



## 1.6 AL QAEDA'S INTERAGENCY

Bruce Hoffman

### INTRODUCTION

Not only is it always a tremendous honor and tremendously beneficial because of the questions and the interaction of this symposium, but what I like most about coming here to speak is that I am forced to do something new: think about what the major trends are and in what new directions to go. I will cover the gamut of terrorism but also discuss how this relates to the interagency process and our response to terrorism.

---

*“What is al Qaeda’s interagency process? What is their networking? How are they operating?”*

---

So, I will begin with al Qaeda, not least because I feel almost no inhibitions in opining or waxing in various directions about a terrorist organization, but I have to say I feel far more intimidated about attempting to prescribe solutions to the interagency process.

---

*Professor Bruce Hoffman is a tenured professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University’s Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. Professor Hoffman previously held the Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency at the RAND Corporation and was also Director of RAND’s Washington, D.C. Office. Professor Hoffman was the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. In November 1994, the Director of Central Intelligence awarded Professor Hoffman the United States Intelligence Community Seal Medallion. He holds degrees in government, history, and international relations and received his doctorate from Oxford University.*

---

In that respect, I want to address the following question: What is al Qaeda's interagency process? What is their networking? How are they operating? Seven and a half years into this struggle, we still face an enormous challenge. Sometimes, we want to ask, is al Qaeda succeeding or not, and what is their own brand strategy?

## AL QAEDA'S INTERAGENCY

Today's al Qaeda universe comprises a movement that has been able to build and exploit seven major networks in as many theaters of operation geographically, that is able to function on four different operational levels, and that, in turn, employs six core subordinate strategies in hopes of achieving its ends. The networks or the theaters are fairly obvious:

The senior core leadership is one key network or hub, which is now located or situated in the second network or theater of operations: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and particularly the lawless border that separates those two countries.

It has a network—although it wants us to say a failing one—in Iraq, that is “al Qaeda in Iraq.”

It has a rather more robust one in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa, which is an increasing threat, in fact, not least because of Ayman al-Zawahiri's statement regarding the Sudan.

It has a functioning network—an increasingly threatening one—in East Africa, particularly in Somalia.

It has a growing network—unfortunately, as The New York Times reported, that has had recent successes—in Saudi Arabia:

*“... Saudi Arabia's main terrorist threat appears to come from Yemen, where a number of Saudi extremists have regrouped in that country's mountainous, tribal hinterland. They have struck there repeatedly in the past year and have declared a goal of using Yemen as a base for attacks against Saudi Arabia. The border with Yemen is long and porous, and militants appear to have no trouble crossing it at will.”*

It is positive that the Saudis have displaced the threat to a certain extent to Yemen where al Qaeda is becoming stronger.

Finally, it has the al Qaeda network in Europe, which it continues to seek to exploit.

---

*“. . . today there are many al Qaedas, all of which have very different capabilities and pose individually unique challenges.”*

---

What we see is that al Qaeda’s sustainability or success has been predicated on the fact that it has been able to create what really amounts to a network transactional movement, rather than a single monolithic entity. Consequently, today there are many al Qaedas, all of which have very different capabilities and pose individually unique challenges. What this means for us is that our approach in the struggle cannot have a one-size-fits-all-strategy; we have to recognize the diversity of al Qaeda.

#### **FOUR OPERATIONAL LEVELS**

On an operational level, it functions—as I think it always has—extremely comfortably on at least four different levels that are used sometimes sequentially, sometimes individually, and sometimes in mixture.

At the top is al Qaeda central. These are the operations that are actually conceived, plotted, planned, and implemented by the remaining al Qaeda senior leadership in the Afghan/Pakistan Theater. These include the spectacular al Qaeda attacks on 9/11, the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, the 1998 embassy bombings, and so on.

The next level down contains the al Qaeda affiliates and associates. These are the like-minded terrorists and insurgent groups worldwide that function independently but nonetheless have bought into al Qaeda’s ideology, support al Qaeda’s overall aims, and act in concert, sometimes at the behest, of al Qaeda. These include al Qaeda in Iraq, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, but

also groups that do not have the al Qaeda moniker—Lashkar-e-Taiba, for example, the group responsible for the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, and the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan, which has been increasingly consequential as well in the Pakistan area.

Another level down is what I call the al Qaeda locals. These are, in essence, al Qaeda sleeper cells or operations units that have received training from al Qaeda and may have received some general guidance, but mostly are left to be opportunistic, to function independently in support of al Qaeda's aims but nonetheless not necessarily in top-down, al Qaeda centrally directed operations. These include many of the al Qaeda cells that have been uncovered in Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, individuals like Ahmed Ressam, the Millennium Bomber from 1999, who was clearly trained in an al Qaeda camp, given very open-ended operational and targeting instructions and a minimal amount of finance, and left basically on his own to recruit his own terrorist cell in North America and to carry out his attacks—still connected to al Qaeda, but not the top-down specifically directed operation such as we saw on 9/11.

Finally, we get to the lowest level, and one that I think in recent years has received disproportionate attention and actually still poses the least threat but has to be reckoned with or taken account of; that is the al Qaeda network of independent cells or even individuals who have been inspired, motivated, animated, and radicalized by al Qaeda propaganda and the Internet, but these are individuals who have no direct contact with al Qaeda, have never trained in an al Qaeda camp, may never have met a terrorist in their lives, but nonetheless have taken up the mantle of struggle merely because of al Qaeda's influence or motivation.

A prime example of this is the Hofstad Network of radical extremists in the Netherlands, a member of which, Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered the Dutch filmmaker Theodoor "Theo" van Gogh in November 2004. They had absolutely no direct connection to al Qaeda, but certainly he and the fellow members of the cell were motivated and inspired by al Qaeda.

## AL QAEDA'S STRATEGIES

What about al Qaeda's strategies? Al Qaeda employs six core strategies to achieve its aims. This is what makes countering them so difficult for us. Its first strategy, very clearly, is to overwhelm, distract, and exhaust us. Distracting our attention and focus is one reason why these low level al Qaeda operatives that have no connection with the organization are nonetheless so valuable to the movement because they are the low hanging fruit that consume the time and the attention of intelligence, security services, and law enforcement and what al Qaeda hopes will distract us from the main attack.

---

*“Particularly at a time of profound global economic travail and upheaval, al Qaeda thinks that their strategy of distraction, of overwhelming, enervating, and exhausting us, will pay bigger dividends than at any time in the past.”*

---

Also, by operating across seven different theaters or with seven different networks, al Qaeda similarly hopes to distract, enervate, and dissipate our abilities by having to keep track of this international movement. Particularly at a time of profound global economic travail and upheaval, al Qaeda thinks that their strategy of distraction, of overwhelming, enervating, and exhausting us, will pay bigger dividends than at any time in the past.

This has been a consistent element of al Qaeda's narrative since at least the summer of 2002, a narrative in which al Qaeda has argued that the U.S. and its allies will not be defeated in conventional military terms but rather bankrupted, economically exhausted, and therefore will have its morale sapped by this unrelenting terrorist and insurgent campaign directed against it. In al Qaeda's historical narrative, this is not something that they think is beyond the realm of possibility; they think it is quite possible, in their view, history repeats itself. They make the point that who would have imagined that in the 1980s a grab bag group of Mujahideen, dedicated fighters in Afghanistan, could have defeated the Red Army and then set in motion the chain of events

that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of Communism. In their narrative, they say the U.S. is at that same precipitous economic point that the Soviet Union was. Just as no one in the 1980s understood how bankrupt the Soviet economy was, how weakened it was, al Qaeda's ideologues argue that is the same position the U.S. is in today, and it is the force of the jihadists and the onslaught of their continued campaign that they believe will also eventually destroy us.

In recent years we have witnessed—even in bin Laden's October 2004 address just before our Presidential elections—how bin Laden and al Qaeda constantly play on the economic card and see every economic downturn, every travail that the U.S. faces, as proof that they are succeeding and we are losing. I am not saying that this thinking is linked to reality, but of course propaganda does not have to be truthful as long as it is believed. At least, in their followers' eyes, they have a good back-story. So that is their first strategy.

Their second strategy is to seek to create, foster, and encourage fissures and divisions within the Alliance or raid against it, particularly on the ground in places like Iraq and especially in Afghanistan. This involves the selective targeting in both operational theaters against those Coalition partners, especially NATO allies in Afghanistan whom al Qaeda and its allies consider our weakest links. Very early in the campaign in Iraq, for example, 17 Spanish Gordeeva civil intelligence specialists were targeted. The efforts as we see in Afghanistan—particularly targeting German, Dutch, Canadian, and British allies with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for suicide attacks—is part of al Qaeda's effort to present the image of the U.S. as being isolated in the world, waging a war against Islam, and engaging in the occupation of Muslim lands.

Obviously, this played a role in the 2004 bombings in Madrid, which resulted in the Spanish decision to remove its troops from Iraq. Certainly the targeting of the United Kingdom is designed to influence public opinion and in turn apply pressure on the government to withdraw its forces first from Iraq and now from Afghanistan. You see this with the attacks on the Netherland's

forces, for example, in Afghanistan where the Netherland's government has said that it first deployed to Afghanistan to do nation building, not counterinsurgency, and has recently been saying consistently it is not going to renew its commitment after 2010.

Third, we see an al Qaeda strategy that also conducts local campaigns of subversion and destabilization in key operational theaters. This is interesting in its own right; subversion is a word that has fallen out of our lexicon in the 21st Century, compared to the Cold War era when Soviet or communist subversion was a main focus and a main concern of ours.

I would argue that we see al Qaeda in key countries, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yeman, and Algeria, attempting behind the scenes to use local groups to advance al Qaeda's aims: destabilize existing societies; undermine popular confidence in government's ability to maintain security, law, and order; undermine confidence of the government's ability to protect the population from suicide and other forms of terrorist attack; and therefore serendipitously create weakening or failed states.

---

*"Today, . . . al Qaeda plays a distinctively low-key role; it acts as a force multiplier, improving the capabilities of local terrorist or insurgent groups by the provision of fighters who are embedded in those groups, much as our forces are embedded with national Iraqi and Afghani police and military forces, providing training, weapons, and technological assistance, perhaps most effectively in the realm of information operations."*

---

For example, today in Pakistan and Afghanistan, you do not see al Qaeda front and center, operating as it did in the 1990s when it was very prominent and active—certainly in the Sudan, but even more so in Afghanistan—in forming a state within a state or the power behind the Taliban. Today, in these key theaters, al Qaeda plays a distinctively low-key role; it acts as a force multiplier, improving the capabilities of local terrorist or insurgent groups by the provision of fighters who are embedded in

those groups, much as our forces are embedded with national Iraqi and Afghani police and military forces, providing training, weapons, and technological assistance, perhaps most effectively in the realm of information operations. You just have to look at the Taliban on both sides of the border in Pakistan and Afghanistan: A decade ago they were technophobes; they were Luddites, in the Stone Ages. Now, we see both Talibans with online news magazines, exactly as were pioneered by al Qaeda at the beginning of the century, with very slick public relations operations that are often first in the media with their version of Predator unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks—divorced from reality and truth—but being first in the press means that they are able to occupy a place and get their version out ahead of that, for instance, of CENTCOM. We see groups that never had any experience with the Internet now developing very effective communication securities, married with other media activity, such as the subversion or influence of local newspapers, in their favor.

Fourth, we have the addition of capabilities of al Qaeda allies in each of the above theaters and elsewhere. Again, we see al Qaeda working behind the scenes as this force multiplier and building up the capabilities of their local allies to make them more effective in countering the established governments.

Fifth, al Qaeda continues to seek access to citizens of what it defines as enemy countries—i.e., countries of the West or allies of the U.S., who possess, in their view, clean passports. In other words, their focus is on European nationals, especially converts who could enter the U.S. under the visa waiver program, who do not have Muslim-sounding names, who have passports issued in their birth names, and who are from countries that do not fit our stereotype of the al Qaeda operative: the young Arab male from the Arabian peninsula.

Even as we see recently in the roughly 20 or so Somalia American youths that have left the Minneapolis/St. Paul area to go to Somalia to train and to fight with an al Qaeda clone there named Al Shahab, you see even the first inroads that al Qaeda, or at least an al Qaeda affiliate, has made in the U.S. Just prior to the inauguration in January, the most serious, or the most credible,

threat that American law enforcement and intelligence agencies were concerned with came precisely from these youths who they believe have American passports and could have been deployed back to the U.S. on terrorist operations.

Sixth, there is an al Qaeda whose strategy is as opportunistic as it is instrumental. This is a movement that has always shown itself capable not only of planning the multi-year detailed spectacular terrorist operations but is also able to take advantage and exploit opportunities that present themselves. You have a movement that is constantly monitoring its enemies, attempting to identify gaps or vulnerabilities in its defenses, and then taking advantage of those gaps and vulnerabilities and moving in for the attack.

We know for a fact that al Qaeda Al Shahab, its media arm, is not only an output communications vehicle disseminating propaganda but also serves an input function. In other words, it gathers strategic intelligence through cultural information, attempts to find out exactly what the concerns of its enemy populations are, and crafts attacks to take advantage of them. So, for instance, we know for a fact that al Qaeda has downloaded the Web sites of virtually every think tank in the U.S. to understand our conducted studies, affected vulnerabilities, counterterrorism strategy, and counterinsurgency.

We know that al Qaeda routinely monitors CSPAN to closely watch congressional hearings, which contain a mother lode of information for them, because a typical congressional hearing has a panel of senior representatives of key agencies charged with the war on terrorism that in many cases are subjected to withering questioning by members of Congress. Then they have a subsequent panel of academic or independent experts that opine or offer views, and this provides a treasure trove of information for al Qaeda to shape what they believe are the vulnerabilities of their targeted societies.

Therefore, we see that across the board al Qaeda is arguably implementing, if not achieving, its objectives. They fundamentally believe in the inevitability of their divinely ordained struggle and the power of their historical narrative. As I said earlier,

they already believe that they were instrumental in defeating one superpower and are confident that they can defeat another.

## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

What does this tell us about al Qaeda's mindset and determination? First, last August marked an enormously important milestone in al Qaeda's history, its 20th anniversary. As a terrorist group, you do not get to be 20 years old unless you have an enormous capacity for adaptation and change that can constantly understand and monitor the countermeasures being used against it and can adjust to even the most consequential countermeasures to overcome or to obviate them. Al Qaeda thus has survived largely because it is a learning organization that has had this capacity to adapt, adjust, and overcome even the most formidable countermeasures directed against it. In this respect, al Qaeda is almost like the archetypal shark in the water that only can move forward to survive

Unfortunately, this is part of a broader pattern of terrorism that we see today. David C. Rapoport, University of California, Los Angeles Professor Emeritus of Political Science and distinguished scholar of terrorism, conducted a study of Cold War era terrorist groups from 1968 to 1990. What he found in his 1992 study is that 90 percent of all terrorist groups during the Cold War era did not last more than a year. In the 20th Century, terrorism was a very difficult vocation for an organization; the survival rate was not high; 90 percent lasted less than a year and of the 10 percent that survived more than a year, half of those were gone within five years.

Audrey Kurth Cronin at the National Defense University, whose book is coming out this summer, has updated Professor Rapoport's statistics. What she found—in a much smaller sample of time but it is nonetheless a very disconcerting finding—is that from 2000 to 2008, the average life span of terrorist groups in the 21st Century is roughly five to 10 years. Terrorist groups today last five to ten times longer than their Cold War predecessors and show a degree of resiliency and a capacity for survival that did not previously exist. Consequently, what this suggests is that terrorism

today is becoming more difficult, more complex, and more time consuming to counter than ever before.

## COUNTERING AL QAEDA

How do we counter al Qaeda effectively? What are the means that we can use against them? I think the main question, the main challenge we face from an interagency perspective, rests in breaking the cycle of recruitment and regeneration that sustains al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist movements. In so fluid an environment as we see today—with terrorist groups constantly changing and adapting, adjusting to overcome our countermeasures—our strategy has to change and adapt as well.

At the foundation, I think a dynamic and flexible approach is the recognition that successfully countering terrorism, as well as insurgency, is not exclusively a military endeavor but also involves fundamentally parallel political, social, economic, and ideological activities. What we therefore require is a more integrated systems approach to a complex problem that is at once operational, durable, evolutionary, and illusive in character.

In sum, we need to be able to leverage and exploit networks with the ease and facility that our enemies routinely do. Thus, in addition to the traditional hard military skills of kill and capture, destruction and attrition—and we absolutely must continue to kill and capture terrorists (it is not my message that we ease up on that accelerator)—we have to emphasize equally the importance of the “soft skills,” such as negotiation, psychology, social and cultural anthropology, foreign area studies, complexity theory, and systems management.

---

*“What we therefore require is a more integrated systems approach to a complex problem that is at once operational, durable, evolutionary, and illusive in character.”*

---

We have to be able to operate effectively in an ambiguous and dynamic environment in which we see our regular adversaries functioning. Above all, this requires strengthened interagency

coordination, cooperation, and deconfliction. I think these are key elements to enhancing interagency operations, which have enormously improved in the past seven years. (I say this humbly because as I said, I have no inhibitions about opining about terrorist groups; I am on much thinner ice when it comes to discussing the U.S. government and its organization.) The old mantra that the interagency system is broken does not apply today; the interagency has been replaced by a far more efficient and effective system, but it is a system that—as our adversaries are constantly changing, adapting, and strengthening their capabilities—has to similarly be replenished.

The key elements to enhance interagency operations focus on the human factor and encourage effective interpersonal relationships; this entails building bridges across agencies and creating institutional incentives to blend diplomacy, justice, economic development, finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military capabilities in a holistic struggle through individual and interagency relationships. It also entails using creative processes to ensure maximum efficiency instituting viable comprehensive mechanisms to achieve better integration in the formulating, implementing, and executing policy. These measures must include the power to disentangle lines of authority, deconflict overlapping responsibilities, improve communal abilities, prioritize and synchronize institutional operations, and build both institutional memory and human skill sets. These combinations of knowledge and ability can enable organizations to reach across bureaucratic territorial divides and share resources to defeat terrorists and insurgencies and to identify and counter emerging threats in a timely and more efficacious manner.

To conclude, how do we effectively counter al Qaeda and manage the jihad threat? First and foremost, we pursue the policy we have been following, a divide-and-conquer strategy that seeks to isolate the most radical, violent extremists from the more moderate elements. Second, this entails constant efforts that are directed toward watering down the al Qaeda brand, which after all is perhaps one of the most recognizable brands in the world today.

Third, we continue similarly constant and unyielding efforts to counter al Qaeda recruitment by communicating more effectively with the core demographic from which it draws its strength—in essence, young people. Fourth, continue to undertake and implement efforts to isolate al Qaeda intellectually and theologically. Fifth, continue efforts to counter al Qaeda finances, which have to be similarly unyielding and unrelenting. Finally, develop and enhance the support of local initiatives in concert with host nations to address the specific root causes that give life to al Qaeda and enable it to continue to replenish its ranks. This strategy assumes that we cannot have a one-size-fits-all solution but rather have to tailor local and national solutions to countering this problem.

In conclusion, what is needed to deal with these new threats and challenges is a capability to anchor changes that will more effectively close the gap between detecting a regular enemy activity and defeating it. The key will be to harness the overwhelming kinetic force at our military's disposal as part of a comprehensive vision to transform capabilities to deal with irregular and unconventional threats while simultaneously utilizing all instruments of our national power in a concerted effort.

## Q&A SESSION WITH BRUCE HOFFMAN

**Q:** *What is al Qaeda's struggle for?*

**Bruce Hoffman** – What is al Qaeda's struggle for? Actually, that is an excellent question. This, I think, is also part of al Qaeda's strength: al Qaeda's idea—its objective—depends on who you are and what you are; and that is what their struggle is. They have tried to appeal to as diverse and broad a constituency as possible. That is the only way that they can encourage, replenish, and sustain this variety of networks.


I think if you reduce it now to its bare minimum, one can say that the purpose of al Qaeda's struggle is broadly to reestablish the Caliphate and to recreate super or transnational Islamic rule as it existed in the 7th Century, extending from Andalusian Spain

across North Africa through the Middle East and Central Asia and South Asia to Southeast Asia.

That is their broad aim. I think they tailor their local aims, depending on local conditions, sensibilities, and needs. This is what has been so difficult for us in countering the al Qaeda narrative; it is not one narrative, and it has to be tailored to the individual circumstances. Because from al Qaeda's point of view, people fighting in North Africa, for instance, may have very different tactical interests certainly than those fighting in East Africa or in South Asia.

Al Qaeda from the start always wanted to be a big ten. That was part of bin Laden's vision to create this unified force against the "Crusaders," just as his 1998 fatwa stated. To make that effective, however, it had to have very flexible and very malleable long-term aims to bring in as many different groups as possible and to have the broadest appeal. That has been al Qaeda's success; it has the big picture aim, but it also caters very effectively to local concerns and local aims.

*Q: Thank you professor. Words count. The Founding Fathers of our country were patriots and heroes from our perspective, but the British Empire called them traitors and turncoats. Today, one man's stimulus program to invest in the future of America is another man's socialism. From a social constructive point of view, in other words, words count. I do not know if you have seen the recent report that apparently we are no longer referring to the Global War on Terrorism or the Long War; we are referring to Overseas Contingency Operations. What does that mean? What is the import, from your perspective, of a change in language, which I think can be very powerful?*

 **Bruce Hoffman** – That is an excellent question. It raises a very important point, and you are absolutely right that words count. On the one hand, the terminology, the phraseology, Global War on Terrorism, has outlived its usefulness. I am not saying it was inappropriate in 2001, 2002, or even 2003, but I think in recent years, unfortunately—and just as you said, words count—even though Global War on Terror means one thing to us, in many

quarters in the world, it is been interpreted not as a global war on terrorism but a global war on Islam.

We need a new concept or construct. Frankly I always thought the Long War was exactly the most important one because it demonstrated that this is not a conventional type of conflict that is going to end—as President Bush said, as President Obama has said, as many people have remarked—it is not going to end with the fate of a single enemy in a single place that results in some terms of armistice and an end to the struggle.

I think the pushback on the term, the Long War—which we saw in the Bush Administration as well at the end of his term in office, so it is not completely new—came from the concern, which actually is a very genuine one, about the American public's ability to sustain this struggle. We already have a well spring of sentiment in this country that says, "Seven and a half years and there has not been a major attack from al Qaeda." I am not saying that this is my opinion, but these are the arguments that you hear.

Al Qaeda posed a threat that was inflated for political reasons by the previous administration; the time of worry has passed, and we can somewhat relax our security, especially at a time of very hard choices being made over budgets, that we can perhaps begin to shift money from security to other needs. In my view, this is not exactly learning a lesson from 9/11 when we underestimated al Qaeda and its power prior to those attacks—and, of course, we are reaping the consequences because it is exactly when we lower our guard that al Qaeda will be poised to strike, and the damage will be that much greater.

All that still does not answer your question, though. To me, "Overseas Contingencies" is so vague, almost to be meaningless, and I think it is worse than the Long War because it deemphasizes or diminishes a struggle that is enormously consequential, even if it is not a conventional war and also leaves this as open ended.

I have always thought—although people disagree with this as well—that a phrase like Global Counterinsurgency would have been a much better one to use once Global War on Terrorism

outlived its usefulness. The only reason I say that is because this is actually something that I mentioned here two years ago: Counterinsurgency by definition involves parallel political, economic, and social initiatives as well as the military ones. By its definition, counterinsurgency is not only the kinetics but the nonkinetics, and in my view, that would be a much clearer depiction than the sort of amorphous concept of Overseas Contingencies. I think it is a huge mistake.

**Q:** *How do you attack them intellectually and theologically and at the same time not isolate the rest of the Muslim world or particularly the Muslims in the U.S.?*

**Bruce Hoffman** –The question, which is actually an excellent one as well, is how do we counter al Qaeda effectively theologically and ideologically without really undermining precisely the moderate Muslim voices that we need to strengthen. First, and this was actually the subject of the lecture I gave two years ago here. I think we have to better know the enemy than we do now.

Last year, for instance, Congresswoman Jane Harman introduced legislation to have a Commission on Radicalization that would bring together the best minds in the U.S. to assess precisely how al Qaeda radicalizes and uses the power of theology and religion to effectively reach its supporters. Although it was successful in the House vote, it did not make it past the Senate and also generated widespread condemnation and opprobrium that this was some form of thought control that the U.S. government was attempting to control the Internet. It got out of control.

We need to establish that knowledge base. The one important step forward is the Washington Institute for Middle East Policy (Matt Levitt is here and will speak later today) just released a very prescient and incisive report on the whole process of radicalization that provides one of the foundations from which we can build. The key is a much more detailed understanding and knowledge of how this is being used.

Then, of course, combined with a very light touch by strengthening moderate opinion, we cannot put them in the cross hairs of the terrorist threat. Countries like Saudi Arabia, in

particular, and also Singapore, have models of rehabilitation of terrorists that have provided some insight into how theologians and clerics interact to help influence and rehabilitate terrorists, providing us with another foundation. These are the essential building blocks that even after seven and a half years of the War on Terrorism we have only started to address. This radicalization report was long overdue, and it is to the credit of the Washington Institute that they embarked on it, which we should have been doing some years ago when moving out ahead of this.

**Q:** *I had first a comment and then a question. The comment regards using the term Global Insurgency. My biggest problem with that is that there is an implication of a global government and an insurgency against it. It seems that unless we are willing to deal with the implications of either the U.S. being a global government or the UN, there is a link missing there that we would have to deal with. I thought that you had a really good point regarding how we need a systems approach, but my biggest challenge with that is how do we have a systems approach in a linear focused society, particularly when money and resources are disseminated based on quantitative methodology?*

**Bruce Hoffman** – That is a very good question and actually an excellent point about insurgency. When I conceptualize insurgency, I think I may look at it differently than you do, perhaps very differently than others: The core of insurgency is mass mobilization. That is what separates insurgency from gorilla warfare, which is the hard tactics, or from terrorism, which is often specific acts designed to elicit fear and anxiety and therefore compliance at the terrorists' hands.

If insurgency is really about mass mobilization, and about the propaganda and the radicalization side of it as well as the fighting side, that is exactly what we face throughout the world. When you have the seven theaters, I do not want to portray al Qaeda as this monolithic, bin Laden is something like a satyr that is able to push buttons and pull levers that illicit responses. It is a very loose network; that is the point. It is very much predicated on mobilization, and that is the heart of it.

In terms of the systems approach, you have put your finger on the pulse of what the problem is: we live and function as a society with very short time horizons; we live, exist, and breathe fiscal plans; and we expect results within a two-year Congressional election cycle, but especially within a four-year Presidential administration. We are constantly looking to identify metrics of effectiveness and success.

I do not have a good answer except to say that in some of these initiatives, there may not be tangible metrics of success or effectiveness. We may have to understand that the things we are doing now may not pay dividends for years to come. In fact, there may not be palpable identification that we have accomplished something, but we need to realize that these measures will be equally or perhaps even more enormously effective in the long run.

What I mean by that, to move from a level of abstraction to specificity, is that—this is why your question I think is so important—right now our entire orientation in fighting the War on Terrorism is directed against the most immediate threat against us, which it absolutely has to be. There is no doubt we have to kill and capture those who we know are out there attempting to kill and harm us.

One of the problems we face is an inability to look beyond the current generation of terrorists. That does not even mean that next generation of terrorists or insurgents; they have already been radicalized and indoctrinated, and they are training an army now. We are already looking, and we are fighting the next generation; this is going on at least another decade.

The most effective policy that I am talking about from a systems approach would look to the generation beyond the next, exactly to the children growing up in North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, precisely those countries of the world that already have a disproportionate population of people under 17 years of age. A country like Jordan, for example, has a growing population. Right now, it is a third of people under 17 years of age, compared to the U.S. or Europe, which do not have that demographic problem.

You can see that the same grievances “root causes” that al Qaeda uses in each of its theaters of operations now could only become more appealing to people growing up in societies where there are no meaningful employment and educational opportunities, in societies that are even going to have difficulty feeding these young populations.

That is why you should not be so quick to do away with the Long War because whatever problems we have seen during the first decade on the War on Terrorism can only likely be magnified in the next decade, not only because of economic problems we face now but also because of the demographics. That is part of al Qaeda’s strength; that is exactly the demographic that it seeks to appeal to. That is why there are at least 5,000 terrorist and insurgent Web sites throughout the world, because those are the people they are trying to reach and that is where the struggle will be. A measure of our effectiveness against that may not be seen for another ten years, but that is something that we have to get over.

## REFERENCE

1. Robert F. Worth, “Saudis Retool to Root Out Terrorist Risk,” *The New York Times*, 21 March 2009: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/world/middleeast/22saudi.html>.

