

## **Al-Qaeda's Media Strategies**

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### **Executive Summary**

Following the loss of their safe haven in Afghanistan and increased pressure from international counter-terrorism operations, the Al-Qaeda network was forcibly scattered into smaller, more elusive factions. Relegated into a state of perpetual hiding, Al-Qaeda's previous ability to communicate with any audience became severely diminished. The media, particularly the Internet, would become a central component of Al-Qaeda's post 9/11 strategy. Al-Qaeda's media strategies serve several distinct functions, target specific audiences, and have been facilitated through multiple formats. The United States faces an uphill battle concerning its public image in Arab and Muslim countries. Anti-Americanism has been fueled throughout the region due to controversial policies, bloodshed in Iraq, the war on terror, support for Israel, and growing tensions with Iran. While immediate hard power tactics may be required to stop existing terror networks, the U.S. needs to invest in more soft power opportunities. This will take serious commitment and require multiple resource investments through several generations. If we fail to engage the Muslim world, then the war on terrorism will falter and we will continue to see new generations of terrorists.

*“For the first time in our history, the principal enemy facing the United States is not another nation state – it is an ideologically-driven, borderless network... Such an enemy requires new thinking on how we organize and fight.”*

-- General John P. Abizaid<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

September 11, 2001 has become a defining moment in American history, having forever changed the landscape of the world in which we naively thought we lived. Four commercial airliners were hijacked by well-coordinated terrorists and transformed into deadly weapons killing thousands of innocent civilians in cold blood. Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network had emerged from their fringe extremist status to become a major, and highly publicized, security threat. The violent attacks on 9/11 remain “the most spectacular expression to date of an ongoing and rational process designed by Islamic radicals to bring terrorism to the American homeland.”<sup>2</sup> The terrorist strikes served as a powerful wake up call for the United States which has been operating with a significant public opinion deficit among Arabs and Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to September 11, terrorism had been viewed by the general public as a foreign problem but not as a major threat within the borders of their own country. Shanto Iyengar felt that most American citizens would find local crime a greater personal threat because terrorism was typically “associated with poorly understood disputes in distant locales.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Remarks of General John B. Abizaid, United States Army Commander, United States Central Command before “The Senate Armed Services Committee on the 2006 Posture of the United States Central Command,” March 14, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Rugh, “Introduction,” in William A. Rugh, ed., *Engaging the Arab & Islamic Worlds Through Public Diplomacy: A Report and Action Recommendations* (Public Diplomacy Council, 2004). p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 26.

While earlier attacks on American interests in Lebanon, Yemen, and other foreign territories did garner attention, they occurred overseas and were on a much smaller scale when compared to the devastating attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The public may have been apprehensive traveling to certain parts of the Middle East, but domestic security was not a significant concern. In fact, according to The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, “until recently, homeland security and preventing terrorism were considered lesser priorities of many existing federal agencies.”<sup>5</sup> The times have changed however and homeland security has since risen to the top of the nation’s issue agenda with Al-Qaeda, perhaps less appropriately in 2006, taking center stage.

### **Al-Qaeda: Origins & Ideology**

*Origins.* Al-Qaeda (a.k.a. al-Qaida, al-Qa’ida), which translates into “the base” in English, was formed out of an earlier brigade of Arab Muslim fighters who joined the U.S. and Pakistani-funded Afghan mujahadeen resistance movement which opposed the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the 1980s, Saudi-born Osama bin Laden and Palestinian religious leader Abdullah Azzam recruited, financed, and trained foreign fighters for the Afghan resistance. Bin Laden, an Islamic fundamentalist and member of the immensely wealthy bin Laden family, eventually decided to extend the holy war beyond Afghanistan and formed Al-Qaeda in 1988. Egyptian-born Ayman al-Zawahiri, former head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad movement became bin Laden's top lieutenant and ideological adviser.

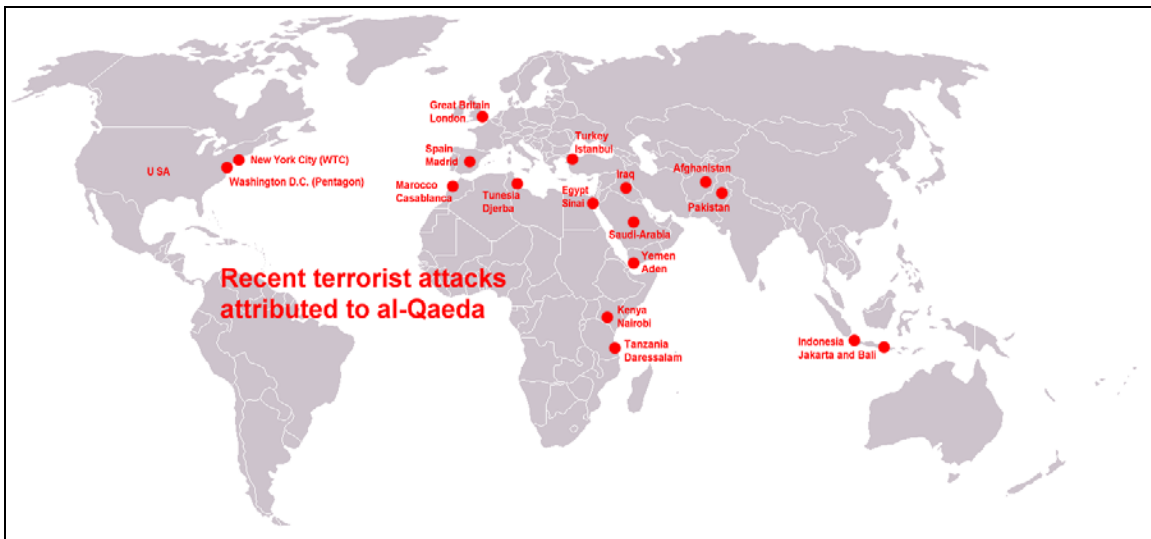
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<sup>5</sup> *Terrorism Prevention Handbook: Executive Summary and Findings and Recommendations*, Report of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Washington, DC, October 9, 2002, p. i.

<http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/archives/000479.php>

<sup>6</sup> *Background Q&A: Al-Qaeda*, Report of the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, July 7, 2005, p. 2. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9126/#1>

Since its founding Al-Qaeda has targeted Western and Jewish interests in addition to Muslim governments it views “as corrupt or impious,”<sup>7</sup> especially Saudi Arabia. In addition to the infamous attacks on September 11, 2001, they have bombed or attacked multiple U.S. embassies in Africa; the U.S.S. Cole and a French tanker off the coast of Yemen; three residential compounds in Saudi Arabia; and a synagogue in Tunisia. In March of 2004 they killed close to 200 people after bombing multiple commuter trains in Madrid and in November of 2002 they attempted to shoot down an Israeli airliner in Kenya using a shoulder-fired missile. Additional attacks have been attributed to Al-Qaeda including those conducted in Iraq by Jordanian-born radical, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who swore his allegiance to bin Laden in October of 2004. It has been widely speculated that Al-Qaeda and its many affiliates are attempting to acquire and implement weapons of mass destruction.



SOURCE: Wikipedia

<sup>7</sup> *Background Q&A: Al-Qaeda*, p. 3.

*Ideology.* Like many of today's militant Islamist groups, Al-Qaeda draws partial inspiration from the radical writings of Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian author and Islamist associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>8</sup> Qutb came to the United States as a student in the 1950s only to detest what he saw as a primitive, rude and decadent society. He would later suggest that the modern world represented *jahiliyya*, the "barbarous state that existed before Muhammad" and called upon all true Muslims to jihad against it.<sup>9</sup> Qutb and six other members of the Muslim Brotherhood were eventually executed in 1966 after being accused of plotting to overthrow the Egyptian government. Qutb's brother Muhammad became a professor of Islamic Studies in Saudi Arabia. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who would later become the mentor of Osama bin Laden, was one of his students and an ardent supporter of his teachings.

Osama bin Laden and his followers also adhere to a radicalized and narrow interpretation of Islam derived from the extremist traditions of Wahhabism<sup>10</sup> and Salafiyya<sup>11</sup> in which the world is divided between devout believers of "the worldwide umma (kindred community) of Muslim brothers and sisters – and evil non-believers (infidels, apostates, heretics)."<sup>12</sup> The non-believer designation includes all non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians; fellow Muslims who do not follow a literal interpretation of the Koran; and all those who support such Western ideals as religious tolerance, freedom, and democracy.

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<sup>8</sup> Al-Qaeda. (2006, April 12). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 12, 2006, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Al-Qaeda&oldid=48134798>

<sup>9</sup> David Von Drehle, "A Lesson in Hate," *Smithsonian*, February 2006, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> See "Analysis Wahhabism" in *Saudi Time Bomb?* PBS Frontline, November, 2001. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/>

<sup>11</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, November 16, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> David Ronfeldt, "Al Qaeda and its Affiliates: A Global Tribe Waging Segmental Warfare?" *First Monday*, March 2005, p. 9. [http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue10\\_3/ronfeldt/index.html](http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue10_3/ronfeldt/index.html)

Failed insurrections in Egypt, Algeria, and Bosnia combined with an inability to expand their Islamic revolution beyond the borders of Afghanistan and the Sudan forced radical organizations such as Al-Qaeda to re-evaluate their tactics. Instead of focusing on local regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia (the near enemy) a vision for “global jihad”<sup>13</sup> emerged with the United States and the West (the far enemy) as the new primary targets. Threat analyst and George Mason University professor of international terror studies, Dennis Pluchinsky, stated that the terrorists changed their tactics because they “see the United States as the puppeteer controlling the world, and they are determined to destroy the puppeteer.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, by eliminating the source of Western decadence and support for corrupt Middle Eastern regimes, Al-Qaeda believes it can revive an Islamic umma, mobilize a global Muslim community “in a revolutionary transformation of the international order,”<sup>15</sup> and install one “supreme religious-political leader”<sup>16</sup> to govern the world under the strictest form of Islam.

### **Al Qaeda’s Media Strategies**

Al-Qaeda’s media strategies serve several distinct functions and have been facilitated through multiple formats including faxed statements, Internet postings, audio recordings, video releases, and published articles. Media statements are directed to specific target audiences in addition to broader population bases. The timing of their releases typically

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<sup>13</sup> Ronfeldt, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Raleigh International Spy Conference 2004. <http://www.raleighspyconference.com/wrapup/2004.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Marc Lynch, “Al-Qaeda’s Media Strategies,” *The National Interest*, March 17, 2006. <http://www.nationalinterest.org/>

<sup>16</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005) p. 395.

correspond with major, international events and are intended to generate publicity, propagandize, generate fear, prove life, rally supporters, and launch attacks.

*A Need for Publicity.* In order for terrorists to raise awareness for their cause, earn support from sympathizers, and generate fear they must have publicity.<sup>17</sup> When Peter Bergen, CNN's terrorism analyst and author of *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of bin Laden*, conducted the first Western television interview with bin Laden in 1997 from his Afghan base, he found that bin Laden "clearly had a thought-out media strategy."<sup>18</sup> Bin Laden asked to preview all questions and would only discuss what he felt was appropriate for the interview. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's second in command, saw multiple benefits in using the international media to draw attention to their cause. Therefore, when Al-Qaeda declared war on the United States in 1998, they did so publicly by hosting their own official news conference in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> Zawahiri also posited that television images of successful attacks would spread fear among publics while encouraging "martyrs to come forth and take on future suicide missions in the name of the Islamist cause."<sup>20</sup>

Following the loss of their safe haven in Afghanistan and increased pressure from international counter-terrorism operations, the Al-Qaeda network was forcibly scattered into smaller, more elusive factions (micro-actors). Relegated into a state of perpetual

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<sup>17</sup> Raphael F. Perl, "Terrorism, the Media, and the Government: Perspectives, Trends, and Options for Policymakers," *Congressional Research Service*, October 22, 1997. <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/crs-terror.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Henry Schuster, "Al Qaeda's Media Strategy," *CNN.com*, January 20, 2006. <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/01/20/schuster.column/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> Schuster, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 73.

hiding, their ability to communicate with any audience became severely diminished. Previous high visibility tactics raised the risk of capture, if not death, therefore mandating that bin Laden and his lieutenants reevaluate their operational practices. Increasingly, the network gravitated toward advanced technologies such as the Internet and satellite communications.<sup>21</sup> Mass media had become a central component in Al-Qaeda's post 9/11 operational strategy. Peter Bergen dubbed this evolution into a more virtual and diffuse organization as "Al-Qaeda 2.0."<sup>22</sup>

Al-Qaeda's media relations efforts often mirror those of professional public relations firms, albeit on a significantly smaller scale. Scripted audio statements, video news releases, and streaming newscasts are created by their own in-house production company known as As-Sahab and released through multiple outlets including their publicity affiliate, the Global Islamic Media Front. The Global Islamic Media Front is also responsible for *Voice of the Caliphate*, an online terrorist newscast which debuted in September of 2005.<sup>23</sup>

*Multiple Audiences.* Targeted to specific populations throughout the Middle East, Europe, Asia and the United States, Al-Qaeda's messages are designed to "elicit psychological reactions and communicate complex political messages to a global audience."<sup>24</sup> Al-Qaeda issues demands, threats, and warnings toward political and ideological enemies including

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<sup>21</sup> *Country Reports on Terrorism*, Report of the U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, April 30, 2006, p. 11. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/c17689.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Lynch, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Ulph, "Coming Soon: The 'Voice of the Caliphate' Radio," *Terrorism Focus*, September 19, 2005. <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369784>

<sup>24</sup> Blanchard, p. 1.

the governments of the United States, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iraq. They have addressed the world's publics having offered transparent truces, called for boycotts, and encouraged the rejection of government leaders and policies followed by stern warnings if those threats were ignored.

Other messages have been designed to reach beyond their existing followers and sway the median Arab-Muslim citizen, a larger segment of Middle Eastern society often reluctant to support their violent terrorist tactics. Al-Qaeda also issues appeals directly to those who share in their ideology of a global jihad in hopes of garnering financial support, gaining new recruits, and breeding future martyrs. Additional messages target existing international operatives and sleeper cells with instructions, updates, and the latest network developments.

### *Propaganda & Rhetoric*

“Masking their true intentions with propaganda, rhetoric, and a sophisticated use of the mass media and the Internet, this enemy exploits regional tensions and popular grievances.”<sup>25</sup>

– General John P. Abizaid

“Osama bin Laden and his allies are gifted propagandists who have spread a welter of malicious misinformation throughout the Muslim world.”<sup>26</sup>

– New York Times

In order for Al-Qaeda to succeed they must reach beyond their existing legion of followers and sway the median Arab-Muslim citizen. To counter audience resistance,

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<sup>25</sup> Abizaid, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> “Managing The News,” *The New York Times*, February 20, 2002.

their arguments for justification have gravitated toward a number of Arab and Muslim hot issues and convenient conflicts, which they strategically manipulate to advance their cause. A central theme in many of their messages attempts to transform Western actions and policies into an all out war on Islam. Frequently drawing upon historic and religious imagery from the days of the Crusades, Al-Qaeda aims for Arab nationalists by insisting that “the U.S., in conjunction with its puppet states in the region and Israel, was waging a war against Islam, particularly through its policies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its support for sanctions on Iraq and its military presence in the Gulf region.”<sup>27</sup> The war against Islam angle also allows Al-Qaeda’s leadership to consistently spin their actions as being defensive and religiously sanctioned<sup>28</sup> in an effort increase support and tolerance for their overall ideology.

One of the most enduring and convincing arguments in their rhetoric against the United States circulates around the incessant Israeli-Palestinian conflict, “a grievance which has a powerful emotional hold on the Arab-Muslim imagination and has long soured relations with America and the West.”<sup>29</sup> Large segments of the Muslim population feel that the United States is in league with Israel and therefore supports what they view as the continued occupation of Palestine. Popular terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah as well as radical Muslim leaders like Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have all publicly called for the destruction of Israel. Zawahiri has consistently viewed the Palestinian cause as *the* catalyst for gaining universal Arab

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<sup>27</sup> Robin Brown, “Spinning The War: Political Communications, Information Operations and Public Diplomacy in the War on Terrorism,” in Daya Kishan and Des Freedman, eds., *War and the Media* (London: Sage Publications. 2003). p. 95.

<sup>28</sup> Blanchard, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Friedman, p. 392.

support for jihad against the United States. “It is a rallying point for all the Arabs, whether or not they are believers.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, many of Al-Qaeda’s statements frequently underscore American-Zionist conspiracy theories.

*Generating Fear.* The primary purpose of terrorism is to “attract attention and generate fear.”<sup>31</sup> Title 22 of the US Code, Section 2656f(d), states that terrorism is premeditated and politically motivated violence against noncombatant targets by groups “usually intended to influence an audience.”<sup>32</sup> Public statements released by bin Laden and al-Zawahiri frequently contain threats detailing pending attacks and warnings for targeted populations. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, became notorious for releasing gruesome video and still images of hostage beheadings, mutilated bodies, and insurgent bombing aftermaths. To maximize effect, operatives frequently execute strategic attacks in areas with high media and public visibility opportunities. Fear has changed the outcomes of recent European elections, impacted foreign policies, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops in Iraq, and fractured international alliances. Fear has provided terrorist networks with a substantial source of hard power.<sup>33</sup>

*Proof of Life.* Bin Laden, Zawahiri, and Zarqawi frequently issue media statements following military offensives designed to capture them and other operatives to prove that they are still alive and in control of their networks. These statements typically lag within weeks or months of production and refer to specific global events, past and future, for

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<sup>30</sup> Kepel, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> Steven Livingston, “Baghdad Car Bombings’ Target is Media Exposure,” *PR Newswire Round-Up*, October 27, 2005, p. 4. <http://www.newswire.com/articles/view/515673/>

<sup>32</sup> *The War on Terrorism: Terrorism FAQs*, Central Intelligence Agency, April 25, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs. 2004) p. 14.

verification purposes. Following a failed missile attack in Damadola, Pakistan, Zawahiri released a video statement 17 days later taunting the United States in their failed efforts to kill him.

*Launching Attacks.* Al-Qaeda often releases media statements prior to launching terrorist attacks. These messages are considered to be coded communiqués targeting international operatives and sleeper cells. While it has been difficult for analysts to decipher specific pre-attack details from many of these announcements, former CIA director James Woolsey warns that bin Laden rarely releases public statements without a reason and that they usually indicate that “something is being planned.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Terrorism in Cyberspace**

Transferring the bulk of their media and communications operations to the Internet has allowed Al-Qaeda to function in an undetectable and secure setting. Tracking and locating terrorists through the Internet has proven increasingly difficult for international authorities circumnavigating a network of restrictive and conflicting international laws. Terrorists routinely hijack network servers of unsuspecting companies and institutions, including such diverse organizations as the Arkansas Department of Highways and Transportation and George Washington University, to post untraceable messages, instructions, and materials. When terrorists are detected and shut down on one server, they simply hijack another, minimizing communication disruptions while hampering tracking operations.

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<sup>34</sup> Schuster, p. 1.

*Creating A Global Community.* Al-Qaeda has transcended its physical existence as a single terrorist group and evolved into a movement supported by multiple organizations around the globe. Affiliate franchises and upstarts sharing Al-Qaeda's ideology have spread the global jihad beyond the limited borders of the Middle East to Southeast Asia, Europe, and former territories of the Soviet Union. In the March 2005 issue of *First Monday*, David F. Ronfeldt, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, discussed how Al-Qaeda and other terror cells have been using the information age to ingeminate ancient tribal patterns on a global level. "Jihadis are using the Internet and the Web to inspire the creation of a virtual global tribe of Islamic radicals – an online *umma* with kinship segments around the world."<sup>35</sup>

Social networking sites like *MySpace*, *Friendster*, and the Google-owned *Orkut*, complete with 13 million members, have become increasingly popular throughout the Middle East. These sites freely link together large groups of people sharing common interests with little government interference or censorship. Terrorists and their sympathizers have set up sites through *Orkut* under such headings as *Jihad Videos* and *Al Qaeda* to spread their ideology and provide links to additional radical websites creating what Jerrold Post, director of the political psychology program at George Washington University, calls "a virtual community of hatred."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ronfeldt, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> Kasie Hunt, "Osama Bin Laden Fan Clubs Build Online Communities," *USA Today*, March 8, 2006.

The Internet has also increased recruitment numbers for Al-Qaeda and its affiliates by cementing relationships with international operatives and financiers. Abu Musab Al Zarqawi formed his own insurgent movement in Iraq and later aligned it with Al-Qaeda's leadership using his computer. The Internet allowed Zarqawi to ask bin Laden for recognition and reach a "position of leadership"<sup>37</sup> as the head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

*Expanding The Conflict.* Gabriel Weimann, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace and professor of communication at Haifa University, has been studying the growing terrorist presence on the Internet for the last eight years. In his new book *Terror on the Internet*, Weimann states that cyberspace has opened a global arena for conflict. "The Internet has expanded the terrorist's theater of operation, allowing them full control over their communications through the use of the developed world's cyberspace infrastructure."<sup>38</sup> Successful bombing operations by various cells affiliated with Al Qaeda have been carried out in Qatar, Egypt, and Europe. These attacks, which were planned almost exclusively through the Internet, have led intelligence experts to conclude that the global jihad movement has expanded to additional "groups and ad hoc cells" becoming a "Web-directed phenomenon"<sup>39</sup>

*Tactical Research & Training Tool.* Terrorists use the Internet as a research tool drawing up to "80 percent" of their pre-attack information, including nuclear power plant layouts,

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<sup>37</sup> J.J. Green, "Terror on the Internet," *Federal News Radio*, April 17, 2006.

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/index.php?nid=169&sid=758956>

<sup>38</sup> *Terror on the Internet Press Kit*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, March 2006, p.1.

[http://www.usip.org/newsmedia/weimann\\_press/index.html](http://www.usip.org/newsmedia/weimann_press/index.html)

<sup>39</sup> Steve Coll and Susan B. Glasser, "Terrorists Turn to the Web as Base of Operations," *The Washington Post*, August 7, 2005.

railway maps, water supply networks, and airport flight schedules, “using sources legally available to the public.”<sup>40</sup> They have instituted a distance learning network through what Reuven Paz, director of the Project for the Study of Islamist Movements calls “an open university for Jihad”<sup>41</sup> by uploading training videos, manuals, and other strategic materials allowing cells across the world to plan and coordinate operations. Insurgent CD-Rom training videos have been found throughout Iraq with rebel fighters lecturing virtual classes in weapons use, hand-to-hand combat techniques, bomb making, and successful assault tactics. Al-Qaeda’s complete *Encyclopedia of Jihad*<sup>42</sup> can be downloaded in a secure and private setting thereby reducing surveillance opportunities and the risk of capture by international authorities. In Iraq, the Internet has become a “force multiplier” for insurgents facilitating remote-controlled attacks against soldiers by allowing them to “seek out enemy targets” instead of “waiting in ambush.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Cracks In The Pavement?**

*Critical Colleagues.* Despite Al-Qaeda’s relentless media efforts there are clear indications that support for the group may actually be waning, especially among fellow jihadist organizations. Groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and others have historically followed different paths, yet they have not criticized each other publicly out of mutual respect. However, following the most recent bin Laden audiotape which was released on

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<sup>40</sup> *Terror on the Internet Press Kit*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Paul McGeough, “On the Net: An Open University for Jihad,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 14, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> McGeough, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Paul McGeough, “Death on Film – Rebels Wage War by Video,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 14, 2006.

April 23, 2006, customary rants about the crusader-Zionist war against Islam and calls for support for Hamas and the Sudan were met with atypical rejection.

Hamas spokesman Sam Abu Zuhiri responded publicly by saying that Hamas had “a different ideology”<sup>44</sup> than that of Al-Qaeda emphasizing that what he said was his own opinion and that “Hamas has its own positions which are different to the ones expressed by bin Laden.”<sup>45</sup> Zuhiri further emphasized that while Hamas did not agree with many policies they would prefer to have positive relations with the West. Now that Hamas has assumed the official leadership role of the Palestinian people as a political organization they are trying to distance themselves from the stigma of terrorism and gain international legitimacy despite their refusal to recognize Israel. Any association or support for bin Laden at this stage would have drastic diplomatic and economic implications.

The Associated Press reported that the Sudanese government also rejected bin Laden’s remarks by publicly declaring “we are not concerned with such statements, or any other statement that comes from foreign quarters about the crisis in Darfur.”<sup>46</sup> Ahmed Hussein of the Justice and Equality Movement, a Sudanese rebel group, stated that his organization fully rejected bin Laden’s comments and declared that he is completely disconnected from the reality in Darfur. “Bin Laden is still preaching the theory of an

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<sup>44</sup> Caroline Faraj, Octavia Nasr, Nic Robertson & Henry Schuster, “Purported Bin Laden Tape Denounces West’s Response to Hamas.” *CNN.com*, April 23, 2006.

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/04/23/binladen.tape/>

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Bright, “Hamas, Sudan Say ‘No Thanks’ to Osama bin Laden,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 26, 2006. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0426/dailyUpdate.html>

<sup>46</sup> Bright

American-Zionist conspiracy when the real problem comes from Khartoum, which is a Muslim government killing other Muslims.”<sup>47</sup>

Longtime associates of Zawahiri have publicly stated that he is at risk of losing his credibility by implying that he is responsible for every event in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. Osama Rushdi, who once spent three years in an Egyptian prison with Zawahiri, told the *Washington Post* that he is trying to “give the impression that he’s behind everything in the Middle East and everywhere else, fighting against the Americans in Iraq and against Britain in Europe.”<sup>48</sup> He further criticized Al-Qaeda’s second in command further for trying to take credit for the successes in Iraq when everyone, including Zawahiri himself, knows that “he has nothing to do with anything in Iraq.”<sup>49</sup>

A big divide among its colleagues can be seen in Al-Qaeda’s decision to focus on the West while other groups remain committed to the near enemies such as Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This tactical shift created rifts with multiple militant groups “who feared US military power would ultimately destroy them.”<sup>50</sup> When Zawahiri merged his Islamic Jihad network with the Al-Qaeda in 1998, internal feuding by senior members over the group’s core mission began. “Many people said, ‘why would I want to fight the White House and Tony Blair?’”<sup>51</sup> As a result, terrorist networks previously unified with Al-

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<sup>47</sup> “ Hamas Rejects bin Laden Message,” *AlJazeera.Net*, April 24, 2006.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/30AE3D57-5BE6-4058-8244-986AE6175640.htm>

<sup>48</sup> Craig Whitlock, “Keeping Al-Qaeda in His Grip,” *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Whitlock, p A12.

<sup>50</sup> Alda Massoud, “Analyst Says bin Laden ‘Desperate,’” *AlJazeera.Net*, April 24, 2006.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/2303D318-E5BA-493F-885C-99BC37F3C16B.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Whitlock, p. A12.

Qaeda following the successful attacks of 9/11 have begun to disaggregate and resume focus on smaller, more localized conflicts. The movement for jihad may still be fed, in part, by the iconic imagery of what bin Laden now represents but his direct control over operations has dwindled, especially the wake of al-Zarqawi's rapid rise in Iraq.

*Declining Media Platform.* The Arab media is also experiencing a major revolution making it more difficult for bin Laden to air his grievances. Instead of airing complete recordings, the often criticized *Al-Jazeera* network has begun to edit statements released by Al-Qaeda's leadership followed by more critical analysis of the content. Many Arab television networks refuse to air any form of Al-Qaeda's messages and a growing number of Middle Eastern newspapers frequently denounce any statements by bin Laden, Zawahiri, and Zarqawi. As a result, the Arab media is beginning to limit coverage of what it sees as unacceptable: "Islamic militants targeting of civilians."<sup>52</sup>

Competition for hearts and minds is also becoming more difficult for Al-Qaeda due to an influx of new media choices reaching Middle Eastern audiences. In addition to *Al-Jazeera*, satellite technology allows Muslims to access and ingest global news media sources from America, Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific. Individual networks throughout the Arab world are gravitating away from international and regional news choosing to focus on local issues instead. While the U.S. government has often blamed the Arab media for a number of problems, "the multitude of satellite television stations

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<sup>52</sup> Sebastian Usher, "Arab Media Shun Al-Qaeda Message," *BBC News*, January, 19, 2006. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4628028.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4628028.stm)

has led to a vigorous competition for audiences”<sup>53</sup> throughout the Middle East providing viewers with multiple perspectives on global issues.

*Internal Frustration & Rifts.* Signs indicate that Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri have become frustrated after losing what they view as direct control of their operations to affiliate micro-cells, especially in Iraq. Media statements released in April of 2006 by both leaders have been viewed as desperate pleas to regain control of a movement that has moved on without them. Middle East analyst Fawaz Gerges says bin Laden knows that his messages are falling on deaf ears and that “the caravan of jihad has left him behind and is moving in a dramatically different direction than he had expected.”<sup>54</sup>

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has caused rifts with Al-Qaeda’s leadership over his extreme tactics and for conducting operations without their input and guidance. They have questioned their decision to appoint him as their leading representative in Iraq “because he is too decisive as a leader and is driven by arrogance.”<sup>55</sup> Zawahiri has communicated his concerns to Zarqawi fearing that his brutal and violent approach would lose the support of Muslim moderates. As a result, intelligence officials in Europe and the Middle East state that “a growing rivalry has developed between Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Open Air Waves,” *PBS NewsHour*, April 27, 2006. [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june06/arab\\_4-27.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june06/arab_4-27.html)

<sup>54</sup> Adla Massoud, “Analyst Says bin Laden ‘Desperate,’” *Al Jazeera*, April 26, 2006.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/2303D318-E5BA-493F-885C-99BC37F3C16B.htm>

<sup>55</sup> Ely Karmon, “Al-Qaida and the War on Terror after Iraq,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Spring 2006. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/jv10no1a1.html>

<sup>56</sup> Whitlock, p. A12.

## **Fueling the Fire: America's Challenges**

*A Tarnished Image.* The United States currently suffers from a tarnished image throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Anti-Americanism has spread throughout the region due, in part, to controversial policies, continued bloodshed in Iraq, the war on terror, unyielding support for Israel, and escalating tensions with Iran. Recent findings by the Pew Global Attitudes Project have verified that America still faces an enormous challenge “regarding its public image in Arab and Muslim countries.”<sup>57</sup>

Our hard power approaches to democratization have caused more harm than good by pigeonholing the United States as an aggressive crusader, and not the peaceful liberator the current administration would have the world believe. As a result, “many Muslims today view Washington as too close to what they characterize as authoritarian regimes in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere.”<sup>58</sup> While Al-Qaeda’s rhetoric may not convince everyone to become a martyr and resort to murder, it does keep the United States, its controversial policies, and questionable actions firmly planted in the international spotlight further intensifying the strained relationships America’s government has been ignoring for several years.

*Iraq.* “We have lost the war for public opinion in Iraq.”<sup>59</sup> It has become one of the most damaging stains on America’s reputation and credibility. Instead of liberating the

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<sup>57</sup> *How the United States is Perceived in the Arab and Muslim Worlds.* Testimony of Andrew Kohut, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, U.S. House International Relations Committee, House of Representatives. November 10, 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Jeff Gerth, “Military’s Information War is Vast and Often Secretive,” *The New York Times*, December 11, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon. *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a strategy for Getting it Right* (New York: Times Books. 2005). p. 217.

oppressed from a convincingly well-publicized tyrant and planting the seeds for a promised democracy, we have launched the country into endless turmoil and bloodshed. Routine attacks and murders by insurgent factions; the scarcity of food, medical supplies, clean water, and electricity; and infighting between rival religious and ethnic groups have brought Iraq to the brink of civil war. What order Saddam Hussein managed to impose on his country, despite all of his faults, has been lost. If promoting democracy is supposed to improve lives<sup>60</sup>, the United States has clearly failed its mission with the Iraqi people.

“Every day that the occupation of Iraq generates graphic footage of American occupation and Islamist ‘resistance’, Al-Qaeda wins.”<sup>61</sup> Iraq has become a retrogression point in the war on terror, increasing levels of anti-Americanism and fueling emerging insurgent groups more dangerous than Al-Qaeda. On April 30, 2006, The State Department released its annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report which stated that Iraq had been transformed into the number one safe haven for terrorists and foreign fighters. Since the U.S. led invasion in 2003, Iraq has become a “safe and proven training ground for terrorists.”<sup>62</sup> The report also indicated that smaller terrorist groups have become more dangerous than Al-Qaeda itself.<sup>63</sup> For radicalized Muslims and foreign fighters Iraq is no longer just a war, it is a cause.

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<sup>60</sup> Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Paul J. Saunders, “Democracy the Day After,” *The National Interest*, Spring 2005.  
<http://www.nationalinterest.org/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=1ABA92EFCD8348688A4EBEB3D69D33EF&tier=4&id=CCAF115F8CB443BBB6F666D6C258416>

<sup>61</sup> Lynch, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> “Iraq Tops U.S. Terrorist Report,” *United Press International Newstrack*, April 28, 2006.  
<http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/view.php?StoryID=20060428-091028-2484r>

<sup>63</sup> Elise Labott, “Report Says Iraq Becoming Terrorist Safe Haven,” *CNN.com*, April 28, 2006.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/04/28/terror.report/index.html>

*Iran.* U.S. relations with Iran continue along a downward spiral. The current administration's overtly public "coercive diplomacy" strategy toward Iran and its nuclear program, which includes yet another "regime change"<sup>64</sup> option through military force, has intensified the nature of the conflict and further alienated the two countries. The State Department lists Iran as a major state sponsor of terrorism<sup>65</sup> and fears its nuclear program will provide radical insurgents with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). However, gaining widespread Arab and Muslim support for another (and seemingly more difficult) war in the midst of the Iraq situation appears to be slim following the credibility of the WMD reports used to justify the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

While Europe has played a major role pushing the U.N. Security Council, America is still leading the international efforts.<sup>66</sup> A military strike against Iran's secular government could unify its divided population and verify Al-Qaeda's rhetoric that America is a crusading super power and that the West is in fact at war with Islam.

*The War on Terrorism.* The war on terror is an unfortunate but necessary endeavor which has not been received well throughout the Arab-Muslim world, due in part to the collateral damage it has created. In the case of radical extremists already committed to murder, hard power is the only effective instrument of statecraft available. Use of force however, particularly the awesome arsenal that is America's military, can both intimidate and enrage the very same populations it has been deployed to protect. While the U.S.

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<sup>64</sup> Peter Baker, Dafna Linzer & Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. is Studying Military Strike Options on Iran," *The Washington Post*, April, 9 2006.

<sup>65</sup> *Country Reports on Terrorism*, p. 180.

<sup>66</sup> Jim Bitterman, "U.S. Leads Drive on Iran Sanctions," *CNN.com*, May 3, 2006.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/05/03/iran.meet/index.html>

media may have sanitized its coverage of this war<sup>67</sup>, international media images of civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq continue to flood the Middle East and our continued presence in both countries perpetuates Al-Qaeda's Western crusader rhetoric.

*Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* Peace efforts between these two stalwarts have failed for decades despite the best international intentions and fault can easily be assigned to both sides of the conflict. Large percentages of the Arab and Muslim world, from peaceful citizens to radical militants, have overwhelmingly sided with the Palestinian people calling for an end to what they perceive as Israeli occupation. While the United States has worked on countless solutions and called for the creation of a free Palestinian state, our steadfast support for Israel continues to ripple throughout the region. In the eyes of the Middle East, America is on the wrong side of this festering debate.

### **Recommendations**

In order to counter the growing wave of anti-Americanism and prevent the spread of terrorism, I have provided a number of recommendations with a particular emphasis on communication. These soft power methods of statecraft represent long range solutions and will necessitate a long term commitment if the United States aims to improve its relationship with Middle Eastern publics and minimize threats to national security.

*Earn Hearts & Minds.* If ever there was a time when American values and ideals were questioned by both our enemies and allies alike, this is the time. The current

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<sup>67</sup> Sean Aday, "The Real War Will Never Get Televised: An Analysis of Casualty Imagery in American Television Coverage of the Iraq War," *Media and Conflict in the 21st Century*, 2005.

administration's push for democratization, complete with public battle cries for regime change, do not bode well for a nation looking to garner international support and reduce anti-Americanism. Taking out the terrorists is only a short term solution. A long term commitment to soft power, engagement of foreign publics, and establishing reciprocal channels of communication will improve our chances of winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim world and allow us to diffuse terrorism at its source. The administration must implement a unified and sustained communications program to proactively explain our policies and actions to global publics and include rapid response contingency plans to help manage perceptions and counter crisis situations, scandals, and terrorist rhetoric.

Stamping out terrorism will require a significant amount of hard power and military intervention is a necessary evil when private citizens become the primary targets of political and religious extremists. "The longer-term challenge is for the hearts and minds of Muslims"<sup>68</sup> and we have failed in many ways to win them over. Our "credibility is diminished when words and actions do not match, when statements directed to multiple audiences are inconsistent, when overt and covert activities are seen to be co-funded and co-located."<sup>69</sup>

Manage Perceptions. Jarol Manheim explained the importance of "managing perceptions" in order to promote US foreign policy programs before a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting in December, 2001. In addition to developing consistent

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<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Alter, "Truth: The Best Propaganda – Disinformation has its uses, but it's not the way to win the Muslim world's hearts and minds," *Newsweek*, March 4, 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms." Paper prepared for American Political Science Association Conference on *International Communication and Conflict*, August 31, 2005.

messages, Manheim asserted the need to develop ways of “telling our ‘story’ that align with audience beliefs and expectations” and to “create a receptive setting for more specific messages.”<sup>70</sup> Part of this can be achieved through Eytan Gilboa’s concept of “media diplomacy,” using the mass media to interface with both state and non-state actors “to build confidence and advance negotiations, as well as to mobilize the public support for agreements.”<sup>71</sup> Establishing positive relationships with global media outlets will help ensure that our messages are not distorted, edited, or ignored and provide counterpoints to terrorist rhetoric. However, the current administration’s over-reliance on public relations spin, planted news stories,<sup>72</sup> and other controversial tactics including the once proposed Office of Strategic Influence<sup>73</sup> are hardly ideal methods of media diplomacy.

*Drop the Spin.* The United States needs to remove itself from the propaganda business if it plans to attract and maintain a receptive international audience. Joseph Nye stressed the dangers of using propaganda stating how it is not only derided by audiences, but that “it also may turn out to be counterproductive if it undermines a country’s reputation for credibility.”<sup>74</sup> Yet, a report issued by the Government Accounting Office earlier this year found that the Bush Administration spent upwards of \$1.6 billion in federal funds across 343 contracts with “public relations firms, advertising agencies, media organizations and

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<sup>70</sup> Jarol Manheim, “Talking points for meeting of December 18, 2001 with staff of Senate Foreign Relations Committee.”

<sup>71</sup> Eytan Gilboa, “Mass communication and diplomacy: A theoretical framework,” *Communication Theory*, August, 2005, p. 295.

<sup>72</sup> Lynne Duke, “Propaganda? Nah, Here’s the Scoop, Say the Guys Who Planted Stories in Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2006. p. D1.

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Alter, “Truth: The Best Propaganda,” *Newsweek*, March 4, 2002.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Nye, “Public Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *The Globalist*, May 10, 2004.

individual journalists between 2003 and 2005.”<sup>75</sup> The biggest media spender was the Department of Defense at \$1.1 billion with the Department of Homeland Security coming in fourth place with \$24 million. The administration has also earmarked \$75 million for an ongoing propaganda program “designed to advance democracy in Iran”<sup>76</sup>

Reduce & Invest. Reducing marketing and public relations budgets will allow the current administration needs to invest in more international exchanges in arts, culture, and entertainment. Instead of campaigning about all of the positive things America and its culture has to offer, we need to physically expose more people to it. Countless diplomatic experts and scholars have already proven that our cultural contributions to the world are well received despite the widespread rejection of many of our policies. Providing ten Arabic youths with a positive exchange experience will have more of an impact in their hearts and minds than any multi-million dollar media campaign.

Establish Reciprocal Channels of Communication. Engaging the Muslim world will require reciprocal channels of communication. William Rugh, former U.S. Ambassador to the Arab Emirates, states that America’s interaction with the Arab and Muslim world has historically “taken on the form of a one-way monologue, rather than a two-way dialogue.”<sup>77</sup> While Charlotte Beers’ Madison Avenue diplomacy methods failed to

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<sup>75</sup> “White House \$\$\$ for PR; Mind the Credibility Gap,” *PR News*, March 27, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> “Washington’s PR War Against Iran: Is the VOA Really DOA?” *PR News*, March 27, 2006. p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> Lindsay Wise, “A Second Look at Alhurra,” *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, 2005.

succeed on many levels, she was correct in suggesting the importance of addressing audiences “from their point of view”,<sup>78</sup> rather than promoting that of the government’s.

Understanding the roots of anti-Americanism requires direct communication with those publics most affected by it. Understanding the rise in terrorism requires a direct dialogue in regions most likely to spawn it. Until these issues are resolved, Al-Qaeda and its clones will continue to flourish. Terrorism is a lot like the leg of a lizard with hatred as its heart. If you sever the leg, the lizard may slow down for a short period of time, but a new leg will eventually grow back. If you want to kill the lizard however, you must stop its heart.

It is time for the administration to stop telling the Arab and Muslim worlds what their problems are, and let them explain them to us for themselves. As one American official stated in a September 2005 report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, “there’s a worldwide debate about the relationship between Islam and the West... and we don’t have a seat at that table.”<sup>79</sup> It is absolutely critical that this situation is reversed.

*Increase Dedicated Diplomats.* No amount of spin will alter the minds of Middle Eastern and Muslim publics perpetually angered by America’s perceived unilateral support for Israel, the war on terror, the instability in Iraq, and a host of other unpopular policies. Therefore, winning the hearts and minds of a growing global audience predisposed to

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<sup>78</sup> Carl Weisre, “Bush Administration Struggles to Build U.S. ‘Brand’ Abroad,” *Gannett News Service*, July 14, 2002. <http://www.gannettonline.com/gns/mideast/brand.htm>

<sup>79</sup> *Cultural Diplomacy the Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*, Report of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, September 2005, p. 3.

scoff our every will also require “the talents of experienced, dedicated, highly knowledgeable individuals” in place of the current crop of “Republican party stalwarts with public relations or advertising experience.”<sup>80</sup> Pitching the United States as “an elegant brand”<sup>81</sup> may work for the tourist trade but lacks legitimacy and substance in real-world foreign affairs. As Ximena Ortiz, executive editor of *The National Interest* asserts, “the administration must re-engineer policy, not make new pitches.”<sup>82</sup> Diplomats are well versed in the cultures and traditions of the countries they work within and therefore know how best to communicate with foreign publics. Their ability to interface with populations on a person-to-person level provides us with a level of communication intimacy no publicity campaign can match.

Push Qualitative Research. The U.S. government needs to look beyond standard quantitative audience data and determine if our messages are having an impact. When it comes to funded broadcasting projects such as *Alhurra* and *Radio Sawa*, simply having a “horse”<sup>83</sup> in the Arab media race does not mean you are effectively communicating. The Middle East has been inundated with new and emerging satellite channels all scrambling for audience shares. Even the almighty *Al-Jazeera* has been impacted by private and state-funded stations in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. “There is no longer any point in

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<sup>80</sup> Benjamin and Simon, p. 218.

<sup>81</sup> Former U.S. Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and former CEO of advertising firm J. Walter Thompson, Charlotte Beers, was once quoted referring to the U.S. as “an elegant brand” and that her initial impulse was to find a “great athlete” or “singer” to “seduce” the foreign Muslim audience (Benjamin and Simon, p. 219). Following her failed “Shared Values” campaign even PR professionals supported her sudden departure stating in *O’Dwyer’s Public Relations News* that “she was horrible and the U.S. has lost all post-9/11 support” as a result. ([http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Charlotte Beers](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Charlotte_Beers)).

<sup>82</sup> Ximena Ortiz, “Geopolitical Jihad,” *The National Interest*, March 17, 2006. <http://www.nationalinterest.org/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=1ABA92EFC8348688A4EBEB3D69D33EF&tier=4&id=FBDD99B5702746A892E06AE322F09F60>

<sup>83</sup> Lindsay Wise, “A Second Look at Alhurra,” *TBS Journal*, Spring 2005. <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring05/wise.htm>

broadcasting in-artful propaganda to viewers who are experiencing a 500-channel universe.”<sup>84</sup>

Maintaining respectable audience numbers will prove meaningless if our communications efforts are perceived to be negative or disingenuous. Moreover, we need to capitalize on *Radio Sawa's* captive audience by doing more than just playing a good mix of popular music. Therefore, more qualitative research needs to be conducted to determine what the audience really thinks about our messages and what strategic content should be instated.

*Curb Public Saber-Rattling.* The United States must stop issuing aggressive public statements against international regimes. Issuing highly visible threats to foreign governments through mediated statements will fuel resentment and provide radicals with more ammunition. We also must avoid condemning entire countries or populations when critiquing other government policies and actions. In the case of Iran, we must attempt to revive some form of diplomatic relations as our continued aggressive stance has fueled tensions in the region. The current administration is all but encouraging Iran to launch a nuclear attack by refusing to communicate through direct channels and issuing diatribes.

*Stop Forcing Democracy.* The United States needs to stop forcing democracy militarily and pursue more diplomatic routes. Rallying international pressure will go further than invading a country and displacing its leadership. This process has all but failed in Iraq and is being held together by strings in Afghanistan. Entire populations may despise their

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<sup>84</sup> “Open Air Waves,” *PBS NewsHour*

governments, but they will crystallize into resistant and rebellious movements once threatened by invasion and occupation.

Use More NGOs. The United States may be the world's current super power, but it needs to flaunt this fact less. We must learn to rely more on NGOs and allies to address international conflicts and issues, especially in regions where America's image still suffers. Allowing other entities such as the European Union and the United Nations to take on lead roles will remove many political obstacles the United States carries with it.

### **Conclusion**

While immediate hard power tactics may be required to stop Al-Qaeda and its affiliate terror networks, the United States needs to invest in more soft power opportunities. Communication has been a successful tool for militant radicals embracing contemporary mass media technologies to further their objectives. The United States must improve its communication counter measures and learn to manage perceptions without losing more credibility in the Middle East. This will require less public relations spin and more open and honest lines of communication.

Current and future administrations must listen to the collective voices of the Middle East and engineer less controversial and seemingly aggressive policies. These suggestions will take serious commitment and require multiple resource investments through several generations. However, if we fail to engage the Muslim world now then the war on

terrorism will falter and we will continue to see new generations of terrorists on every horizon.

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