



## The Broader War on Terrorism: After the "Victory" in Afghanistan

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It is tempting to focus on developments in Afghanistan, and the hunt for Osama bin Laden, as the key elements in the war on terrorism. In practice, however, it is already clear that the situation is far more complex and that the United States may not always be able to take the initiative in shaping the future course of the war.

### 1. Bin Laden's Possible Options and Strategy

The current bin Laden hunt may keep him and the leaders of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or Pakistan and eventually lead to his capture. The longer the hunt goes on, however, the more possible it is that bin Laden may escape to other countries and/or be able to buy some form of sanctuary where he can remain undetected.

This raises the specter of a prolonged bin Laden hunt with no clear target, and where the present U.S. aura of victory is offset by bin Laden's apparent or real survival. Such a strategy of invisibility would give bin Laden the status of having survived all of the power of the United States, and time to reorganize some aspects of his network. If bin Laden believes death or capture is inevitable, he may use whatever time he can win to try to organize some form of last series of attacks on the United States and allies, and to create some kind of crisis that will allow him to become a martyr. Bin Laden might try to exploit his presence in an Arab state to force the kind of U.S. military action that would lead to Arab resentment.

In short, the bin Laden hunt does not mean that the hunter has all of the options. Bin Laden may still be able to enhance his reputation and carry out new attacks in spite of the U.S. victory in Afghanistan.

### 2. The "Other 67 Countries"

At the same time, Al Qaeda should not be confused with bin Laden. Many elements and cells in Al Qaeda may pursue a different strategy from bin Laden. They may, for example, seek to go underground or to separate themselves from bin Laden and reemerge under a different name. They may also carry out independent operations, and affiliate with new groups or states in doing so. There is little evidence that most of Al Qaeda has a rigid hierarchical structure and cannot survive without bin Laden, or that there will be an identifiable set of targets.

Moreover, the broader battle against Al Qaeda has been going on for some time. While the media focuses on the "next phase" of the war, it has been clear from the start that Afghanistan was only one country out of some 68 nations where U.S. intelligence has identified Al Qaeda elements and groups associated with it. Dealing with this "next phase" in the war of terrorism actually began before any fighting took place in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials have never published a list of all the countries involved—in fact, some U.S. intelligence officials refer to 53 countries while DoD intelligence officials refer to 68. They also have never attempted to make any public assessment of how this struggle is going. It is also clear that Europe and NATO are the only areas where cooperative—or anything approaching "coalition" action is taking place. In every other case, the U.S. effort is largely bilateral—simply because no country outside NATO and Europe is willing to cooperate with its neighbors in any depth on issues as sensitive as internal security.

While Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen are three countries on this list that have received a great deal of attention as possible sanctuaries for bin Laden and areas for military action, it is also important to note that the vast majority of countries where elements of Al Qaeda are located are friends, allies, and neutrals. These are countries where the United

States has been steadily more involved in intelligence cooperation and where most of the lead is taken by the country involved, consisting of local legal and counterterrorism activity.

Some of this activity has been highly active and relatively public in European democracies like Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. It has been far less public in the case of nations like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and quiet and grudging in nations like Syria.

In short, the so-called "next phase" in the war on terrorism actually began before the war in Afghanistan, and the outcome will ultimately be at least as important.

### 3. Non-al Qaeda Terrorist Movements and States

The Bush Administration has not yet identified the range of other terrorist movements that it regards as targets in the war on terrorism, nor stated how it will evaluate regimes that have been as "terrorist," "rogue," or "states of concern." It is probably wise not to do so. First, it needs to finish with Afghanistan. Second, it has no reason to push itself into rigid categories and solutions in dealing with very different movements and countries. This is particularly true because winning by intimidation, political and diplomatic pressure, and economic leverage-backed by the tacit or overt threat of using military force-is far more cost-effective than openly trying to take on the entire world of hostile states and movements and actually using force.

The fact remains, however, that the war on terrorism-and broader U.S. concerns about state-sponsored asymmetric warfare-will eventually have to go far beyond the problem of al Qaeda. There are some 23 to 37 movements that the State Department, CIA, and FBI have listed as terrorist or violent extremist groups located over much of the world.

Moreover, the common perception that global terrorism against U.S. citizens is centered in the Middle East was not reflected in State Department statistics on terrorism before September 11. The State Department counted far more incidents in Latin America, many related to narcotics or politically motivated kidnappings. (The State Department reports there were 200 international terrorist attacks affecting U.S. citizens and facilities in 2000. A total of 172 were in Latin America, 9 in Asia, 7 in Western Europe, 6 in Africa, 4 in Eurasia and only 2 in the Middle East).

The question is how the United States can shape a broader global strategy-particularly one that also addresses the mid- to long-term risk posed by proliferation and that looks at states rather than just terrorist groups. The differences between terrorist groups are bad enough, but the differences between nations as diverse as China, Colombia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, and Syria, are not only sharper but involve far more serious risks if the United States does not choose the right approach.

### 4. The Economic Dimension of Terrorism

The world is just beginning to understand the broader economic impact of terrorism and the war on terrorism. In the past, the seriousness of terrorism has been measured almost solely by the number killed or wounded. The economic costs have received little attention.

It is clear, however, that the economic costs of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon have helped worsen a global recession in ways that not only have had a major impact on the U.S. economy, but also have hurt the world. Investment and trade have been cut sharply in China. Oil revenues will fall precipitously in Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other oil exporters. Pakistan's textile industry has suffered badly. Similar problems have emerged all over the world. The economic costs of the anthrax attacks have been far greater than the cost in terms of direct human casualties. An attack that probably was financed with well under \$100,000 has cost billions of dollars-and the end is scarcely in sight.

So far, President Bush and the Congress have not been able to agree on how to react to U.S. economic problems, much less the global economic impact of terrorism. It is clear, however, that the United States-and its friends and allies-now need to plan how to use government spending and economic tools, as well as public information campaigns, to address the economic dimensions of the war on terrorism. It is equally clear that such plans need to be made now because the future may hold a wide range of different types of major terrorist attacks.

### 5. The "End" of "Red-lines" in the Size and Method of Attack

Many U.S. and European experts on terrorism and asymmetric warfare feel that sheer scale of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the massive political and economic impact of the small anthrax attacks that followed, has eroded many of the previous "redlines" that limited the size and method of attack. They feel that any movement or state that is willing to attack the U.S. homeland has now seen an example of U.S. vulnerability, and that it has little to lose

from using the most intensive possible method of attack, since the U.S. response to virtually any level of attack will be virtually the same.

This means the U.S. victory in Afghanistan could encourage attacks as well as discourage them. U.S. military strength will always have a deterrent effect, but once a state or movement concludes it must act-or U.S. military action is inevitable-it may also conclude that it has nothing to lose to by escalating. Alternatively both well-known terrorist groups and states may conclude that using new cover organizations or small extremist groups to deliver such weapons may be a far safer form of proxy warfare than any direct confrontation with the United States. There is no way to validate such conclusions. Some experts argue that they are a logical result of the lessons of proliferation that terrorist movements and hostile states have drawn since the Gulf War. Others argue that technology is another factor that erodes redlines.

It is now clear that lethal biological devices are not that hard to make. It is also clear that commercial factors are vastly increasing the dissemination of sophisticated biological, food processing, and pharmaceutical equipment while more and more educated personnel who can use such equipment are becoming available. Furthermore, most studies indicate that genetic engineering skills will greatly increase the ease of creating lethal toxins and diseases that are treatment resistance or immune over the next five to 10 years.

Other advances are taking place in the production of fourth generation chemical weapons, some aspects of fission weapons manufacture, and the production of cruise missiles and conversion of aircraft into long-range drones. They are not as dramatic, but they too can help further erode redlines simply by making it easier to obtain a weapon. They also tend to turn many arms control and inspection regimes into little more than empty facades. For example, the Chemical Weapons Convention really does not cover fourth generation weapons effectively. There are no teeth to the biological weapons convention, and the NNPT is really effective only to the extent it covers overt production and transfer of potentially fissionable material.

## 6. Iraq and the "New Redlines" Argument

One major side effect of the "new redlines" argument is that the rationale for urgent military action against Iraq has shifted from possible participation in the September 11th and anthrax attacks to the argument that proliferation by a leader like Saddam Hussein is simply too dangerous to tolerate. This argument is closely coupled to the argument that no form of UN inspection can be effective in finding all of the research and production facilities in a country like Iraq, and regime change offers the only hope of stability.

These arguments may ultimately persuade more U.S. policymakers than the argument Iraq was a covert participant in the September 11th attacks. They certainly make some kind of strong U.S. action more likely, even if it is not a form of war directed at regime change.

There is no consensus over what this action should be-UN inspections, military support of opposition groups, or a major U.S. military effort. It is likely, however, that the Bush Administration will take some action over the next few months and any major Iraqi provocation- or firm evidence of Iraqi proliferation or support of terrorism-could lead to war.

## 7. Spoiler Attacks: The India-Pakistan Case

It has been clear from the start of the war in Afghanistan that the stability of Pakistan would be a major problem, and that the risk of any form of Islamic extremist regime in Pakistan-which has some 20 to 30 nuclear weapons-posed a potential threat. But Musharraf's regime proved to be more resilient than many thought.

The suicide attacks on India's parliament show, however, that terrorist groups can have a major impact on U.S. policy even when they don't hit the United States directly. It has again demonstrated just as thoroughly as the Second Intifada, and the actions of Hamas and the PIJ, that a terrorist group can hijack or destroy the political agenda of states simply by striking at the most sensitive or controversial target.

It is far too soon to say that that Pakistani extremist groups like the Sipah-e-Sahaha, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba deliberately attempted to use a broader crisis to end Pakistan's support of the United States or to break up Musharraf's effort to bring Islamic extremist movements under control. It is very clear, however, that their actions and the risk of an India-Pakistani conflict have added a new dimension to the war on terrorism.

## 8. The "Israeli-Palestinian Theater"

When we talk about "next phases" in the war on terrorism, we also need to consider that the United States may have entered one simply by taking such a strong stand in backing Israel on terrorism. One obvious impact is that the United States is now even more identified as a supporter of Israel in the Second Intifada, which has hardened Arab and Islamic

hostility and resentment. In addition, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad may become more willing to attack U.S. targets.

It is hard to think of any case where the United States can back an ally in counterterrorism without to some extent making itself a target. Taking a side against terrorism in the Second Intifada, however, may make the United States far more of a target than taking sides in most other conflicts.

#### 9. Low Level Military Cases: Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen

There is considerable speculation inside the Pentagon (as well as in the media) that the United States may have to use military action against al Qaeda cells or supporters in the Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. Certainly, no nation can host bin Laden (and possibly Omar) and their top supporters without creating a major risk of war with the United States. It is not clear, however, that serious military risk is needed in any of these three cases.

The Sudan, like Libya, seems to be actively seeking to reduce its profile as a terrorist state. It is not clear what good U.S. military action could do that diplomatic and political pressure cannot.

Yemen has long been a "safe house" for Islamic and other political extremist groups-and has had ties to bin Laden and al Qaeda. However, President Saleh of Yemen is already conducting low-level military action (one of his sons is a key commander) against the Jalal tribe over its support of al Qaeda. U.S. special forces may already be aiding Yemeni troops in the Shabwah and Marib regions east of Sanaa. At least some kind of increased government activity is also underway in the Hadramawt, Abyan, and Lahij provinces in East Yemen (formerly South Yemen). This kind of cooperation seems to offer the United States a far greater prospect of success than forced entry or bombing-unless some high-value and very concentrated target emerges whose location can be established precisely.

The situation in Somalia remains a hopeless mess. It is symbolic of efforts to use the United States and the war on terrorism as a tool strike at enemies and opponents. Ethiopia wants to use U.S. military intervention to solve its problems with Somali separatism and instability on its border. The Rahanwein Resistance Army and Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council want to use the United States against the Transitional National Government. This seems to have influenced a number of U.S. defense planners and intelligence analysts until the United States reevaluated the intelligence involved and surveyed the situation. The United States has since had some cooperation from Abdiqassim Salad Hassan-the "president" of the Transitional National Government-in dealing with al Qaeda operations in Somalia. Once again, it is not clear what good U.S. military action could do that diplomatic and political pressure cannot.

#### 10. Playing Three Dimensional Chess

These are the lessons that have emerged so far from the war on terrorism: the United States is involved in a far more complex set of challenges than simply the one presented by al Qaeda and bin Laden; much of this struggle can escalate in ways the United States cannot control; the war on terrorism has no clear end; and it is a "war" in which political, economic, and diplomatic means are likely to be more important than military means.

This, in turn, is a strong argument against the kind of "911" mentality that argues that the attacks on the United States now mean that every nation and political movement in the world is either with the United States or against it and the United States has virtual freedom of action. This simply isn't going to happen. Too many states and movements have priorities and interests that transcend any fear they may have of the United States or which may make U.S. views somewhat irrelevant. India and Pakistan are two cases in point, but so are Israel and the Palestinian movement.

The war on terrorism is also a war that involves such a wide range of states and movements that any overall pattern of U.S. deterrence and military action must necessarily be complex and be designed to deal with a wide range of different threats, nations, and political conditions. Most Americans like simple games. The war on terrorism, however, is a "game" that is at least as complex as three-dimensional chess. The only way to understand it and win is to accept the full range of complexities and uncertainties involved and tailor a separate mix of solutions to each case where the United States must act.

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