



Rethinking the War on Terror

Developing a Strategy to Counter Extremist Ideologies

A Workshop Report
March 2007



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A Workshop Report

Future Strategic Contexts for WMD-related Planning and Operations
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Executive Summary

On January 10, 2007, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) convened an expert level workshop designed to help U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) devise a strategy to counter the arguments of the radical Islamists and to undermine their appeal to susceptible Muslim audiences around the world. Focusing on the nature of the ideological challenge that the radicals represent, participants explored the ideological underpinnings of current-day radical Islamist movements and factors that contribute to the radicalization process of individuals. There was, in this regard, extensive debate about the centrality of religion to radical Islamist ideology, with many participants convinced that while religion is an important motivator in the radicalization process, it is also being used to legitimate a very specific worldview that has been shaped by many factors external to Islam, but that impinge on Muslim views of Islam's place in the 21st century world. Over and above specific grievances, many Muslims express a general sense of anger and humiliation (into which radical Islamists can tap) in reaction to events of foreign origin over which they have no control, but which are viewed as impacting their daily lives in a negative fashion. At the same time, domestic problems in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries can feed that dissatisfaction and engender support for extremism, as has the push for autonomy and independence in such areas as Kosovo, Kashmir, and Chechnya. The main point here is that while we face a global, transnational extremist movement, it is one that is often triggered and fed by local conditions and difficulties that have little to do the West per se, and about which we must become far better informed.

By failing to appreciate this point, we are likely to focus unduly (and incorrectly) on the idea of an all-embracing Islamic identity shared by our adversaries (and those they seek to radicalize) that would miss entirely the more textured nuances of their sectarian, ethnic, linguistic, and/or tribal identities and differences. As we are discovering in Iraq, there are multiple overlapping loyalties and identities among the various competing groups and power centers that require tailored responses as we seek to engage them or curtail their influence. From this perspective, temporal cultural and societal trends and pressures are perhaps most important in promoting and molding extremist movements, especially as they relate to what many experts believe to be an ongoing struggle within Islamic communities over the value, pace, and direction of modernization. While acknowledging that a struggle indeed is going on in the Muslim world, some experts would also argue that it is less about modernists and anti-modernists than about what constitutes authenticity — and, by extension, authority worthy of support — within contemporary Islamic societies. In this sense, it is a struggle that we in the West may have limited ability to influence directly, though there are some “hooks” (including the Islamic concept of a “consensus of community”) that we might draw upon in our efforts to help shape (and direct) the intra-Islamic debate.

Islamism in its most radical form confronts the West with the need to engage in a “battle of ideas” not unlike that waged against totalitarian fascism in the 1930s and communism after World War II. In point of fact, in our efforts to counter radical Islamism, we are facing a global struggle against an ideology that, although dressed in Islamic language, shares a great deal in common with the European philosophical movements and lines of argumentation that led to fascism and communism. Taking stock of the similarity in arguments made by the Islamists and by the founders of these European movements, U.S. policymakers should avoid becoming preoccupied with academic debates about passages from the Qur'an and the Hadith in countering Islamist claims, for the struggle of ideas in which we must now

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engage has as much to do with open debate and intellectual discourse regarding the nature of contemporary life (and the politics behind it) as it does with arcane and historically obscure religious debates. It follows then that neither the United States nor the West as a whole is marginal to the debate as it applies to Muslim communities, and both must join more seriously in a critical assessment of the main tenets of Islamic extremism, many of the key philosophical themes of which are really quite modern and familiar, with links to modern European philosophy.

That said, many Muslims are indeed eager for Islamic teachings to play at least some role in their daily lives and societal relationships, a desire that may make them somewhat sympathetic to Islamist thinking (especially the less radical variant that does not openly endorse violence). This sympathy for aspects of the Islamist critique, of course, certainly complicates the task of countering effectively the more radical Islamist ideology and its appeal. Part of the problem is that not all Islamists are violence prone, but distinguishing those who are (or may become so) from those who are not is not an easy task. So, too, as certain themes of the radical Islamist ideology build upon and resonate with concerns and grievances more broadly held in the Muslim world, it could be difficult at times to mobilize support and cooperation even from regimes in the Islamic world with whom we would normally partner (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab Gulf states), but who may share similar perspectives with the radicals on specific issues (e.g., possible Saudi support for the Sunni insurgency in Iraq). Moreover, however important local and regional grievances are in fueling bottom-up support for radical Islamist movements, we must not underestimate the extent to which these movements derive their legitimacy from a top-down process. This is all the more reason for the United States to pay very special attention to the "allies" it enlists in support of its fight against radical Islamists, as some of these partners may very well be part of the problem.

The escalation of sectarian violence in Iraq, the emergence of an emboldened Hezbollah after last summer's military confrontation with Israel, and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Islamists in Somalia/East Africa reinforce the need as well for developing tailored and local-/regionally-sensitive strategies to counter the radical Islamists' appeal and their messages. Obviously, such a strategy must embrace a state-centric component, as appropriate, reaching out to and leveraging "democratic forces" (in, for example, Iran), while identifying and influencing what is taught in the madrassahs (especially in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) and the mosques (including in the United States and Western Europe). Hopefully, initiatives along both lines would help to stem the worldwide influence of radical clerics by creating and offering non-religious educational opportunities, approaches to learning, and funding to empower alternative ideas. However, such efforts should also focus greater attention on key non-state actors, disaggregating them to allow us to identify those that really threaten U.S. interests and policy objectives, as opposed to those that may be hostile to U.S. policies, but pose no major or immediate threat to the United States or its strategic interests, and might even be co-opted in time.

On the sectarian issue more specifically, Sunni leaders in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar have expressed growing concern, particularly since the ascendancy of a Shi'ite controlled government in Iraq, over the possible creation of a "Shi'ite crescent" that transcends state boundaries and could enhance Iran's rise to regional prominence. Such fears may help to explain why, for example, some Sunni leaders

have been reluctant to support U.S. efforts to defeat the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, and it may as well be at the root of the ambivalence shown by them toward al-Qaeda's efforts to establish a sanctuary in al-Anbar or Diyala provinces in Iraq. Even as Sunni leaderships, especially in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, would likely face direct threats to their governance as a result of an established al-Qaeda presence in Iraq (should or once the Americans leave), they have held back from providing the support that the United States has been requesting to help defeat the insurgents, for fear that the provision of such support could lead to popular protests that would undermine their own domestic authority. Bahrain, the site of U.S. Fifth Fleet Headquarters, has become particularly vulnerable in this regard, with its large Shi'ite majority now openly demonstrating for a greater say in this tiny state's governance, as did their brethren in Lebanon, which, itself, has teetered since December 2006 on the brink of political chaos, following Hezbollah's latest calls for much broader representation within the Lebanese cabinet. Repeated reports of an al-Qaeda presence in northern Lebanon and of a base of support for the al-Qaeda-type ideology among Lebanese Sunnis has also created a volatile mix. An attack against Hezbollah or the Shi'ite population of Lebanon that is traced back to al-Qaeda or the Sunni population, therefore, has the potential to generate a bloody civil war, the effects of which are likely to spill over into neighboring states and ignite a broader conflagration.

While much of this workshop was devoted to the ideological roots of radical Islamism, workshop participants did consider as well the key elements of a strategy to counter the Islamists' appeal. Among those most frequently cited was the need to develop a sophisticated strategic communications strategy to challenge Islamist assertions about ideology, Islam, and U.S. policies. Such a strategy needs to be locally focused, regionally sensitive, and globally informed. It must be pursued directly, with the U.S. voice apparent, but indirectly as well, leveraging allied voices and moderate groups, and working with partners whose interests may not always coincide with those of the United States, but who do have a vested interest in ensuring that the Islamists fail in obtaining their objectives. In this, there are some "hooks" that we can and should use, such as the Islamic concept of a "consensus of the community," which acknowledges that the community's view on key issues can (and does) change and that it is this collective view — something that can be shaped and influenced over time via concrete deeds — that should carry greatest weight, not grand theories with little connection to local needs and interests. For example, we should be trying to win support for a notion of "jihad" that pertains to the inner battle of the soul, one that historically has been central to the Islamic faith.

Of vital importance in this regard is the need to push the jihadists into defending themselves (and their records), and to answer the question of what precisely they have done of late to help solve the problems of Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan (with the answer likely being very little). Keeping the pressure on in this way could go a long way toward publicizing the Islamists' lack of vision. On the issue of improving life for Islamic communities now suffering from the effects of war, civil strife, and economic dislocation, the jihadists have many shortcomings over which they can be more explicitly and consistently brought to account. Doing just that should be a key component of any serious counter-strategy to diminish support for radical Islamists at the local community level.

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With these observations as general points of reference, participants offered a few more specific ideas for a better way ahead. These included the following:

- Understanding the radical Islamist ideology is central to success in the Long War, but it should be remembered as well that quite local and pragmatic political objectives and socio-economic concerns often shape and inform the jihadist movement (and are exploited by it).
- It is equally important to develop a fuller appreciation for the overall process of radicalization within Islamist circles and for the role of ideology within that process compared to other factors (e.g., personal grievances, kinship factors, etc.). This would include better insight into how social ties and various intra-/inter-group dynamics influence and shape individual perceptions, motivations, and willingness to act.
- Working with allies and coalition partners remains a key imperative of the Long War, but in doing so we must also recognize that our own credibility on “the Arab street” and in the wider Muslim world may at times be diminished by “the company that we keep.” Going forward, therefore, we must try, whenever possible, to make those with whom we collaborate most closely more accountable for their actions, and, where necessary, to hold their feet to the fire with respect to promises made (e.g., with respect to support for the re-development of Iraq and Afghanistan).
- The safety and security of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons — most notably the prospect that some may fall into Islamist hands — must be treated as a top priority of U.S. policy in the years ahead. Of equal importance, however, is the question of Saudi Arabia’s future and Iran’s possible emergence as a formidable regional power, perhaps in possession, in the not too distant future, of a nuclear weapons capability. Greater thought, therefore, needs to be given to thinking through emerging challenges of regional proliferation, extended deterrence, and escalation control in a post-Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF) world, as we ponder how best to contain plausible acts of violence by radical Islamist groups.
- Reforming U.S. foreign assistance programs, especially their funding cycles, will also be key to providing the necessary flexibility to meet newly emerging and rapidly changing strategic challenges in the Long War. This will require closer Executive-Congressional cooperation and a more proactive role on the part of Interagency community beyond the Departments of State and Defense. So-called Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) for the Long War are important, but wholly inadequate to the tasks at hand. Counter-insurgency strategy places a premium on “hearts and minds” operations for which security assistance and other funding will be needed to support stability and re-construction tasks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere where vital and/or important U.S. interests are being jeopardized. The need to deny terrorists sanctuaries is paramount, as is the effort to win local tribal loyalties and to shape security perceptions within Muslim communities (as we have done via recent disaster relief/humanitarian assistance missions). To do this, a more refined use of U.S. so-called “soft power” will be just as important as the employment of military forces, to create secure environments

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within which re-construction and development can take place. None of these ideas, however, can work in the absence of a comprehensive national strategy that leverages all aspects of U.S. power, and, where necessary and appropriate, that of its regional allies and partners.

As these workshop conclusions suggest, the United States and its allies in the Long War have options and “hooks” to use in devising strategies to deal with the challenges posed by the radical Islamists. However, a closer scrutiny of U.S. tools, resourcing procedures, and operational concepts is necessary to bring all elements of U.S. power and influence to bear more effectively on this complicated and multi-faceted problem. Apart from the deployment of American military forces, this will require carefully designed plans to coordinate programs and capabilities across the Interagency community to alleviate local conditions in the Muslim world that provide inroads for the radicals’ message, and to present and help popularize an alternative message that is genuine, that is congruent both with local customs and history and with Islamic culture and teachings, and that provides concrete, lasting benefits to those in need. Otherwise, the battle for “hearts and minds” within the Islamic world will be needlessly lost to our great peril.

Introduction

On January 10, 2007, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) convened an expert level workshop designed to help U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) devise a strategy to counter the arguments of the radical Islamists¹ and to undermine their appeal to susceptible Muslim audiences around the world. This workshop, which was designed for CENTCOM with the support of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), followed an earlier session that focused more specifically on the phenomenon of suicide terrorism, and it will be succeeded by an upcoming workshop focused exclusively on the elements of a national strategy to defeat radical Islamist threats. Held at the unclassified level to facilitate participation from the academic and think tank communities, discussion at this meeting aired a wide range of views, with participants agreed that an uppermost U.S. priority was the development of a comprehensive, Interagency strategy to counter and devalue radical extremist ideologies that are advanced in the name of Islam. The following represents a synopsis of that discussion, organized around the workshop's principal themes.

I. Radical Islamist Ideology as a Motivation for, or Legitimization of, Jihadist Action?

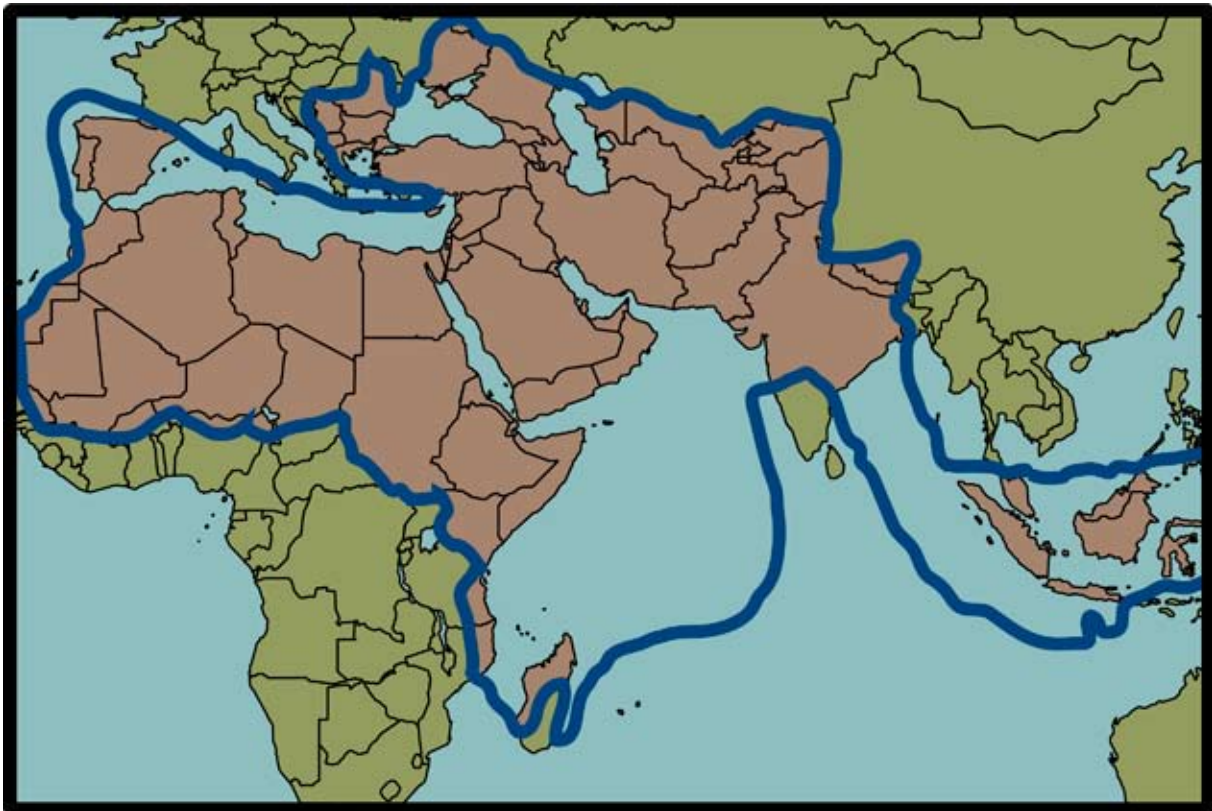
From the outset, workshop participants focused their attention on the nature of the challenge that confronts us and the roots of that challenge as it is manifested in the efforts of radical Islamists to achieve three critical goals. These are to force the withdrawal of American troops from Muslim countries, to overthrow what radicals consider to be apostate regimes, and to re-create a Muslim caliphate stretching from Spain and North Africa across the Mediterranean and into the wider Middle East, much of East Africa, a good portion of Central and South Asia, and onward to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as depicted on page 2. According to several workshop participants, the ideological underpinnings of current-day radical Islamist movements lie not so much in specific religious theology, as in Islamists' perceptions that Islamic peoples and nations have suffered at the hands of the Western industrialized world ever since the fall of the Ottoman Empire.² According to this perspective, a sense of "Islam under siege" has fueled an ideology that finds sustenance (and justification) in the "clash of civilizations" mentality, and which promotes an "us versus them" outlook that is hostile towards non-Muslim peoples and states, especially those who have occupied, or

1 It should be noted at the outset that the term "radical Islamist" is used throughout this report to identify those who propagate a literal and thus conservative reading of the Qur'an, the Hadith (the Prophet's teachings), and the Sunnah (literally "the ways of the Prophet"), and who see Islam as not only a religion but a political system governing all aspects of the state. "Islamism" represents a very wide range of conservative sects of Islam, some peaceful and others violent, some embracing modernity and others rejecting it. This report focuses on the violent (jihadi) side of Islamism. Today, violent Islamists have been attributed various labels according to the regional strain of Islamism they represent (Salafism and Wahhabism being primarily Arab, with Deobandism generic to South Asia) and the extent to which violence represents a key means to promote their ideology. Within violent Sunni Islamism, for example, one can read now about Salafists, Salafi-jihadists, jihadi-Islamists, jihadists, Wahhabis, and Deobandis, and many more. The global jihadist threat that we face today is largely Salafi-jihadist, primarily represented by al-Qaeda and its various regional wings. However, for the purpose of simplicity, within this report, violent Islamists will generally be referred to as "radical Islamists".

2 Much of this is discussed in greater detail in a recent IFPA publication, prepared for CENTCOM and this meeting, entitled *Radical Islamist Ideologies and the Long War: Implications for U.S. Strategic Planning and U.S. Central Command's Operations*, January 2007.

are perceived to have denigrated in some way, Muslim lands or holy sites. From the radicals' perspective, the United States, followed by Israel, holds the main culpability in this regard, and, to the extent that anti-Americanism can be leveraged in support of the extremists' goals, it is a theme that they certainly use to enhance and broaden their appeal across the wider Muslim world.

A New Caliphate



Hence, while religious beliefs are certainly central elements of radical Islamist ideology, it is shaped to a considerable degree, a number of workshop participants stressed, by a range of local, regional, and broader Islamic grievances against the West and/or those among their co-religionists thought to be doing the West's bidding. Over and above specific grievances, moreover, many Muslims, it was added, express a general sense of anger and humiliation (that radical Islamists can tap) in reaction to events of foreign origin over which they have no control, but which are viewed as impacting their daily lives in a negative fashion. At the same time, domestic problems in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries can feed that dissatisfaction and engender support for extremism, as can the push for autonomy and independence in such areas as Kosovo, Kashmir, and Chechnya. The main point here is that we face a global, transnational extremist movement that is often triggered and fed by local conditions and difficulties that have little to do with the West, and about which we must become far better informed.

Failing to appreciate this point, we are likely to focus unduly (and incorrectly) on the idea of an all-embracing Islamic identity shared by our adversaries (and those whom they seek to radicalize) that would fail to miss the implications of their sectarian, ethnic, linguistic, and/or tribal identities and differences. As we are discovering in Iraq, there are multiple overlapping loyalties and identities among competing groups and power centers that require tailored responses if we are to engage them or curtail their influence. We do need, in this regard, a more carefully coordinated strategy for security and stability in Iraq that appreciates the nuances and understands local conditions. This is indispensable if we are to leverage the opportunities for success that arise from country-specific conditions or situations. Similarly, to meet the challenge of governance in Afghanistan, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of local tribal structures and loyalties. Absent such an appreciation of the true power structure in Afghanistan, the efforts of NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (or PRTs) to improve local conditions will falter, and the capacity of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to bring stability to the country as a whole will be undermined.

From this perspective, the ideology of extremism can be viewed largely as an expression of, or reaction to, a specific political context or situation. It is also said to emanate from (and feed upon) a general sense of powerlessness that envisions few positive-minded, non-violent paths for change along which to channel such negative sentiments. In a culture that is legendary for accepting, if not directly promoting, violence as a predictable aspect of every-day life (at least within the greater Middle East), the Islamists' call to jihad, therefore, has struck a responsive chord among many Muslims, and it has encouraged new thinking about the concept of jihad in which jihad has emerged as both an individual requirement and a global Muslim responsibility with an emphasis on defending Islam by all available means, including armed struggle. From this perspective, Islam is (again) seen to be under severe threat, creating conditions in which the requirements (and approved tools) for waging jihad have changed. According to adherents of the radical Islamist critique, current conditions are such that actions which would not normally be proposed by devout Muslims or sanctioned by Islamic religious authorities — e.g., criminal acts, the targeting of civilians, the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), should they become available — are now acceptable.

In the current security environment, jihad is perhaps the most important concept from the Islamic religion to understand more fully, if only because it is the one most manipulated by radicals to claim that ancient teachings demand violent action against non-Muslims and apostate regimes. Throughout history, jihad, which literally means "a struggle," "a striving," or "a great effort," has been manifested in the two distinct notions of "greater jihad" and "lesser jihad," with many traditional Muslim scholars and religious leaders claiming that "greater jihad" — that is, one's personal struggle against sin and temptation — is the only jihad that is central to the Muslim faith, and the one that all Muslims must pursue. Others, however, including those now most influential among radical Islamists, argue that "lesser jihad" — which would include all outward exertions, military or otherwise, to resist oppression and tyranny, especially at the hands of infidels or non-believers — has become the key individual responsibility of all Muslims, given that Islam (in their view) is under attack from the West. This concept of "lesser jihad," they go on to point out, is also composed of two inter-related elements — namely, "offensive jihad," which implies outward action both to spread and defend Islam even before it comes under any direct

assault, and “defensive jihad,” which contends that once an Islamic community is actually attacked (e.g., the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), then it is incumbent upon every single Muslim to engage in violent jihad to help defend that community. Clearly, much of the violence perpetrated by al-Qaeda and similar extremists could be categorized (and may well be viewed by these groups) as acts of “offensive jihad,” but most radical Islamists prefer to explain their actions as examples of “defensive jihad,” as this variant (with its connotations of legitimate self-defense) would likely be easier to justify within the Islamist and broader Muslim community.

On this general point, one workshop participant expressed his belief that previous constraints on the more violent forms of jihad, including the non-violent, inner struggle aspect of “greater jihad” and a classical interpretation of “defensive lesser jihad” (i.e., to be conducted only in response to unprovoked, external attack), are disappearing, and that a shift is occurring in which calls for “lesser jihad” that is more offense-minded in content (if not name) are acquiring broader acceptance among a larger number of contemporary Muslims. Moreover, the growth in support for “lesser jihad” conducted in an offense-minded manner (though almost always justified in terms of “defensive jihad”) not only legitimizes a less restrained resort to violence, it also lays the foundation, this same participant suggested, for the broader “clash of civilizations” that the radical Islamists are now embracing as their own. With Islam under assault, or so the argument goes, the time for talk is gone, and it is action (i.e., jihad via armed struggle) that is needed, including in areas quite distant from Muslim lands.

Other workshop participants went on to suggest, however, that if one considers more fully the local roots of the radical Islamist challenge, the importance of the religious component of the ideology (including varying interpretations of jihad) may be less than we might otherwise assume. For these participants, more temporal cultural and societal trends and pressures are perhaps most important in promoting and molding extremist movements, especially as they relate to what many experts believe to be an ongoing struggle within Islamic communities over the value, pace, and direction of modernization. Some participants who held this view argued as well that the real struggle is between those in the Muslim world who believe in modernity and those who do not, with most Islamists viewing modernity as a contamination of Islamic religion, culture, and civilization. Still other participants, however, countered that accepting or rejecting modernity was not the real issue, and certainly not the key determinant of who might turn to violent means of jihad. Those Islamists who have joined al-Qaeda and its affiliates, for example, include in their ranks the most violent as well as some of the best educated, Western-trained, and most modern in outlook (e.g., Internet-savvy) among all extremists. For participants who advanced this latter perspective, there is indeed a struggle going on in the Muslim world, but it is less about modernists and anti-modernists than about what constitutes authenticity — and, by extension, authority worthy of support — within contemporary Islamic societies. This is a struggle, it was added, that we in the West may have limited ability to influence directly, though there are, as will be discussed later, some “hooks” (including the Islamic concept of a “consensus of community”) that we might draw upon in our efforts to help shape (and direct) the intra-Islamic debate.

The Islamists, on the other hand, have already been quite successful in setting the terms of this debate over authenticity and authority within Islam, in part via their claim to uphold the real traditions of the Prophet Muhammad as expressed in the Qur’an and interpreted in the Hadith. By citing carefully

selected passages from the Qur'an and noting references in the Hadith that equate jihad with "fighting," even extremists with little real religious training have been able to cultivate sympathetic audiences among Muslim communities. Islamists as a whole hold out an idealized vision of the possibility of recovering Islam's lost glory (to include restoration of the caliphate) and of regaining dignity and respect in a world where contemporary Muslim leaders, with few exceptions, have failed to meet the needs and/or expectations of their peoples. The prospect of such a wholesale renewal, moreover, seems all the more compelling and likely to many in the Muslim world precisely because in their view Islam is fundamentally a "religion of justice." Indeed, Shariah-informed governance, Islamists would argue, would ultimately be more democratic and just than other government models, including Western concepts of democracy.

In this sense, Islamism in its most radical form, at least one workshop participant argued, confronts the West with the need to engage in a "battle of ideas" not unlike that waged against totalitarian fascism in the 1930s and communism after World War II. In point of fact, in our efforts to counter radical Islamism, we are facing a global struggle, this participant argued, against an ideology that, though dressed in Islamic language, shares a great deal in common with the European philosophical movements and lines of argumentation that led to fascism and communism. Drawing our attention to the similarity in arguments made by the Islamists and by the founders of these European movements, he urged U.S. policymakers not to become preoccupied with academic debates about the Qur'an or the merits of the Hadith, for the struggle of ideas in which we must now engage has as much to do with open debate and intellectual discourse at the university level as it does with arcane and historically obscure religious debates. If this is true, then neither the United States nor the West as a whole is marginal to the debate. Both must join more seriously in a critical assessment of the main tenets of Islamic extremism, many of the ideological arguments of which, he stressed, are really quite modern and familiar.

In this context, a number of participants noted the predominant influences of two branches of conservative Islam, Salafism (of which Wahhabism is a part) and Deobandism (which began in South Asia, but has spread quite widely among Muslim communities, including those in Europe), on contemporary radical Islamist ideology. Both, it was said, advocate a return to "the pure practice of Islam" and to Shariah governance based on traditional practices of Islamic jurisprudence and laws. Salafism, it was added, provides as well the underlying inspiration for the al-Qaeda movement, while modern-day Deobandis are more influential in Afghanistan, South Africa, and (within Europe) the United Kingdom. Like members of the al-Qaeda movement who seek the withdrawal of American power and the erosion of U.S. influence in the Middle East, Deobandis are motivated by a desire to expel foreign influences from South and Central Asia, where they have played the formative role in shaping the Taliban's ideology.

Together, these two branches of Islamic thought, along with Iran's Shi'ite-inspired *velayat-e faqih* principle (which confers upon Islamic jurists, or *faqih*, considerable secular authority over the faithful), are fueling a top-down movement within Islamic societies led by a limited number of chief ideologues, whose objective is to stifle popular dissent and to promote a vision of Islam that embraces a "clash of civilizations" perspective, brings all aspects of life under Islamic control, and imposes a code of conduct that discourages independent action. Religion, from this perspective, not only legitimates action, but is also seen as a motivating force both to govern and to attract foot soldiers to the extremists' causes. As one participant noted, it may be grievances and friends that "get you through the door" to radicalism,

but it is the ideological and theological component — much of it drawn from the writings of Islamist theorists educated in the West (and, hence, familiar with the philosophical roots of totalitarianism) — that “will keep you and make you stay.”

II. The Interplay Between Ideological and Political Motivations

Islamist radicalism, then, can not simply be explained as the bubbling up of righteous indignation (however incorrect or misdirected) from long-suppressed and maligned Muslim communities. Rather, it is to a large extent the result of a carefully thought-out theory and explanation of the modern Islamic predicament as popularized by a few conservative mullahs and religious scholars and transmitted by them and their followers in a top-down manner to the broader Islamic community. Extremist ideologies, therefore, are indeed important to the radicalization process, will pose a central challenge in the Long War’s fight against terrorism, and must be understood and countered, more than one participant proposed, as directly and forcefully as were Europe-based totalitarian beliefs of the past. By itself, however, the radical Islamist ideology often can not create individuals ready to engage in terrorism. Much like the appeal of other radical ideologies, Islamism takes advantage of the interplay between political motivations, personal/communal grievances, and the perceived failures of governments in power to radicalize and then mobilize those so radicalized to take action to rectify local problems.

While Islamists generally do not offer positive solutions to these problems themselves (a point that one participant suggested needed to be given broader coverage in Western efforts to counter the radicals’ messages and appeal), they do nonetheless often receive credit for focusing popular angst on “targets of opportunity” and in the process helping to project blame onto foreign influences (thereby diverting attention from more local causes). This in itself creates an impression that the Islamists may be able to provide solutions to issues that have stymied existing Muslim governments. Thus, by drawing attention to political, economic, and social problems in Muslim communities, Islamists can argue that their ideological enemies (i.e., the United States and the Western world) are responsible for such problems, and that only through the extreme, violent acts supported by the radical ideology they promote can action be taken to improve the Muslim situation. The appeal of the Islamist message, then, can be traced in part to a combination of popular attraction to extremist ideologies (couched in familiar Islamic rhetoric) and anger at real-world conditions. This points, in turn, to the need for a counter-argument that offers both an alternative worldview that would resonate within various Muslim communities and that provides real solutions to concrete problems within those communities.

For its part, the Islamist ideology currently in favor casts a rather wide net across the Islamic world, a point brought home by one workshop participant’s comment that even a native of the Borneo jungles, who had never left his shores, evoked the Islamist “clash of civilizations” theme when discussing religion and society with him. However, in its extremist form, the Islamists’ appeal remains limited and has failed overwhelmingly to achieve most of its goals or to win wide support among Muslim populations. To the extent that it is successful, the appeal of radical Islam to certain groups, another participant suggested, stems from the cultural connection it can claim to Islam and its history — a connection that gives it, for many, an automatic degree of legitimacy. This cultural and historical connection, it was further suggested, results in the Muslim population giving a fair hearing to Islamism. Yet, despite the widely cast

net of Islamists and their cultural connection to Islam and its history (and that of Islamic communities), Islamists have been unable so far to gain and retain control of a single country absent extenuating circumstances, such as war, economic collapse, and/or the existence of an exceptionally charismatic leader (as happened in Iran and, for a time, in Afghanistan). The United States, therefore, must pay special attention to these same “extenuating circumstances” in its efforts to prevent local conditions from arising that would provide fertile ground for extreme Islamist messages.

As mentioned above, the problem of a connection between political and ideological motivations is not new, and the United States has successfully confronted it in the past. The communist ideology of the Soviet Union was only able to emerge successfully following the collapse of the Russian monarchy in 1917. The rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party were greatly enhanced by the economic collapse and general political chaos of Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s. Furthermore, the United States actively opposed communist advances in Western Europe through Marshall Plan funding that rested on the premise that Europeans would reject communism if their economies were able to develop along the free market model, a premise that was sustained by subsequent events. With these and other examples, history has shown that the collapse of political and economic systems can create a vacuum into which extremist forces that would ordinarily be dismissed can enter, if not countered or preempted by alternative ideologies, strategies, and leaders. Identifying similarly vulnerable areas in the contemporary security environment and implementing policies to discredit extremist ideologies, then, will be a major challenge during the Long War.

Present-day Islamist ideologues thrive on a number of particular grievances against individual leaders and specific countries, and they have grown adept at using such complaints to highlight certain themes of their ideology, such as restoring Islamic control over Muslim lands, the supposed desire of non-Islamic countries to destroy Islam, the economic depravity of the West, the desirability of dying for the cause of Islam, and many others. The litany of complaints did not begin with the United States, but the United States has become the focus of Islamic ire because of its leadership position in the global hierarchy of nations. That fact, together with America’s track record of foreign interventions, is perceived to pose a threat to Islamic culture and religion. From this, the radical Islamists have incorporated in their ideology, as one of their major themes, the need to resist the attempts of outside powers to impose their will on Islamic peoples and to implement non-Shariah forms of government. While this preoccupation with outside threats dates back eight hundred years to the era of the Crusades, the U.S. presence in the Middle East — whether low key and strictly economic or bolder, including military force deployments, rotations, and interventions — is taken as a continuation of Western attempts to subjugate Islamic populations.

The high level of sensitivity in the Islamic community — especially in the Middle East — to foreign intervention allows the Islamists to claim that any U.S. presence in the region is an attempt at neo-colonialism. This challenge to U.S. security operations in the region predates 9/11 and Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF) and places a unique burden on the United States to debunk the neo-colonial arguments of the Islamists. Since foreign intervention and foreign hostility to Islam is such a prevalent theme in the Islamist ideology, the United States must address concerns that it intends to remain permanently in the Middle East, that it is primarily interested in exploiting the natural resources of the region, that it is

attempting to destroy Islam militarily, and a collection of other allegations that, nonetheless, resonate among Islamic populations.

The prevalence of Afghanistan and Iraq in the ideological arguments of Islamists points as well to the connection between transnational issues (i.e., the “clash of civilizations,” Islam under attack, etc.) and national issues. The national issues that motivate many individual Muslims are spread around the globe on the borders between Islamic and non-Islamic populations, and they feed into the idea that the current ideological struggle is indeed a clash between Islam and the Christian West. National causes that provide significant grist for the Islamist propaganda machine include those related to Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Xinjiang. The list can be expanded to include more recent conflicts in Somalia, Nigeria, and Sudan, and older conflicts such as Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. These national struggles of Muslims fighting non-Muslims feed into the transnational ideology and help motivate some Muslims to adopt a worldview that moves beyond their own national struggle and accepts the idea of a global clash and the need to oppose the United States as the country perceived as its prime instigator. The connection between national and transnational struggles is one of the most important dynamics in the interplay between ideological and political motivations, and several workshop participants agreed that the United States would benefit from highlighting local issues and downplaying the transnational aspects because it is easier to refute the former.

Among the local issues highlighted at this meeting were: authoritarian governments headed by leaderships who are more interested in regime control than in governance, lack of individual liberties, absence of the rule of law, and persistently stagnant economies in the Islamic world that extremist ideologues exploit to their advantage. The recent United Nations-sponsored Arab human development reports deliver a well-documented critique of the pattern of Arab governments to hold back the development of their citizens. The reports, which have been released annually since 2002, have catalogued the lack of freedom, poor education, absence of women’s rights, relatively poor professional skills, and terrible governance prevalent in Arab states. Radical Islamists do not offer solutions to these problems (and do not even seek to solve several, i.e., women’s rights). However, the relatively poor political and economic situation in the Arab and Muslim world does create an audience anxious for change, including a small portion open to a violent and radical change. The political, economic, military, and social failings of parts of the Muslim world will continue to feed directly into the ideological challenge of the Long War, and it will be difficult to reverse this trend so long as the United States and its allies are seen as aloof or ineffective in addressing everyday concerns.

The need to separate the global jihadist movement from local conflicts, and to limit its ability to legitimize violent action by Islamist ideology, was highlighted by several workshop participants as a crucial requirement for the United States. One participant argued that extremist ideologies are not the driver of violent acts, but instead provide individuals and groups with a method to act against those thought to have caused harm. Another participant furthered this theme by stressing the potential to decouple the international Islamist movement from national causes by building up the various local identities held by citizens of Muslim countries and downplaying the sense of a predominant Muslim identity. This participant said that among the various identities held by Muslims, their roles as a citizen of a state, member of an ethnic group and family, with tribal ties, and linguistic connections provide the potential to pull

individuals away from the transnational Islamist ideology. Competing identities along these lines are on display in the groups opposed to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Although the leaderships of anti-U.S. groups often speak in the language of a global Islamist community, a number of workshop participants believed that the rank and file organize around local identities and not necessarily in support of an international movement to implement Islamism. These participants highlighted the pattern in Afghanistan of the several non-Taliban groups that oppose U.S. activity and have organized on the basis of tribal ties, on which they have fallen back since the Taliban were deposed. Such tribal groups often turn to drug production and criminal gang activity to solidify their influence and power base at the local level. The same trend is apparent in Iraq with the proliferation of militias, down even to militias at the neighborhood level. Hence, finding a way to allow local groups that remain at arms length from global Islamism (and the violence it endorses) to express peacefully their local identities could be a key component of an overall strategy to counter such extremism.

Well-known arguments concerning the need for a renewed effort to solve persistent nationalist conflicts were also set forth by other workshop participants. One workshop participant with close involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process claimed that a few radical Islamist leaders in the greater Middle East region have expressed the willingness to go as far as to turn against al-Qaeda and similar extremist groups if the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) were to yield a successful outcome. Although the MEPP will likely stretch out into a timeframe of several years, a resolution would remove a potent argument from the radical Islamists' arsenal and demonstrate to Muslims that the United States, Israel, and the West support a Palestinian state. In addition to the MEPP, the conflict in Kashmir was noted by workshop participants. The long standing and well organized South Asian Islamist movement and its surreptitious relationship with a nuclear-armed Pakistan creates an ongoing problem that gives Islamists an excuse to organize within Pakistan and Kashmir, and it also motivates extremist elements within the Pakistani government to support radical Islamist groups.

Clearly, the successful resolution of either the Palestinian or the Kashmiri issue — or even the perception of real progress toward resolution — could help separate the connection between ideological and political motivations for radicalization, as well as the connection between transnational and national movements for jihad. It should be remembered, however, that the core elements of Islamist ideology would remain vehemently anti-American regardless of the resolution of the conflicts between Israel and its neighbors and between India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the future direction of American policies toward these conflicts is noted here because it is an issue that continues to shape the debate among U.S. specialists about how best to cope with Islamist extremism. To ignore it, moreover, in fashioning our response to radical Islamists, would be to concede to the radicals a much freer hand than they should be allowed with regard to a set of issues that remain highly emotive (and open to manipulation) among Muslim peoples.

III. Implications of Failures of Arab/Islamic Governments for Enhancing the Islamists' Appeal

Many Muslims are influenced to some degree by Islamist thinking and by a desire for Islamic teachings to play at least some role in their daily lives and societal relationships. This greatly enhances the complexity of the issue of countering the Islamists' ideology and its appeal. However, as long as Islamist ideology is the real issue, it will be difficult to mobilize the support of Muslim regimes that feel a sense of cultural affinity with the radicals. As noted earlier, radical Islamists have crafted their messages around causes for which all Muslim governments also, to a certain extent, exhibit a degree of sensitivity and perhaps even support (as in the case of the Saudi government's alleged complicity in supporting the Sunni insurgency in Iraq). This line of discussion led one participant to observe that focusing on ideology implies that the conflict between radical Islamists and the West is driven principally by local grievances. Such grievances, as already noted, must represent a necessary focal point in our strategy. However, they must not be allowed to obscure "the forest for the trees." In other words, any strategy to counter and de-legitimize the radical Islamist ideology must also take into account the bigger picture, including, in the case of the Middle East, the tensions that exist between U.S. democracy promotion efforts and our support of autocratic regimes which continue to turn a blind eye to some of the issues that are central to the democratic concept. This led to a spirited debate among the participants about the behavior of U.S. allies in this Long War, and how it may be contributing to the Islamists' ability to register successes in the ideological battle, including with respect to important electoral victories in Bahrain, Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey, for example.

Elaborating on this theme, another workshop participant commented that many of our so-called allies have leaderships which are poorly perceived by those they govern, and that by identifying too closely with autocratic leaders whose own lifestyles belie their Muslim teachings, we risk losing credibility with those in the Muslim world that we wish to influence. To a certain extent, this duality of perception has hampered U.S. efforts to promote democracy in the wider Middle East, although, to be sure, it has also been stymied as well by perceptions of unjust American policies and because of our relationship with Israel. While it is debatable (as noted already) that a just Arab-Israeli peace settlement — if it ever came to pass — would appease extremist elements on either side, the requirement to pursue "the peace process" is an overarching priority for many Muslims. The Islamists understand this reality and are manipulating it to rally people to their cause. In the past, this has manifested itself in widespread support for non-state actor groups (i.e., Hamas, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO, and Hezbollah) advocating Israel's destruction and, implicitly the use of violence to further specific political objectives. More recently, however, and especially since the Lebanese parliamentary election of 2005 and the Palestinian election in 2006, Islamists have sought to use Western democratic practices, including access to political office, to influence and shape governance in the volatile Middle Eastern region. In this way, historically violent organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza, and the Sadrist Movement in Iraq have used the election process to enhance their power and increase their voice in political debates. In so doing, the Islamists have begun to challenge directly U.S. democracy-building strategies and principles in an arena in which the United States had once been the unchallenged mentor.

Instead, today, Islamists are leveraging the democratic process in the pursuit of power, and moderate Muslims, our traditional allies in the region, are feeling more and more exposed, to the point that many are trying to distance themselves from U.S. policies and from the secular vision of governance that we have tried to promote. Turkey is an important case in point. Since the founding of the Turkish republic, and under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, Turkey has adhered to a secular path of governance. Of late, however, the Islamist influence has been increasing, and were Turkey's bid to join the European Union (EU) left unfulfilled, prominent analysts of the Turkish scene suggest that this could be the catalyst to push Turkey more firmly into the Islamist camp, opening the prospect of a fundamentalist government or a military coup (to sustain Turkey's Western orientation). Whatever the likelihood of either contingency, the current reality is that Turkey is mired between two competing models of its future political evolution, and we should be very aware of the impact that events in Iraq are having and will continue to have for Turkey's future. This discussion led one participant to observe that in Turkey and elsewhere throughout the Muslim world, we need to maximize the value of those who reject fatwas and caliphates and who are fighting the Islamization of their societies.

On this note, identifying allies to help de-legitimize Islamist arguments, it was said, is relatively easy; empowering them in their communities is more difficult, especially at a time when U.S. policies are perceived to have facilitated radical Islam's growth. However, as one participant noted, "a rise in anti-Americanism does not necessarily mean a rise in extremism." And, while it is very difficult to draw a line between extremist and non-extremist Islamists and non-Islamists, it can be done, and this should occupy a centerpiece of any strategy to counter the extremists' ideology. Other participants supported this idea, further arguing that we must avoid conflating all these various anti-Western and anti-American undercurrents into one big Islamist problem. Rather, as suggested by another participant, we should recognize that Islamism, historically, has only flourished in recent decades largely due to the failures of Arab/Islamic governments to address and solve pressing local and regional problems (such as the establishment of a Palestinian state) and to improve the economic well being of their peoples. This is especially true with respect to regimes that are perceived as not being culturally authentic. Islamism may be at a high tide now for all of the reasons cited in this report, but it does not have to be permanent or victorious, though counter-strategies for de-legitimizing its appeal must be more sophisticated than they have been in recent years, and, in many instances, the U.S. imprimatur must be invisible. As noted by one participant, a too-open U.S. embrace of reasonable elements in the Muslim world would be "the kiss of death" for them.

We can, and should, however, try to influence the conditions that promote the radicals' appeal by addressing specific conditions that allow extremism to flourish among local communities and in tribal settings. In this respect, we must do more in the "hearts and minds" realm, but do it subtly and in a more flexible fashion, as we did when we provided aid to Indonesia after the December 2004 tsunami and in the wake of the October 2005 earthquake whose epicenter was located in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. In this context, one participant noted that while these two events have been portrayed as tremendous successes for U.S. security cooperation planning and humanitarian relief, both operations were also marred by difficulties arising from inflexible USAID funding lines, which are limited to pre-established three-to-five year funding cycles. Such constraints make it very difficult (if not impossible) to

exploit “windows of opportunity” as they arise, as, for example, Hezbollah can and has done in the aftermath of last summer’s war in Lebanon. There was a consensus view in this regard that the United States needs to modernize its approach to humanitarian/disaster relief, in conjunction with so-called “Phase 0” security cooperation planning for the military. Drawing on our experiences in Indonesia and in Pakistan, the United States needs in particular to develop a new, more flexible framework for stability operations and “Phase 0” planning, one that incorporates Interagency and non-governmental resource planning, and one that can be sustained for a reasonable period after an initial crisis or disaster has occurred.

IV. Non-State Actors and the Promotion of Extremist Ideologies

The escalation of sectarian violence in Iraq, the emergence of an emboldened Hezbollah after last summer’s military confrontation with Israel, and the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Islamists in Somalia/East Africa reinforce the need for developing tailored and local-/regionally-sensitive strategies to counter the radical Islamists’ appeal and their messages. Obviously, such a strategy should embrace a state-centric component, as appropriate, and, as in the cases of Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, it should aim at reaching out to, and leveraging, “democratic forces” (in, for example, Iran), while identifying and influencing what is taught in the madrassahs (especially in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) and the mosques (including in the United States and Western Europe). Hopefully, initiatives along both lines would help to stem the worldwide influence of radical clerics by creating and offering non-religious educational opportunities, approaches to learning, and funding to empower alternative ideas. However, such efforts should also focus greater attention on key non-state actors, disaggregating them to allow us to identify those that really threaten U.S. interests and policy objectives, as opposed to those that may be hostile to U.S. policies, but pose no major or immediate threat to the United States or its strategic interests, and might even be co-opted in time.

This discussion led one workshop participant to argue that it is necessary to see radicalization as a process, not a condition. From this perspective, Muslim anger, more than any other emotion or intellectual bias, is at the root of this process, and the radicals’ ideology takes this anger and interprets it (uses it) in such a way as to channel it to correspond to their more political objectives, playing upon an individual’s own experiences, his societal connections, and his worldview (as formulated through his own subjective lens). Because the ideology then resonates with an individual’s own experiences, the radicals are able to shape perceptions to fit their particular worldview. Thus, while the intellectual message propounded by the Islamists is important (and it helps to frame the perceptual context), it is in reality less important than the emotional exploitation that takes place in the radicalization process, which, in turn, heightens the need — as perceived by the individual — for action in the name of Islam.

There are weaknesses, of course, to this approach to recruitment by the Islamists that we could play upon, including the Islamists’ aforementioned inability to articulate a positive vision of the future and their willingness to kill other Muslims. At the same time, however, our inability to forge a comprehensive, Interagency strategy to deal with the intellectual underpinnings, perceptions, and policy failures of our friends and allies in the region inhibits our ability to de-value the radicals’ appeal. To be able to get to the point where we are able to do so, however, requires that we distinguish between individual motivations of those who become jihadists and the larger group-level dynamics that support the extremists’ causes.

For instance, those who are driven by visions of “the next world” may not really care about improving things in this world. This, it was suggested, points to the need to address the networks that support the extremists and to understand very precisely the societal links that engender cross-border “alliances” and funding.

V. Iran’s Rise and al-Qaeda’s Resurgence

Workshop participants devoted considerable attention as well to two recent phenomena that hold profound implications for crafting a U.S. strategy to de-legitimize the radicals’ appeal. The first was Iran’s increasingly influential role in stoking the sectarian violence in Iraq, and its ongoing support of Hezbollah, which is pressuring the Siniora government in Lebanon and King Abdullah’s rule in Jordan. The second was the re-emergence of al-Qaeda, to which one participant attributed the July 7, 2005 suicide bombings in London, and the 2006 plot to bring down commercial aircraft over the Atlantic. Both phenomena, participants argued, have complicated the task at hand, especially the issue of how best to react to the “us or them” proposition embedded in the “clash of civilizations” thesis advanced by the radicals. Moreover, while it may well be that we face a transnational movement that fosters a common language, rhetoric, and set of grievances, this movement, participants were eager to emphasize, is characterized as well by myriad internal struggles and inconsistencies, arising from local identities, ethnicities, and tribal allegiances. The point was made as well that even though Iran may consider itself to be at the head of a global Shi’a movement, its Persian roots and its own imperialistic history have raised apprehensions in neighboring countries about Iran’s claims to leadership and concern over Iran’s rising profile in the greater Middle East.

The Sunni/Shi’a split manifests itself in a variety of ways and fuels many of the conflicts taken advantage of by al-Qaeda and other ideological enemies of the United States. Most immediately, it has fueled sectarian violence in Iraq and has emboldened Shi’a opposition to Sunni regimes across the Middle East. This, in turn, has created a new base of support for Islamists who are using the “foreign occupation” theme to attract new recruits to their cause. At heart, the disagreements between Sunnis and Shi’ites reflect an ideological conflict that stems from the founding period of Islam and the succession to Muhammad. The details of these ideological disagreements that have lasted over a millennium have crystallized over time into anger at the entire opposing sect and conflict over a few specific practices by each. For example, the Sunnis condemn the Shi’ites as “rejectionists” of the founding caliphs. The Shi’ites in turn resent the Sunnis for a perceived overbearing style of government that prevents Shi’ites from practicing religion freely, sometimes expressed through the banning of, or attacks during, the Shi’ite celebration of Ashura.

Of late, particularly since the ascendancy of a Shi’ite-controlled government in Iraq, Sunni leaders in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar have expressed concerns about the creation of a “Shi’ite crescent” that transcends state boundaries and which could enhance Iran’s rise to regional prominence. Such fears may help to explain why, for example, some Sunni leaders have been reluctant to support U.S. efforts to defeat the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, and it may as well be at the root of ambiguity about al-Qaeda’s efforts to establish a sanctuary in al-Anbar or Diyala provinces in Iraq. Even as Sunni leaderships, especially in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, would likely face direct threats to their governance as a

result of an established al-Qaeda presence in Iraq (if and when the Americans leave), they have held back from providing support that the United States has been requesting of them because of their need to perform a delicate balancing act within their own countries to perpetuate their rule. Bahrain, the site of U.S. Fifth Fleet Headquarters, has become particularly vulnerable in this regard, with its large Shi'ite majority now openly demonstrating for a greater say in this tiny state's governance, as did their brethren in Lebanon, which, itself, has teetered since December 2006 on the brink of political chaos as Hezbollah has called its supporters into the streets of Beirut to demand larger representation for Hezbollah and its allies in the Lebanese cabinet. Repeated reports of an al-Qaeda presence in northern Lebanon and of a base of support for the al-Qaeda-type ideology among Lebanese Sunnis have also created a volatile mix. An attack against Hezbollah or the Shi'ite population of Lebanon that is traced back to al-Qaeda or the Sunni population has the potential to generate a bloody civil war, the effects of which are likely to spill over into neighboring states and ignite a broader regional conflagration.

If anti-Shi'a feelings feature importantly in al-Qaeda's ideology, they have also provided a new and central focus for the movement's military operations. Ever since the February 2006 attack on the golden-domed al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, the sectarian violence in Iraq, and particularly in Baghdad, has become more heated, and, to some extent, has eclipsed al-Qaeda efforts to gain a foothold in al-Anbar province (although al-Anbar certainly remains a dangerous front in Iraq and an important focus of the broader U.S. effort to defeat radical Islamist terrorism). With the evidence mounting, it appears as if Iran is actively supporting the sectarian violence in Iraq, and perhaps may be providing more than material support for the militias, supplying shaped explosive devices for roadside bombs, militia training by experienced Quds forces (which are linked to the Revolutionary Guards), and timely intelligence support. To a degree, Iran's support for the Shi'a in Iraq and for Hezbollah's activities in Lebanon is also tied to the aforementioned debate in Islam about authenticity and about how Islam should be practiced. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, Shi'a communities, who have long been repressed by their Sunni leaderships, have felt more emboldened to act, and, in some cases, to challenge directly the authority of their governments. In the wake of U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq that, respectively, ushered in the demise of the Taliban and the Saddam Hussein regime, repressed Shi'ite minorities throughout the Middle East saw an opportunity to break out from their Sunni suppression, and took to the streets to demonstrate, organize politically, and, in some instances, mobilize against their "enemies." This, in turn, has influenced thinking in Iran about long-term trends in the region, including a belief that America (and American influence) is now in decline, and that this will directly benefit Iran's regional and global ambitions.

Indeed, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is a case in point. Recently, one prominent U.S. scholar has described the Shi'a ideology (which contends that martyrdom operations are the epitome of Islam's highest principles) as central to Iranian views of deterrence, arguing that mass annihilation (resulting from nuclear weapons use and/or the failure of deterrence) may hold few fears for a Shi'a-based society that already embraces death and martyrdom on an individual level. Whatever the truth of this assertion, it is clear that the level of sectarian violence in Iraq demonstrates the extent to which ideology and politics are combining to produce a malevolence that will be hard to overcome, even if the government in Baghdad steps up to the challenge of governing a multi-ethnic/multi-cultural state. The Shi'a's celebration of the Ashura and their disagreement over the Sunni interpretation of the Prophet's

succession are at the core of a dispute that spans generations, and continues to poison U.S. and Iraqi efforts to pacify, stabilize, and re-build Iraq. Islamists in both camps, however, suggest that it is the United States that is fueling the sectarian violence in Iraq, as a way to seal the split between the major branches of Islam. This, of course, belies the reality that the Sunni-Shi'a split originated centuries before, but it is convenient for the Islamists to point to the United States as the common enemy of Islam.

In reality, while Iran's theocratic leadership may justify intervention in Iraq and support for Hezbollah on grounds of "protecting the faithful," its actions reflect a more practical imperative: creating chaos in Iraq diverts attention from Iran's military build-up, its illicit nuclear development, and its looming regional ambitions. Thus, in addition to the need for a U.S. strategic communications strategy that distinguishes between these two Islamic sects and their beliefs, there is also a role for "hard power" in America's regional response, aimed particularly at deterring and dissuading Iran's political aspirations when they impinge on or conflict with U.S. national interests. From this perspective, as one participant noted, "politics is more important than ideology" in explaining the challenge we now face in the Islamic world and how to react to it (especially in the Middle East/Arabian Gulf region).

Against this backdrop, workshop participants went on to consider in greater detail the process of Islamist radicalization. From one perspective, it is the social dynamics of the group that are responsible for triggering and sustaining the radicalization process, though not necessarily for getting new recruits to join the group in the first place. As discussed already, it is local grievances, in the view of several workshop participants, that often provide the initial motivation for an individual's decision to become part of a particular movement, and it is the sense of identity with the group and the group's interpersonal dynamics that subsequently tended to push individuals toward embracing the radical ideology. At that point, however, the ideology alone would begin to play a more central role, it was further argued, in keeping the group together. Thus, from a strategic perspective, if we treat the radical Islamist ideology from the outset as the central aspect of our counter-strategy, we may fail to recognize and appreciate a number of non-ideological factors that appear to push (or draw) people to the radical Islamist cause, but over which we and/or our regional allies have some influence. In that event, we would risk playing into the Islamists' hands by validating their argument that every local conflict is part of a universal attack against the entire religion of Islam. As one participant said, "it is not in our interest to let the insurgents portray (the Long War) as a civilizational struggle."

This is not to suggest that we yield the ideological struggle to the Islamists; far from it. Countering the radical Islamist ideology is a necessary component of a comprehensive U.S. (and Western) strategy, but of itself it is not sufficient to lessen the Islamists' appeal and, more importantly, to generate support for alternatives. In particular, we should not be willing to concede their claim to a pedigree that extends back to Muhammad, especially when their ideology can be shown to have twentieth century roots in the fascist and communist movements and other European political philosophies that underlie them. For this reason alone, we should be proactively engaged in ideological debates, and point out that the radical Islamists are not the "purest of Muslims" in terms of the historic norms of Islam. Clearly, what is needed is a strategy that disaggregates the many conflicts involving Muslims and that decouples them from the universal war (i.e., the "clash of civilizations") idea that the radical Islamists want us to endorse (or, by our actions, seemingly prove correct).

VI. Key Elements of a Strategy to Counter the Islamists' Appeal

While much of this workshop was devoted to the ideological roots of radical Islamism, workshop participants did consider as well the key elements of a strategy to counter the Islamists' appeal. Among those most frequently cited was the need to develop a sophisticated strategic communications strategy to challenge Islamist assertions about ideology, Islam, and U.S. policies. Such a strategy needs to be locally focused, regionally sensitive, and globally informed. It must be pursued directly, with the U.S. voice apparent, but indirectly as well, leveraging allied voices, moderate groups, and working with partners whose interests may not always coincide with those of the United States, but who have nonetheless a vested interest in ensuring that the Islamists fail in obtaining their objectives. In this, there are some "hooks" that we can and should use, such as the Islamic concept of a "consensus of the community," which acknowledges that the community's view on key issues can (and does) change and that it is this collective view — something that can be shaped and influenced over time via concrete deeds — that should carry greatest weight, not grand theories with little connection to local needs and interests. For example, we should be trying to win support for a notion of "jihad" that pertains to the inner battle of the soul, one that historically has been central to the Islamic faith.

Several workshop participants noted, however, the difficulties facing the United States in cultivating the "consensus of the community," not the least being our perceived support for regimes in Muslim countries that are thought to be autocratic and/or corrupt. There was, on this point, extended discussion of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, with various participants noting the fragile nature of a U.S. policy that relies on these two embattled leaderships to counter the radical Islamist appeal. On this specific issue, one participant urged that we avoid the trap of "allowing the Muslims' greatest hypocrites" to lead us in this endeavor. He urged, in this context, the development of a two-tiered strategy that is not dependent on unreliable allies, but which recognizes and has great fidelity with respect to serious local issues, regional disputes, and more global Muslim grievances. From his perspective, such a strategy must have a political dimension, aimed at winning the battle for "hearts and minds," as well as a technological component, focused on hard security issues, including bomb detection, Internet defenses, and military/operational planning. Another participant disputed the centrality of the role of the military in this struggle, arguing that countering the Islamists' appeal and dealing with terror threats would be better served by relying on "law enforcement" procedures and techniques, reinforcing his view that the major challenge comes from social dynamics and group think.

Not all participants endorsed this last comment, and many noted the need to have available all aspects of U.S. (and allied/coalition partner) power to engage successfully on the ideological and terrorist fronts. On this point, another participant observed that there are really two objectives or struggles to influence: that involving violent or non-violent groups, and another dealing with moderates or radicals in the Islamic world. The U.S.-articulated Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) seeks to influence those Muslim groups who support their own notions of justice and liberty, while isolating the radicals by exposing the weaknesses in their ideas. We can not run away from our allies in this endeavor, even though some are very definitely part of the problem. Our main point of engagement, however, must be to help empower those Muslims who are fighting back against the creeping Islamization of local towns and culture. Some of our allies are engaged in this fight, so we must do all that we can to help them, whatever their shortcomings.

In Pakistan, for example, we are helping President Musharraf implement a tribal strategy designed to counter the lure of the radicals. However, this effort lacks sufficient funding and Congressional support. Moreover, the complications created as a result of the Taliban's implementation of cross-border operations (into Afghanistan) and their use of Pakistani territory as a sanctuary is creating problems for U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and they have had the effect of eroding support for regional cooperation—a concept that the United States has been promoting to help address the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Where Muslim leaders are culpable and found to be aiding or supporting the enemy's cause, they should be held accountable and even removed from office, just as radical madrassahs should be closed or their Imams replaced if they continue to foment violence and hatred.

A third element of strategy must involve the more innovative use and embrace of the media. As it stands today, the Islamists have created a virtual sanctuary in cyberspace, with Islamist web sites numbering in the thousands. While a handful of private efforts, the SITE Institute included, have made some headway here, the U.S. government has done relatively little to challenge systematically the Islamists' control of the medium, and, worse still, little in the way of countering outrageous claims, gossip, and allegations. True intellectual debate of the highest caliber in academia and beyond will be central to this battle for "hearts and minds," and Europe appears to be the new battlefield, with the United States not far behind. Workshop participants were unanimous in the view that this debate needs to be engaged at all levels of exchange in the United States and Europe, including in national-level publications and media programs, university-linked conference and publication activities, and local, community-based media. Discussion of this particular issue provoked a lively workshop debate over whether and how to engage our plausible adversaries (when identified), with at least one participant of the view that the United States should be engaging not only Iran and Syria, but also Hamas, as a means of testing — especially in the case of Hamas — their willingness to negotiate and cooperate.

One workshop participant pointed as well to the need to push the jihadists into defending themselves (and their records), and to answer the question of what they have done to solve the problems of Iraq, or Algeria, or Pakistan. Keeping the pressure on in this way will go a long way toward publicizing the Islamists' lack of vision. According to another participant (and as referenced earlier), the jihadists seem to have many vulnerabilities along these lines, and a successful counter-strategy must exploit them to the fullest.

With these observations as general points of reference, participants offered several specific ideas for a better way ahead. They included the following.

- Understanding the radical Islamist ideology is central to success in the Long War, although quite local and pragmatic political objectives and socio-economic concerns often shape and inform the jihadist movement. Al-Qaeda continues to be a major actor in this regard, and, notwithstanding contending assessments of the organization's potency in Iraq, it continues to inspire membership in a worldwide jihadist movement that promotes the argument that Islam is under global attack from the West and must be defended with force. Assessing very precisely the key tenets of this ideology and devising strategies to counter its appeal must be regarded as a central goal of what has been called the Long War. That said, it must be understood as

well that Islamic militants are recruiting foot soldiers by manipulating local grievances, real and perceived, to curry favor with local population bases. Thus, while it is essential to understand and respond to the overarching and commonly-shared ideology of radical Islamist groups, it is also important to recognize the many local variations of the movement, tailoring our responses and counter-strategies to these same local variations (and to the local conditions on which they are based).

- A second and related point is the need to understand much more precisely the overall radicalization process, and how network dynamics within and among radical groups influence and shape individual perceptions, motivations, and willingness to act. As discussed elsewhere in this report (and in some detail at this workshop), the jihadists' familiarity with the cultural environment and social service needs of the Muslim communities within which they operate has burnished their overall appeal, so any U.S. strategy to counter and de-legitimize the radicals' draw must be grounded in a deeper understanding of these same communities and of their needs, hopes, and dreams. This suggests the need for an inter-disciplinary approach to strategy and policy development, and for the development of an Information Operations (IO) plan that tailors messages to specific audiences. The United States confronts an enemy proficient in the use of new communications technologies and adept at reaching its audiences by means of these technologies with forceful messages. Al-Qaeda and affiliated organizations disseminate their messages through a variety of mediums that have outpaced and taken away the U.S. capacity to respond and/or seize the initiative with respect to strategic communications. By using websites, e-mail, cell phones, satellite television, and DVD and audio recordings sold in markets to spread video and audio messages, Islamist organizations are able to take their messages to a variety of audiences in a variety of ways. U.S. policy planning must be much more carefully calibrated to address and counter anti-American trends by developing sophisticated and targeted communications strategies that are equally flexible. Ideally, such programs would be managed by a Cabinet-level organization charged with primary responsibility for overseeing information management.
- Working with allies and coalition partners remains a key imperative of the Long War, but in doing so we must also recognize that our own credibility on "the Arab street" and in the wider Muslim world may in fact be diminished by "the company that we keep." For example, for some audiences we wish to influence, we may open ourselves up to charges of hypocrisy, etc., when dealing with leaderships in the Muslim world who act in ways that are viewed locally as contrary to Islamic principles. On the other hand, as with President Musharraf in Pakistan or various leaders in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, these same people may be the only credible options available for helping to organize and implement key aspects of a viable strategy to counter the Islamists' appeal. Going forward, therefore, we must try, whenever possible, to make those with whom we collaborate most closely more accountable for their actions, and, where necessary, to hold their feet to the fire with respect to promises made (e.g., support for the re-development of Iraq and Afghanistan).

- There is no question but that radical Islamist elements have targeted regimes that are or seem to be allies of the United States. Pakistan and President Musharraf are extremely vulnerable in this regard, and we must do all that is possible to ensure regime survival, or face the prospect of a failed state in Pakistan, with control of nuclear weapons in contention. The safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons represent perhaps the most serious strategic threat that looms as a real possibility in the future, and it is a scenario for which much more serious planning must be done. Beyond Pakistan, and more generally, but very specifically with regard to Iran, greater thought needs to be devoted as well to thinking about deterrence and escalation in the post-9/11 world, including with respect to crisis management, possibly in the context of a nuclear-armed Iran.
- As a substantial portion of any counter-Islamist strategy must focus on a number of fairly small and nimble non-state groups, the U.S. approach in countering their message must, as alluded to above, place a premium on flexibility and adaptability. Groups such as Hezbollah have demonstrated considerable skill in winning public support by competing with governments (or filling the political vacuum in their absence) in the provision of social services. While non-state groups and authoritarian states such as Iran are able to disperse money quickly and with little bureaucracy, the United States is hampered by a cumbersome process of applying for and distributing funding. Programs like MEPI, the G-8's Broader Middle East North Africa (BMENA) Initiative, and Forum for the Future display promise, but they are currently under-funded, too slow to respond to opportunities for action that arise in the field, too short-term oriented, and overly reliant on working through existing authoritarian governments with little real interest in promoting democratic and economic reform. Implementing policy adjustments that would allow U.S. policymakers and overseas personnel deployed in the field to respond more quickly to breaking events, such as a new al-Qaeda statement, a natural disaster, or the immediate aftermath of a military conflict (e.g., helping to rebuild southern Lebanon following the summer 2006 Israeli conflict with Hezbollah), would certainly help in pushing back against Islamist attempts to spread hatred of the United States.
- Reforming U.S. assistance programs, however, will require wider cooperation with Congress and greater coordination among key players in the Interagency. MEPI, for instance, has already seen its funding requests slashed by the appropriations committees in Congress, reflecting their apparent low confidence in the program. More assiduous efforts to walk Congress through administration plans to counter extremist ideologies, in part by means of foreign assistance programs and public diplomacy, could help to assure that the necessary funding support will be available over the longer run. Any U.S. anti-Islamist campaign worth its salt, moreover, will require very close coordination within the Interagency. To be sure, the State Department has been quite active in developing new initiatives to create local allies and partners in our fight against radical Islamists, and DoD has been active as well in front-line efforts to reduce the appeal and reach of radical Islamists by building support via re-construction and community assistance projects in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by providing disaster relief to Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines (after the massive February 2006 mudslides). DoD has also been

quite forward-leaning in integrating a public diplomacy element into various cooperative exercises and training activities, as demonstrated by the medical assistance provided by troops via the Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and during Operation *Balikatan* in the Philippines.

- Building an infrastructure within the Muslim world that could credibly advance a more liberal and secular model for social development could also help U.S. efforts to turn the ideological tide. One workshop participant drew attention to the British establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in response to the 1857 revolt in India. For a century and half now, Aligarh has served as a moderating influence among South Asian leadership circles. The United States should consider supporting development of similar institutions designed to promote inter-religious cooperation and a moderate form of Islam, while also teaching the skills needed to prosper in the modern economy. As one workshop participant suggested, U.S. embassies and/or Congress could allot additional funding to support local children to attend, for example, the network of American Schools already in place throughout the greater Middle East. The United States would also be well-advised to help fund or facilitate new private, non-religious endeavors to build modern education facilities, such as King's Academy now being planned in Jordan and modeled after King Abdullah's high school alma mater, Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts.
- As these workshop conclusions suggest, the United States and its allies in the Long War have options and "hooks" to use in devising strategies to deal with the challenges posed by the radical Islamists. However, a closer scrutiny of U.S. tools, resourcing procedures, and operational concepts is necessary to bring all elements of U.S. power and influence to bear more effectively on this complicated and multi-faceted problem. Apart from the deployment of American military forces, this will require carefully designed plans to coordinate programs and capabilities across the Interagency community to alleviate local conditions in the Muslim world that provide inroads for the radicals' message, and to present and help popularize an alternative message that is genuine, that is congruent both with local customs and history and with Islamic culture and teachings, and that provides concrete, lasting benefits to those in need. Otherwise, the battle for "hearts and minds" within the Islamic world will be needlessly lost to our great peril.

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