STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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A PROPOSED GRAND STRATEGY FOR DEFEATING BIN LADEN AND HIS AL QAEDA NETWORK

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This paper examines Osama bin Laden, his al Qaeda network and the corresponding strategic context; examines the United States' goals and interests; and applies the concept of center of gravity to develop a grand strategy for their defeat. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda represent an insurgency aimed at the governments of Muslim countries with the ultimate goal of establishing a pan-Islamic caliphate. Assuming that the US is committed to long-term victory in fighting this war, it must apply national instruments of power to simultaneously improve the legitimacy of those governments while de-legitimizing the Islamist threat. In addition to US commitment, victory will depend on those governments' recognition of the threat, their commitment to defeat it, and ultimately upon Islam's rejection of "Islamism," or political Islam.

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A PROPOSED GRAND STRATEGY FOR DEFEATING BIN LADEN AND HIS AL QAEDA NETWORK

Within one hour on September 11, 2001 nineteen hijackers commandeered four separate commercial airliners and crashed three of them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon killing over 3,000 innocent men, women and children from over 80 nations.[1] The fourth aircraft crashed into Pennsylvania countryside when passengers--upon discovering their fate--overwhelmed the hijackers. Investigators found Korans in the hijackers' suitcases and suicide notes and prayers to Allah in their apartments. All hijackers were linked to Osama bin Laden (OBL) and his al Qaeda (AQ) network with possible linkages to Saddam Hussein. Investigators determined that 15 of 19 of the hijackers were Saudi Arabians, one was Egyptian, two were from the United Arab Emirates, and one was of unknown nationality. In his address to Congress following the attack, President Bush declared war on terrorism and demanded Taliban rulers in Afghanistan hand over OBL and his AQ followers known to be hiding there; or to share in their fate. Why did OBL and AQ attack the US and what strategy should the US pursue to defeat OBL and his AQ network? There are no simple answers for what is a very complex war on terrorism. But there are tools available that can be of assistance.

Over 150 years ago Carl von Clausewitz, conceptualized the theoretical concept of "center of gravity" as an essential tool in determining a nation's military strategy. It is still used in determining strategy not just for military operations, but also for all the instruments of national power to include informational, diplomatic and economic. Clausewitz stated, *"one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.*[2] This paper will examine this new threat and the corresponding strategic context, examine the United States' goals and interests, and apply the concept of center of gravity to develop a grand strategy to defeat Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network.

THE NEW THREAT.

In order to determine the enemy's center of gravity, one must understand the enemy's dominate characteristics. This new terrorist threat is rooted in Islamism, or political Islam; its physical manifestation is OBL and his AQ network. Understanding Islamism together with its physical agents is the key to development and execution of a coherent strategy for its defeat.

ISLAMISM.

Islamism is a product of its history, variants, and sources of legitimacy; government interactions; and evolving culture.

Islamism is "a political and ideological platform to restructure the state, society, and the culture."[3] It is rooted in the belief that the only way Muslims will correct the conditions they face is by submitting to the will of the leaders appointed by Allah. This movement has been around for many years but began to take hold as Arab nationalism began to decline with Egypt's failed attack on Israel in 1967. Islamism continued to grow when Islamists overthrew the Shah of Iran and installed a religious government. It grew even stronger from 1979 to 1989 when mujahideen from many Arab countries fought in a holy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and eventually forced their withdrawal. Many of the mujahideen veterans, filled with religious fervor, returned to their countries and subsequently became disappointed by their perceived apostasy of their governments.

There are two types of Islamists: militants and incrementalists. "Militants have a sense of urgency and a dedication to radical action."[4] They attempt to undermine their government by acts of terror intended to demonstrate the government's inability to perform its most basic function: security of its people. Incrementalists denounce violence while advocating increased Islamic reforms in all aspects of life: at home, in schools, in the workplace, and in the government. Both types of Islamists agree upon their endstate--an Islamic government--and both derive their legitimacy from the governments they oppose.

While the foundation of Islamists' legitimacy is their belief in, and ties to Islam, their legitimacy is inversely proportional to the legitimacy of the regimes they oppose. The perception of Islamists' legitimacy increases when they fault governments for inability to correct problems facing their countries; lack of public redress; and perceived tolerance of non-Islamic behavior.

Moreover, lack of economic growth continues to plague Muslim governments in the Middle East and South Asia. The combined gross domestic products (GDP) of all 22 Arab countries are less than half of Italy's.[5] Many of these governments continually fail to address poor economic conditions such as 15-30 percent unemployment[6] and lack of investment. The socialist policies, excessive tariffs and state ownership of businesses[7] not only cause foreigners not to invest, but result in two thirds of the profits generated in the Middle East being invested elsewhere.[8] These conditions are projected to worsen due to the Arab population explosion in which 70% of all Arabs are under the age of 25 and 60% are under the age of 21.[9] In most of these countries "state security has tightened, as has state control over the media. Legitimate

opposition groups have been crushed, bought off, or co-opted."[10] Because many of these governments have no means to adequately address grievances, using mosques and mullahs in the form of Islamism is often the only alternative to achieve stability. However, Islamists charge these same governments as lacking fidelity to Islamic principles, or as being apostate.

To identify with the predominately Muslim populations, governments often have made seemingly harmless concessions to incrementalists such as increasing Islamic instruction in schools and universities at the expense of practical skills such as science, math, engineering, and medicine. These concessions prove harmful when graduates offer no practical skills and often find themselves unemployed. The reaction of most Muslims, whether they are Islamists or not, is to seek blame for their countries' stagnation.[11] However, the distorted application of Islamic doctrine may be a major factor in this stagnation. Renowned Middle Eastern scholar Bernard Lewis states that their problems are due to a lack of freedom caused by their "adopted alien notions and practices" of Islam.[12] In his most recent book, "What Went Wrong?," he states,

> If Islam is an obstacle to freedom, to science, to economic development, how is it that Muslim society in the past was a pioneer in all three, and this when Muslims were much closer in time to the sources and inspiration of their faith than they are now? Some have indeed posed the question in a different form--not "What has Islam done to the Muslims?" but "What have the Muslims done to Islam?," and have answered by laying the blame on specific teachers and doctrines and groups.[13]

The implications of Lewis' findings are that Islamism as well as the most fundamental version of Islam, Wahabism (the version practiced by OBL and in Saudi Arabia), has suppressed the freedom needed for all types of development. Over the past decade, Wahabism has been widely disseminated and is taught in Madrassahs in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bosnia with varying degrees of rigor. Neither Islamism nor Wahabism can compare to the Islam of the first 10 centuries that was tolerant and enabled Islamic leadership in a host of areas.[14] In a lecture to the US Army War College, Dr. Shafeeq N. Chabra, of the Kuwaiti Information Agency, stated:

> Islam is the youngest of the three monotheistic religions and is the only one that has not reformed. If Islamic Puritanism (Islamism) succeeds, there is no need for reform. We are getting to the point where people are beginning to see that Islamic Puritanism leads no where.[15]

Nevertheless, the Islamist movement continues to grow as the Muslim population explodes. Currently, over 70% of all Arabs are under the age of 25.[16] Many of the disaffected males attracted to militant Islamism become entangled with OBL and his AQ network which have now established a presence within the United States.

OSAMA BIN LADEN.

OBL has emerged as the world's leading militant Islamist. He reveals his goals and his evolving strategy in the numerous interviews, fatwas and actions; and his status among Islamists is legendary.

Since 1996, he is has written three "fatwas", or Islamic judgments and given several television interviews in which he has declared jihad, or holy war, against the US. His words have been backed by action and he has been linked to terrorist attacks against US service members located in Riyadh in 1995, Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996, US embassies in Nairobie and Dar Es Salaam in 1998, the USS Cole in 1999, and the 9-11 Twin Towers attack. OBL has declared the US his enemy and has demanded that all Muslims kill any and all Americans anywhere and everywhere they "see" them.[17] He justifies his actions by charging the US has: desecrated the Muslim holy land through the occupation of its territory by military force; stolen Saudi Arabia's wealth by procuring her oil then forcing her to purchase US weapons far beyond her needs; caused massive suffering to numerous innocent Muslims such as Palestinian and Iraqi children; and supported the existence of Israel and its criminal acts against the Palestinians.[18] These charges resonate with the majority of the world's Muslims[19] even though most Muslims also condemn his acts of terrorism.[20]

While OBL's terrorist attacks have targeted the US over the past several years, moderate governments of Muslim countries, especially Saudi Arabia--not the US--are OBL's primary targets. OBL proposed to overthrow moderate governments such as Saudi Arabia as early as 1996.[21] In his "Declaration of War" he states that the bombings at Riyadh and Khobar were a warning of the "volcanic eruption emerging as a result of the severe oppression, suffering, excessive inequity and poverty."[22] He charges that the Saudi government had "torn off its legitimacy" by suspending the Islamic Shari'ah law and "exchanging it with man made civil law"[23] only Allah can make law. He continues to attack the legitimacy of the Saudi government because of its "inability to protect the country"[24] by allowing "the American crusader forces--to occupy the land for the longest of years."[25] He states that the king of Saudi Arabia was given a petition of charges in 1992 and did nothing to correct them.[26] OBL reveals his intentions to overthrow the Saudi government and establish a pan-Islamic caliphate in his guidance to the mujahideen regarding oil:

> I would like here to alert my brothers, the Mujahideen, the sons of the nation, to protect this (oil) wealth and not to include it in the battle as it is a great Islamic wealth and a large economical power essential for the soon to be established Islamic state.[27]

Because of his inability to overthrow his own government, he has directed the terrorist efforts of AQ towards the US and sought to unify Islamists[28] against this common enemy.[29] In the past, OBL's stated purpose for attacking the US was to cause its complete withdraw from the Middle East; ostensibly to weaken moderate Muslim governments. Militant Islamists would then be strong enough to overthrow these alleged puppets of the US.[30] With his direct attack on the United States on September 11, OBL's strategy shifted from one of causing an immediate withdrawal from the Middle East to one of provoking an overwhelming response intended to unify all Islamists into overthrowing their governments. Michael Doran, a noted Professor of Near East Studies at Princeton University describes his strategy:

> America, cast as the villain, was supposed to use its military might like a cartoon character trying to kill a fly with a shotgun. . . The ensuing outrage would open a chasm between state and society in the Middle East. [31]

OBL's immediate video broadcast following the commencement of US bombing of the Taliban in Afghanistan on October 7 and President Bush's speech on the same day, was clearly planned ahead of time to coincide with the US response he was sure to provoke. OBL's video statement was broadcast around the world and reveals his strategy when he says, "I say these events have split the whole world into two camps: the camp of belief and the disbelief. So every Muslim shall take--shall support his religion."[32] According to Doran,

> Polarizing the world between the umma and the regimes allied with the United States would help achieve bin Laden's primary goal: furthering the cause of Islamic revolution within the Muslim world itself, in the Arab lands and in Saudi Arabia above all. He had no intention of defeating America. War with the United States was not a goal in itself but rather an instrument designed to help his brand of extremist Islam to survive and flourish among believers. Americans, in short, have been drawn into someone else's civil war.[33]

Thus the US was drawn into fighting alongside the governments of numerous Muslim countries against an insurgency that has been present for years.

OBL's desired goal or end state is the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate. The country that comes closest to the caliphate model was Taliban controlled Afghanistan[34] where OBL resided and ran terrorist training camps from 1996. The Afghan Taliban strictly interpreted Shari'ah law from the Koran and Hadith and ruthlessly imposed it upon their fellow Afghans. OBL desires all countries that are predominately Muslim to be run in a similar fashion.

OBL's status among fellow Muslims is legendary. He derives his legitimacy from his rejection of a wealthy inheritance as a young man; his ability to convince other Islamists that the US is the cause of their problems while the governments he opposes are US puppets; a seemingly impossible series of successful acts of terrorism against the US; and his use of the

Koran to justify his actions. As a leader, OBL gained legendary status with his fellow Muslims when he rejected a wealthy lifestyle (he inherited over $300M) and became a freedom fighter. He supported the Mujahideen freedom fighters in repelling the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980's. He played a key role in providing financial support through both fund raising in Arab countries and from his own fortune. In making concessions with Islamists, many governments of Muslim countries have readily allowed their media, which are otherwise censored by the government, to blame the US for all of their shortcomings.[35] In so doing, the governments attempt to discredit their portrayal as US puppets. Because OBL takes on the US directly in his fatwas, internationally televised interviews, and his terrorist acts, he demonstrates the courage to do what Muslim governments are perceived as being unable or unwilling. OBL's legitimacy is further strengthened by the perception that Allah has blessed him and AQ with numerous victories in the form of successful acts of terrorism against the US. In the Muslim culture, Allah is responsible for everything--be it success or failure. His success continues to increase his following. He is the icon of radical Muslims who view him as instrumental in guiding and instigating the masses into action.[36] Moreover, his speech and writings are filled with numerous passages from the Koran that support his radical interpretation and increase his legitimacy especially among Islamists. OBL's perceived legitimacy among Islamists has helped to create and lead his network for terror known as al Qaeda.

AL QAEDA.

The threat fueled by OBL is manifested within the al Qaeda network and is a function of its origin, goals, employment, organization, size, and likely targets.

During the war in Afghanistan in the 1980's, OBL and his mentor, Abdullah Azzam, recruited Muslims from throughout the world to fight the jihad against the Soviets. The resultant organization was called the mujahideen services office--Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK)--with headquarters in Peshawar and with recruiting offices in over 50 countries.[37] When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan and Azzam was assassinated in 1989,[38] OBL emerged as his replacement. OBL transformed MAK to a network for world wide Islamic jihad and changed the name to al Qaeda--the base. Subsequently, many of the mujahideen veterans throughout the world became AQ members. New recruits continued to enter the mujahideen training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan, then fought in Islamic "holy wars" throughout the world, or returned to their country of origin. Many of these also became AQ members. Its goals are essentially the same as OBL's. The International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism characterizes the current AQ organization:

> Al Qaeda is a network of many different fundamentalist organizations in diverse countries. The common factor in all these groups is the use of terrorism for the attainment of their political goals, and an agenda whose main priority is the overthrow of the "heretic governments" in their respective countries and the establishment of Islamic governments based on the rule of Shari'ah.[39]

Regarding the goals of AQ President Bush stated, "Al Qaeda is to terror what mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world--and imposing radical beliefs on people everywhere."[40]

AQ is employed to conduct three types of wars: fighting Muslim led governments that are, in their opinion, not following Islam and are perceived to be puppets of the west (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, and more recently Pakistan); fighting governments that are suppressing their Muslim populace (India, Philippines, Chechnya, etc.); and fighting the source of evil--the west (primarily terrorist acts directed at the United States followed closely by Israel and the United Kingdom).[41] At times AQ will fight conventional battles using "Afghan Arabs" of the disputed region such as the wars being fought in Chechnya, Sudan, and Kashmir. This is similar to what they did in Afghanistan in the 1980's against the Soviets and in the 1990's with the Taliban. More often, they will conduct terrorist operations against the most vulnerable targets yielding the greatest psychological impact. The Indian Parliament, Khobar Towers, US Embassies in Africa, The USS Cole, World Trade Center, and the Pentagon are well known examples. Their organization resembles a computer network in that it is a loose merger of many radical Islamic terrorist groups with cells in over 60 countries that can function with or without OBL at its head. It is very difficult to detect the relationship between cells because minimal information is given out and with only key leaders knowing entire plans. One or numerous cells can be removed with little effect on the overall organization.[42] Paul Pillar, the National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia at the Central Intelligence Agency, uses the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center as an example of why it is so difficult to trace the network:

> The group that struck the World Trade Center. . .did not exist until its members, foreigners of diverse nationalities coalesced in New York for that one attack. That they belonged to no terrorist group when they entered the United States underscores how the mere movement of highly discontented people can bring about the malignant combination of ringleader, collaborators, and target, despite passport checks at international borders.[43]

With this type of organization, it is very easy for one leader, the only one who knows the entire plan, to use foreigners, who will likely be caught if they should survive. This blurs lines of responsibility and dulls linkages to state sponsorship, which is almost essential for large scale

terrorist operations.[44] The leader for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing was Ramsi Youseff who may well have been an Iraqi agent as is alleged by author and former presidential advisor, Laurie Mylroie.[45]

AQ is organized with OBL at its head, followed by his assistant and private physician, Dr. Ayman Zawahiri, who is also the head of Egypt based Islamic Jihad and was imprisoned for assisting in the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981. There is a consultive council, Shura majlis, immediately below OBL. The council has four committees that report directly to it: military, religious, finance and media. The members of the committees are hand picked. The military committee recruits, trains, procures, and supports military operations. They plan and prepare attacks approved by the majlis often on targets personally approved by OBL.[46] The finance committee develops finances to support AQ operations and training. It uses many front organizations to divert Islamic charities and raises funds through both legal and illegal means. It also receives and launders financial support from state sponsors. The religious committee provides "Islamic justification" for AQ actions and its positions. The media committee disseminates news and propaganda in support of AQ. Its goal is winning the hearts and minds of all Muslims while exploiting terrorist acts in order to defeat the national will of its enemies.[47] Its effective use was seen by the world when a pre-made tape depicting OBL cave side with AK-47 was shown repeatedly world wide immediately following President Bush's speech explaining the start of the US bombing campaign of the Taliban. OBL's videotaped speech addressed specific grievances of Middle Easterners--US support of Israel, lack of a Palestinian homeland, the suffering of Iraqis, US continued presence in the Muslim holy land, and the perception of US disregard for Muslim lives--and for many, garnered their passive support even if they did not agree that terrorism was justifiable by their Islamic faith.[48]

AQ is estimated to have anywhere from 10-20,000 members located in over 60 countries.[49] They receive training in conventional weapons, explosives, assassination and sabotage in camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and possibly Iraq and Iran. Many are "jihad" veterans of the wars in Afghanistan in the 1980's and 1990's. Many are jihad veterans of Chechnya, Uzbekistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sudan where they fought not for their countries, but for Islam.[50] Others are veterans of terrorist operations that have taken place throughout the world. And some are "sleeper" agents waiting to be activated to support a terrorist operation or who have recently responded to OBL's calls for assistance in Afghanistan. Sources for their ranks include a growing number of disaffected Muslim youth as well as Afghan and Pakistani talibs or students who are often recruited from refugee camps and orphanages to attend the madrassahs or religious schools. In many of the madrassahs, the students are essentially

immersed in radical Islam where they become prime candidates to attend terrorist training camps.[51] Numerous scholarships have been given to Islamists throughout the world to fly to Pakistan, attend madrassahs and sometimes terrorist training camps.[52]

AQ's most likely targets are those that will have the most dramatic and psychological effect. Pakistan's government appears to be the top target because it possesses nuclear weapons and OBL has stated that it is a religious duty to obtain weapons of mass destruction.[53] OBL's objective in his attempts to instigate the overthrow of the Musharraf government in Pakistan last September and October, was most likely an effort to gain control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons.[54] US soldiers deployed in Muslim countries are a stated target of OBL and likely to attract AQ attacks. Given the opportunity, AQ is also likely to employ suicide bombers to attack large gatherings of American civilians at vulnerable locations such as mass transit and shopping malls. As we have seen, AQ will also try to use the media (al Jazeera and the Islamic press) to exploit any incidence of the US killing of innocent civilians, attacks during Ramadan, etc. in order to solicit sympathy and expand Muslim support.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The OBL and AQ strategic concept to achieve their war aims, has been dynamic. Islamists, many of whom are AQ members, have been conducting insurgencies against their governments for several years. Because of government concessions to Islamists, some insurgencies appear to be unnoticeable. The reality is that these governments have slowly given up their power base to the Islamists.[55] Other governments have fought openly with militant Islamists. As previously stated, OBL and AQ's strategy throughout the 1990's was to conduct terrorist attacks against the US interests overseas (Riyadh, Khobar Towers, US embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam, and the USS Cole) in order to cause its withdrawal from the Middle East. Clausewitz' writings support this strategy when he states that the act he considers most important to defeat an enemy is the "delivery of an effective blow against his principle ally if that ally is more powerful than he is."[56] While these acts did not have the desired outcome, they increased support for OBL, AQ and the Islamist movement in general. The September 11 attack marked a change of strategy that was intended to cause an overwhelming and clumsy US response, that would unite Islamists and Muslims to kill "Jewish-Crusadors" any where and every where they see them. If this were to occur, it would represent a "clash of civilizations"[57] as described by Samuel Huntington. Islamists could then easily overthrow the governments of the Muslim countries and begin to leverage their oil wealth to influence other countries.

UNITED STATES GOALS AND INTERESTS.

The US center of gravity is directly related to its goals and interests. In President Bush's speeches, the most current National Security Strategy (NSS), and the Constitution reflect the US goals and interests. In President Bush's September 20 address to congress, he defined the United States' overall interest as freedom, which he declared to be at war with fear. He also stated "the advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us."[58] He stated that the US goal in its current war on terrorism is the "elimination of every terrorist group of global reach."[59] Less than two weeks later, he stated publicly that a "Palestinian state was 'part of a vision' of any negotiated peace in the Middle East."[60] The Secretary of State's remarks on November 19, 2001 included a U.S. vision of a Palestinian homeland when he stated: "We have a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders."[61] The US 2000 NSS also alludes to the establishment of a Palestinian homeland when it states "the US has enduring interests in pursuing a just, lasting and comprehensive Middle East peace, ensuring the security and well-being of Israel, helping our Arab partners provide for their security, and maintaining access to a critical energy source."[62] Other interests included in the NSS are: security and protection of all Americans; assuring global security, shared prosperity and freedom;[63] free access to oil; containment of Iraq especially in light of Saddam Hussein's continued pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, his proven aggression, and his blockage of UN weapons inspectors, a condition he agreed to following the 1991 Gulf war cease fire; countering threats posed by weapons of mass destruction; stopping the illegal flow of drugs; and the elimination of known terrorists in addition to OBL.[64] Advancing American values--"political and economic freedom, respect for human rights and the rule of law[65]"--is also included. Because of the "religious" nature of the threat, it is important to note the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."[66] Consequently, the US war against OBL and AQ must not cross over to a war on Islam, no matter its distorted application.

CENTERS OF GRAVITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

> one must keep the dominant characteristics of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed.[67] *Carl von Clausewitz*

Colonel Harry Tomlin, a professor at the US Army War College, proposes a center of gravity conceptual and doctrinal framework which leads to an effective strategy to defeat OBL

and AQ.[68] Consistent with this framework, center of gravity candidates are examined for both the new threat and the US and corresponding decisive points and critical vulnerabilities are postulated.

"Clausewitz' definition offers "flexibility and yet a clarity" that is not only relevant in contemporary strategic contexts, "but is notably superior in clarity and function than the present joint and service definitions."[69] Clausewitz' theory on war is based on the remarkable trinity between the people, the government, and the commander and his army.[70] By definition the center of gravity should be a hub of all power; critical to the belligerent; something the belligerent cannot do without; and which if eliminated, will bend him most rapidly to his adversary's will. Once identified, it should become the focus of our strategy. While OBL and AQ have no government, these concepts can still be applied to OBL and AQ. Conceptually, Islamism subsumes politics, the military, and people, and can therefore be substituted for the trinity. Theoretically, there is one center of gravity for each belligerent at the strategic level of war. "The first task. . . in planning for war is to identify the enemy's centers of gravity, and if possible trace them back to a single one."[71]

Based on the previous discussion of the "new threat," five enemy center of gravity candidates will be considered: leadership, public opinion, AQ, Islamism, and militant Islamism. As mentioned previously, one method of eliminating center of gravity candidates is to determine whether its elimination results in defeat of the belligerent. Consider leadership as the center of gravity. As stated previously, the AQ network is called a network because it functions like the Internet. If leadership cells or OBL are removed, the rest of the organization will continue to operate. Therefore, while OBL and leadership are important, neither are the center of gravity.

Considering public opinion of Muslims as a potential center of gravity: even without public support of the Muslims, OBL and AQ would likely continue to grow and conduct terrorist acts in the name of their cause. As with other insurgencies, all they require is "the passive acquiescence of the majority."[72] Consequently, public opinion is not a strong candidate as the center of gravity.

As stated by Clausewitz, the army, or in modern times a particular service, is often the center of gravity. AQ could be likened to an Army when considering it as a center of gravity candidate. Even if AQ is eliminated, there will still be other Islamist, both militant and incrementalist, who will continue to grow and fight for their cause. Therefore, AQ does not meet the central center of gravity criteria.

Considering Islamism, or political Islam, as the center of gravity: if Islamism is removed, OBL and AQ lose their legitimacy and they are defeated. Islamism is certainly the source of

strength and legitimacy. This is reflected in OBL's fatwas, his interviews and even in the video captured in December, 2001.

Militant Islamism is another candidate. Even if militant Islamists are removed, there will still be Islamic incrementalism. There is no way to tell when incrementalists will become militant. Therefore, militant Islamism is not the center of gravity. If Islamism is defeated, both OBL and AQ are defeated regardless of what country they are in. Therefore, Islamism, or political Islam, is the center of gravity that emerges for OBL and AQ.

Four major center of gravity candidates for the US exist: public opinion, freedom, the economy, and force projection capability. While the removal of public opinion eventually results in the defeat of the US, the attack of the other candidates becomes significant because of their impact on the public support for the war. Public opinion emerges as the central source of strength. For instance, because the US is a democracy in which the people impart their will to their elected political representatives, public opinion is absolutely a source of power. If US public opinion did not support the war against OBL and AQ, it would be just a matter of time before elected officials decided to stop fighting.

Freedom is cherished within the US. If freedom is the source of strength and power, its loss is significant only because it might cause public opinion to shift against support of the war. Because "the US has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world,"[73] many Americans think of it as a source of power and strength. Therefore, the US economy is also a candidate as the US center of gravity. However, if the cost of the war against OBL and AQ became so high that the US economy significantly faltered, it would likely, in of itself, not defeat the US. It could, however, cause public opinion to shift against the war. Force projection cannot be permanently taken away from the US. Temporarily removing US force projection capabilities could prolong the war, which also has the potential to decrease public support of the war. However, it is unlikely that the US requires the projection of large numbers of forces to successfully prosecute or continue the war effort. The lack of freedom, poor economic conditions, and prolonging the conflict through loss of force projection, are all significant only because they could turn public opinion against the war. Therefore, public opinion is the U.S. center of gravity.

Decisive points relate to centers of gravity. "They are not limited. . . to geographic features or key terrain. They can be a place, specific key event, or enabling system."[74] Some decisive points will also be critical vulnerabilities, which can be defined as:

> Critical requirements or components thereof which are deficient, or vulnerable to neutralization, interdiction or attack (moral/physical harm) in a manner achieving decisive or significant results, disproportional to the military resources applied.[75]

While it is desirable to concentrate our attacks on those decisive points which are also critical vulnerabilities, some decisive points must be attacked whether they are vulnerable or not. To determine decisive points and critical vulnerability candidates, it is useful to determine critical capabilities that support each center of gravity.[76] For each critical capability, there are critical requirements which will yield decisive points, some of which will be vulnerable.

OSAMA BIN LADEN AND AL QAEDA CENTER OF GRAVITY

The OBL and AQ center of gravity, Islamism, must possess the following six critical capabilities each with its own critical requirements ("DP" indicates decisive points and "CV" indicates critical vulnerabilities):

1. Be seen as legitimately representative of Islam (critical capability)
   - Majority of Muslims passively support Islamism by at least remaining silent concerning insurgent activities to include terrorism CV
   - Motivation stemming from:
     - Confidence in victory (Allah will provide) CV
     - Fear of reprisals from militant Islamists CV
     - People see no viable option (e.g., no means to redress government) DP
2. Operate in areas of refuge (critical capability)
   - Direct state sponsorship (e.g., Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, etc.) DP
   - Passive state sponsorship (e.g., Saudi Arabia) DP
3. Communicate with Muslims world wide (critical capability)
   - Mullahs and mosques that are Islamist or provide passive support DP
   - Media coverage; e.g. satellite television (Al Jazeera, CNN) and newspapers (Al-Quds, Al-Alam, etc.) CV
   - Internet, Cell phones CV
4. Exert political influence/conduct military/terrorist operations (critical capability)
   - Al Qaeda network, Arab Afghans DP
   - Source of arms and ammunition DP
   - Communications CV
   - Weapons of mass destruction (if they can be obtained, they will be used) DP
   - Grievances against the government DP
     - Lack of Palestinian homeland DP

- Unemployment DP
- Less welfare DP
- Iraqi suffering DP

5. Control (critical capability)
   - Leadership (OBL, Zawahiri, Mullah Omar, top 10) CV
6. Attract membership and train (critical capability)
   - Unemployed, skill-less youth, refugee camps, Madrassahs DP
   - Terrorist training camps DP

UNITED STATES CENTER OF GRAVITY

The US center of gravity, public support, must possess the following five critical capabilities each with its own critical requirements:

1. Compete economically: make a profit and keep people working (critical capability)
   - Free market, consumer spending, manufacturers producing, inflation minimal, reasonable taxes CV
2. Conduct successful military operations (critical capability)
   - Global projection (naval and air) DP
   - Decisively engage enemies (precision guided munitions, land power) DP
   - Access CV
   - Intelligence DP
   - Long term commitment CV
   - Willingness to sacrifice US servicemen CV
3. Enjoy individual freedoms: free speech, free press, free beliefs, free travel (critical capability)
   - Secure society, minimum government control, reasonable gas prices CV
4. Believe in the cause/reelect leaders supportive of the cause (critical capability)
   - Motivation stemming from:
     - Demonstrated progress in the war CV
     - Governmental leadership CV
     - People see no alternative even if situation appears hopeless CV
     - Legitimacy of governments the US is supporting CV
5. International legitimacy (critical capability)
     - Legitimacy of governments the US is supporting CV
     - Ability to act without international condemnation (minimum fratricide to civilians) CV
     - International anti-terror coalition CV

- US victim in 9/11 attacks DP
- Avoid "CNN effect" (e.g., peoples' perception influences incorrect actions) CV

The critical capabilities, decisive points and critical vulnerabilities developed for both the US and the threat will be the basis for the development of an effective grand strategy.

GRAND STRATEGY

Due to the insurgent nature of this war on terrorism, the biggest challenge in developing a viable strategy is that the US, by itself, cannot defeat OBL's and AQ's center of gravity: Islamism. As long as Muslims allow Islamist mullahs and terrorists to claim their faith, terrorist acts in the name of Allah will continue. As long as moderate Muslim governments fail to address the needs of their people, these elements will continue to exist. But there are substantial steps that the US has already taken and should continue to take as part of a grand strategy to win the war against OBL and AQ. The US grand strategy should include the simultaneous attack of enemy vulnerabilities and key decisive points while protecting friendly vulnerabilities using the four instruments of national power--diplomatic, informational, military and economic. The strategy that follows corresponds with the decisive points and critical vulnerabilities that were previously developed for friendly and enemy centers of gravity.

The US should attack the following critical vulnerabilities using national instruments of power to defeat the center of gravity for OBL and AQ: Islamism.

1. Similar to attacking a coalition by causing it to break apart, the US should use informational and diplomatic instruments of power to challenge the legitimacy of Islamism so that it is rejected by Islam. The US should encourage public debate in Muslim media. This must be a constant theme for this war. Because the US is not a Muslim country and OBL claims that this war is a war between religions, the US must be careful not to attack Islam itself. President Bush's speech to the US Congress on September 20 in which he stated, "the terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics; a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam,"[77] is an excellent example of attacking Islamism but not Islam. The US should convince government and religious leaders of the Muslim countries that they are the ones under attack and that is in their interest to aggressively denounce Islamism. The Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the US, Prince Bandar, acknowledges Saudi Arabia's potential role in this effort when he stated,

> Now, we, on the other hand, in the Arab and Islamic world, have a role to play, a big role. And I believe Saudi Arabia ... its destiny is to shoulder the future responsibility in fighting this kind of warped thinking within our religion. And I

> believe my leadership will stand to the challenge. And that is not just the leadership, the political, but also the religious leadership. Because before we come to you to help us in this world, let's get our own house in order. And I'm not talking now about our own house in Saudi Arabia, but in the Islamic world at large.[78]

The US should encourage Saudi Arabia in this effort. President Musharraf's January speech condemning radical Islamism is a good example for governments of Muslim countries. In his televised speech to the people of Pakistan on January 12th of this year he stated:

> Is this the way of life that Islam teaches us? That we fight amongst ourselves and feel scared of fellow Muslims, scared of visiting our places of worship where police have to be deputed outside for protection? Mosques are being misused for propagating and inciting hatred against each other's sect and beliefs and against the Government, too.[79]

Success for counterinsurgent governments such as Pakistan's is seen by most Muslims as coming from Allah. The US should assist counterinsurgent governments' in improving their legitimacy by supporting their efforts to protect their citizens from militant Islamists' reprisals through foreign internal defense activities. Doing so, increases the likelihood Muslims will condemn Islamism.

2. Use all instruments of power to eliminate direct state sponsorship of OBL and AQ. President Bush's warning to the Taliban to hand over OBL and AQ followed by military attacks a few weeks later are a good example. The US should use diplomatic, informational and economic instruments of power to convince those countries that are passively supporting OBL and AQ that they are the targets and their continued support will result in their demise just as he did with the Taliban. While it is important that the US be concerned about international public opinion, it is more important that the US achieve rapid, decisive results, as we saw when the US attacked the Taliban during the Muslim holiday, Ramadan.
3. Exploit Islamist reliance on communications using informational, diplomatic, economic and military instruments of power. Strongly encourage and participate in debate on Muslim media outlets such as Qatar based, al Jazeera. While doing this, the US must be careful to avoid projecting a "bully" image that will encourage passive Muslim support and possibly undermine the legitimacy of the governments it supports.
4. Use all instruments of power to defeat AQ while aiding those governments that are under attack in increasing their own legitimacy. It is much easier to defeat AQ when they are fighting conventionally such as in Afghanistan, than when they are blending in with populations as terrorists or fighting directly against their own governments. The US should

exploit these opportunities whenever possible. Furthermore, the US should support Muslims fighting against Islamist as it did when toppling the Taliban. Doing so avoided not playing to OBL's strategy which would have enabled much greater condemnation of the US. Moreover, the US must use all instruments of power to assist Muslim governments that are fighting counterinsurgencies to address the grievances of the people such as unemployment and welfare. This includes attacking the causes of unrest such as poor economies, population explosion, and lack of governmental redress. In the words of Senator Joseph Lieberman, "we need to reseed the garden."[80] The key is to help the governments to help themselves, not to create welfare states. The US should encourage economic reform and Arab investors to invest in the Middle East. This will greatly improve their legitimacy without exacerbating the conditions which give legitimacy to the Islamists. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan should be the initial priorities in this effort--Afghanistan because it now has a brand new regime, courtesy of the US, and Pakistan, because its government, in spite of being on the brink of Islamism, has steadfastly supported the US war on terrorism and is crucial to containing Islamism. Additionally, the US must remain neutral and work with all Arab governments and Israel to achieve a Palestinian peace settlement. While Israel is its close ally, the US must speak out when Israel acts inappropriately such as continuing settlements in the West Bank in violation of United Nations security resolutions. The endstate for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement must include a Palestinian homeland and uniform Arab recognition of Israel. This will greatly improve the legitimacy of all these governments as well as that of the US. Finally, if Saddam Hussein continues to refuse UN weapons of mass destruction inspections, or evidence proves Iraq's sponsorship of AQ, the US should use all instruments of power to cause a regime change. Doing so will prevent any of these weapons from getting into the hands of OBL or AQ. More importantly, it will allow the US to help the new government and the Iraqi people who have suffered for years under Saddam's oppression.

5. Use all instruments of power to eliminate or bring to justice, OBL and his AQ leadership. This might not eliminate AQ, but it will certainly disrupt it. To achieve this end, the US must continue to improve upon information sharing between local law enforcement, the FBI, the CIA and the Department of Defense as well as with our international partners.
6. Use all instruments of power to assist counterinsurgent governments to address the problems of their societies such as unconstrained population growth, unemployment, economic depression and school reform as needed. Doing so will attract outside investment, create jobs, and greatly reduce the source of AQ recruits.

At the strategic level, the US should take the following actions to protect the aforementioned US critical vulnerabilities thereby preserving her center of gravity: public opinion. For every one of these actions, the perception of American citizens is crucial. Therefore, the informational instrument of power is crucial as is remaining true to the core values of the US such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

1. Use informational, diplomatic and economic instruments of power to continue to instill confidence in US consumers and international trade partners. Continue to evoke the theme of returning to normal, but with the caveat, that we are at war. Due to the global nature of our economy, this is equally important for our international trade partners. The US must be very careful to budget wisely for this war, or it could significantly reduce public support for the war in the long term.
2. Continue to resource the military instrument of power so that it remains successful. The US military is extremely capable, but its operations must be very flexible, synchronized and focused in supporting a global counterinsurgency. In conjunction with its allies, it must simultaneously operate along the entire spectrum of conflict, from nation building to global war. This is a monumental task when one considers that the US has not fought a global war in over 50 years. Keeping the American public appraised of the true status of the war is essential. President Bush's comment that this war will be a long term effort was the right message to tell the American public. The informational campaign must insure that the American public and the American military remain willing to sacrifice.
3. Continue to protect individual freedoms--free speech, free press, free beliefs, and free travel by providing adequate but minimal control on individual freedoms and by keeping gas prices at a reasonable level. As stated by President Bush, "the characteristics of American society that we cherish – our freedom, our openness, our great cities and towering skyscrapers, our modern transportation systems – make us vulnerable to terrorism of catastrophic proportions."[81] His establishment of an office of homeland security to develop the national strategy for homeland security was an important step when one considers the magnitude of US homeland vulnerabilities—from the economy; to borders accessible by land, sea and air; to the internet; to critical infrastructure, etc. The government agencies involved include but are not limited to the Federal Reserve, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Justice, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Border Patrol, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Defense, state governments, local law enforcement, and local emergency response. In order to have the powers necessary to coordinate and plan such an imposing task, with such powerful and at times competing governmental agencies, the

position should be immediately upgraded to cabinet level. It might take only a few well timed terrorist attacks in malls or on public transportation to adversely impact US public opinion. Hence, force protection both within the US and for US citizens overseas is essential. The US should also pursue the development of and conversion to alternative energy sources so that it is not so dependent on Middle Eastern oil.

4. Use the informational instrument of power to continue to motivate the public by: demonstrating continued progress; instilling in the people that there is no alternative; and demonstrating US legitimacy as well as the legitimacy of the governments it supports.
5. Use diplomatic and informational elements of power to maintain international legitimacy for the war by maintaining a coalition, by assisting supported governments in improving their own legitimacy, and by proactively using the media to project desired themes or perspectives--not untruths. While maintaining an international coalition is at times cumbersome, it greatly improves US legitimacy and should not be neglected. As mentioned previously, an Arab-Israeli peace solution will greatly increase the legitimacy of governments in Muslim countries and of the US.

There may be entire campaigns devoted to defeating certain decisive points. For instance, the Taliban state sponsorship of OBL and AQ resulted in a campaign in which the US backed Afghan insurgents to cause a regime change. The new government in Afghanistan, with US support, is now fighting its own counterinsurgency against the deposed Taliban and remaining AQ elements. The second phase of the Afghanistan campaign requires strong nation building and peace keeping efforts while remaining capable of defeating a counterinsurgency.

CONCLUSION.

While the terrorist threat represented by OBL and AQ is a very complex one, the concepts of center of gravity and critical vulnerabilities are very useful tools in determining a sound strategy. Islamism, the center of gravity for OBL and AQ, will not be defeated in a short campaign of a few months, or years but more likely a decade or more. The US grand strategy should focus its efforts on de-legitimizing Islamism so that it is rejected by all Muslims. The Commanders in Chief over the next decade must keep America vigilant. President Bush, in declaring war on terrorism while emphatically supporting Islam,[82] established a policy that allows the US to defeat the threat of terrorism to the US while denying OBL exactly what he wants--a war between Islam and the US. While conducting the war on terrorism, the US must simultaneously protect its vulnerabilities and assist governments of moderate Muslim countries to improve their own legitimacy by implementing reforms that: allow for popular redress, enable

economies to grow, reduce government coercion and corruption, and renounce Islamism. But the war will not be won until those countries make the choice.

> If the peoples of the Middle East continue on their present path,. . . there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity, poverty and oppression, culminating sooner or later in yet another alien domination; perhaps from a new Europe reverting to old ways, perhaps from a resurgent Russia, perhaps from some expanding superpower in the East. If they can abandon grievance and victimhood, settle their differences, and join their talents, energies, and resources in a common creative endeavor, then they can once again make the Middle East, in modern times as it was in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, a major center of civilization.[83]

WORD COUNT=8,529

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