



AFTERTHOUGHTS

John McLaughlin

By any measure, this has been an extraordinary conference. For starters, it's the first time analysts, strategists, and technologists have come together on this subject, and the synergy among them has been a joy to watch. We may not have gotten everything done here that we wanted to get done, but it was an excellent start, and I think it provides a platform for a lot of future work. If you think about it, this has also been an extraordinary conference in terms of its substantive scope. We've gone from a 30,000-ft perspective, talking about sophisticated anthropological concepts, right down to street level when we discussed things like suicide belts and curbside IEDs.

So we've really covered an incredible spectrum of issues. As you reflect on this, you're likely to be astonished at what you're taking away. This is probably just the right time to do this in our national history. In fact, it's regrettable that we didn't have C-Span cameras here so that some of the things we've discussed could be shared with the American public more broadly. It's the right time for us to have discussed and debated all of this, because this may be a moment when it's appropriate in the war on terror to have a kind of strategic pause—not a pause in the action or in the

Mr. McLaughlin is a Senior Fellow in the Merrill Center for Strategic Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of The Johns Hopkins University. He has served as Acting Director and as Deputy Director of the CIA, Vice Chairman for Estimates, and Acting Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and a national security advisor to the Cable News Network (CNN).

aggressiveness, but a pause in terms of thinking about what we're really doing and whether there's a better way to do it. And that's basically what we've begun here today.

We have fought this war very aggressively in the first four-and-a-half years since 9/11. But it's mostly been about tactics. Yes, there's been strategic content and focus in it, but it's mostly been about reducing enemy numbers and effectiveness. This may be the time to stand back from all of this—if this is a long war—and ask ourselves: is this the way we want to do it? Is this a strategy that will stand up over a long period of time against a determined enemy?

In truth, we still don't have the equivalent of George Kennan's famous "X" article from the late 1940s that in one word—containment—gave everyone a strategic concept appropriate to the challenges of that era, an era in some respects just as complex as our own. So perhaps our conference here is a starting point down that road toward one of you thinking about all of this and writing this generation's "X" article.