No. 3-24* and *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency*, December 2006, Introduction and para. 1-113.

7. *Ibid*, para. 6-1.

8. *Ibid.*, para. 1-67, states that previous conflict planners assumed that a ratio of 10 or 15 counterinsurgents per insurgent was required to prevail; currently a ratio of 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1,000 civilian residents is recommended.

9. *Ibid.*, chap. 8.

10. For example, a gallon of fuel for counterinsurgents in Afghanistan costs as much as $400.00 because of transportation related costs. Roxana Tiron, "$400 per gallon gas to drive debate over cost of war in Afghanistan," *The Hill*, October 15, 2009, available from *thehill.com/homenews/administration/63407-400gallon-gas-another-cost-of-war-in-afghanistan*.

11. JP 1-02, p. 130.

12. See, for example, "U.S. Drone Attack Kills 7 in Pakistan's Wazirastan," *Reuters*, January 17, 2010; and "Al-Qaeda Somalia Suspect 'Killed,'" BBC News, September 15, 2009; available from *www.alertnet.org/ thenews/newsdesk/SGE60G00V.htm and news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8254957.stm*.

13. JP 1-02, p. 266.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

15. *National Guard Homeland Defense White Paper: September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and Beyond*, October 11, 2005, available from *www.arng.army.mil/News/publications/Publications/HLD%20White%20Paper_ 11OCT05_Final_Version.pdf*; and Donna Miles, "Military Prepares to Support Super Bowl XLIV," American Forces Press Service, February 5, 2010, available from *www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=57894*.

16. See David Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," *Anthropoetics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2002, regarding the overwhelming failure of terrorist organizations since 1901; and Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2002, pp. 42-43.

17. Timothy Hoyt, "'Like a Phoenix from the Ashes: The IRA as a multi-generational movement, and its relevance for the War on Terror," paper presented at the Interdisciplinary Conference on War, Virtual War, and Society, Budapest, Hungary, May 2008, p. 3; and James Kiras, "Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency," in *Understanding Modern Warfare*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 224, **168**.

18. Kiras, pp. 224, **165**; and Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in Sue Mahan and Pamela Griset, *Terrorism in Perspective*, 2d Ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008, p. 26.

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21. Crenshaw, pp. 27, 29-30.

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23. Sun Tzu, *Sun Tzu on the Art of War*, Lionel Giles, trans., Taipei, Taiwan: Literature House, 1964, p. 12. Sun Tzu implicitly admonishes a nation to minimize time spent at war. A corollary to this proposition is that if a nation is not able to control the time it spends at war, it should endeavor to minimize its costs in fighting the war.

24. Michael Howard, "What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1, 2002, pp. 8, 12.

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27. September 24, 2009, speech, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. A copy of General Petraeus' slide discussing the elements al Qaeda in Iraq needed to function is on file with the author.

28. Sun Tzu, p. 12.

29. President Barrack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," White House Office of the Press Secretary, December 1, 2009, p. 7.

30. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1998 Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 243-246.

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33. Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," and Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, *The $3 Trillion War: the True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*, New York: Norton, 2008. President Obama stated that the cost for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq through January, 2009 was an estimated $1 trillion. Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winning economist, and Bilmes believe the total U.S. cost in the Iraq war alone is about $3 trillion.

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able from *www.uscc.gov/researchpapers/2009/NorthropGrumman_PRC_Cyber_Paper_FINAL_Approved%20 Report _16Oct2009.pdf*

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40. "Who is Ayman al-Zawahri? Egyptian Doctor is bin Laden's No. 2, al-Qaida's Chief Ideologist," MSNBC March 25, 2004, available from *www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4555901/.*

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42. *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?* Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, September 1999, pp. 48-50, 119, available from *www.loc.gov/rr/frd/ pdf-files/Soc_Psych_of_Terrorism.pdf.* Perhaps the background of the typical terrorist senior leader reflects Maslow's hierarchy; those who must focus their efforts on personal or family survival lack the ability or need to focus on more ethereal matters such as destroying or building civilizations.

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74. *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 169. Improvements in homeland security since 9/11 may have made many larger scale attacks more difficult and expensive. Small scale attacks, particularly by self-selected, self-radicalized, and self-directed individual terrorists are inexpensive to conduct and difficult to detect or prevent.

75. Denying al Qaeda a safe haven was a primary justification for the war in Afghanistan as announced by both President Bush and President Obama.

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79. "The Failed State Index 2009," *Foreign Policy and The Fund for Peace*, available from *www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/the_2009_failed_states_index*.

80. Robert Bunker and John Sullivan, "Cartel Evolution Revisited: Third Phase Cartel Potentials and Alternative Futures in Mexico," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2010, pp. 30, 44-45.

81. Ken Menkhaus, "Quasi-States, Nation-Building, and Terrorist Safe Havens," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2, 2003, available from *dev.hil.unb.ca/Texts/JCS/Fall03/menkhaus.htm*. Failed states are in-

hospitable for al Qaeda for many of the same reasons that failed states are inhospitable for legitimate organizations. Additionally, failed states have the twin flaws, from al Qaeda's perspective, of lacking a diverse group of foreigners with which to blend and the lack of a sovereign government which may impede U.S. counterterrorism operations. For detailed first-hand accounts of al Qaeda's difficulties in Somalia, see "Al-Qa'ida's Mis-Adventures in the Horn of Africa," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, available from *www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII_pdf.asp*.

82. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power*, p. 131.

83. Senior leaders, discussed at the beginning of this section, could also be termed "combat service support".

84. Al Qaeda had some difficulties bringing all its chosen operatives to the United States for the 9/11 attacks under the comparatively lax security measures in place before 9/11, and these operatives had some difficulty functioning despite some familiarity with Western ways of life and proficiency in Arabic and some English. See *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 215-249.

85. Estimates vary greatly regarding the percentage of the Afghan population that is illiterate. Admiral Mullen testified that 10 percent or less of the Afghan military and police are literate. Mike Mullen, Senate Armed Services Committee Reconfirmation Hearing, September 15, 2009, available from *www.jcs.mil/speech.aspx?ID=1244*. According to the Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book," in 2009, 28 percent of the adult population was literate, available from *https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html*.

86. There appear to be no credible published reports that Iraq possessed meaningful cyber-attack capabilities, and the absence of a successful attack on the United States or its coalition partners as they invaded Iraq also evidences the absence of meaningful Iraqi cyber-attack capability.

87. "Pakistan Test-Fires Pair of Ballistic Missiles," CNN, May 8, 2010, available from *www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/05/08/pakistan.missiles/index.html*.

88. Riedel, pp. 24-25.

89. Shaun Gregory, "The ISI and the War on Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 30, No. 12, 2007, p. 1013, available from *pdfserve.informaworld.com/14583_731197519_783550161.pdf*; Riedel, pp. 24, 38.

90. Major General Randy Manner, Deputy Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, speech at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, "Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Role of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency," November 17, 2009. Major General Manner stated that a variety of safeguards exist to prevent terrorists from detonating a Pakistani nuclear weapon if they gained access to it. Moreover, stealing a nuclear weapon for later use after working through the steps necessary to detonate it would require the using heavy equipment for multiple days to remove the weapon.

91. "US Pulls Out of Saudi Arabia," BBC News, April 29, 2003, available from *news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/ 2984547.stm*.

92. A belief that the United States was engaged in a crusade against Muslim lands was at the core of the insurgency in Anbar, uniting local insurgents with al Qaeda fighters. See John McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2009, p. 43.

93. See, for example, Peter Baker, "Could Afghanistan Become Obama's Vietnam?" *New York Times*, August 22, 2009, available from *www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/weekinreview/23baker.html*; and Thomas Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Obama's Indecent Interval," *Foreign Policy*, December 10, 2009, available from *www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/12/10/sorry_obama_afghanistans_your_vietnam*.

94. See, for example, "Spain PM Orders Iraq Troops Home," BBC News, April 18, 2004, available from *news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3637523.stm*.

95. Michael Howard, "What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1, 2002, pp. 8-9.

96. According to Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone, An Analysis of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004-2010," February 24, 2010, the United States conducted 51 drone strikes in Pakistan in 2009, compared to 45 drone strikes in Pakistan during the entire George W. Bush administration, available from *counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/bergentiedemann2.pdf*. See also David Cloud, "CIA Drones Have Broader List of Targets," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 2010, available from *articles.latimes.com/2010/may/05/world/la-fg-drone-targets-20100506/4*.

97. A large part of the difficulty of comparing the number of innocent civilians COIN and counterterrorism kill arises from the difficulty of determining who among the dead was an innocent civilian and who was an enemy. Wildly different statistics exist for the same events depending upon who is keeping score. See, for example, Bergen and Tiedemann.

98. According to Cloud's article, President Obama has "streamlined" drone targeting in Pakistan by delegating approval authority down to the CIA Director.

99. General Charles Krulak, originated the phrase "strategic corporal" in "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine*, January 1999. Krulak noted that in modern warfare, militaries and national governments would be judged based on decisions by very junior leaders.

100. See Keith Johnson, "U.S. Defends Legality of Killing with Drones," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 2010, available from *online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303450704575159864237752180.html*. See also Lolita Baldor, "Legal Questions Raised Over CIA Drone Strikes," Associated Press, April 28, 2010, available from *www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iIH1sH8Ahs0qtHK3DU1kbTWctZHwD9FCASOG0*.

101. Nat Hentof, "Nothing Funny About Predator Drones," May 13, 2010, available from *www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=11806*.

102. George Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, Winter 1985, pp. 205, 214.

103. "Allegations Mount in Death of Hamas Official," PBS News Hour, February 17, 2010, available from *www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june10/hamas2_02-17.html*.

104. Cloud.

105. Riedel, pp. 24-25.

106. Kiras, p. 224, **172**.

107. The estimated cost per service member per year in Afghanistan, the highest cost theater for the United States, is about $1 million. Christopher Drew, "High Costs Weigh on Troop Debate for Afghan War," *New York Times*, November 14, 2009, available from *www.nytimes.com/2009/11/15/us/politics/15cost.html*.

108. 18 U.S. Code section 1385.

109. Of course, political considerations may also dictate the expenditure of large sums for military hardware systems which the DoD does not believe are militarily beneficial relative to their cost.

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