CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:
THE ERA OF “CONSTRAINMENT”

Placement and Its Obstacles

Especially since groups like al-Qa’idah, Hamas and others do rely on the public for support and consequently maintain a public profile, complete with interviews and both printed and broadcast declarations, we have a tremendous amount of even open-source material which, combined with classified information, can be used for very rich placement. For example, the two situations detailed in the previous chapter in which deterrence can backfire (i.e., an unacceptable status quo and/or an opponent on the verge of extinction) have challenger desperation in common. The frequency, tone and content of public statements, for example, can contribute to the picture of a group or individual’s desperation. Jordan’s King Hussein provides a good example of an obviously highly pressured leader during the Gulf War. More recent examples can be found in the statements of and interviews with bin Laden since September 11 (and especially after the fighting in Afghanistan began on October 7) and in the public declarations of Yasser Arafat since the fall of 2000 in general and during Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield in the spring of 2002 in particular.¹

Sensing desperation is not the only, nor even the main role placement can play in formulating an effective deterrence strategy. At its heart, placement is part of a larger effort to see ourselves, and in this instance the threat we pose, through the eyes of the challenger. This is a daunting task, requiring insight gained through an appreciation of religion, culture, history, psychology, politics and more. Any study of al-Qa’idah, for example, would be incomplete without understanding the dynamics of dynastic rule in Saudi Arabia, what it means to be a Saudi citizen, the pervasive view of having God on the side of Islam and of the
inferiority of Judaism and Christianity and the resultant interpretations of past American decision-making. For example, the American decision to disengage from Somalia appears to have been the result of a fairly straightforward cost-benefit analysis. In the eyes of Usama bin Laden, however, it was nothing less than a confirmation of an unavoidable destiny ordained by God Himself. It is not enough to read a bin Laden declaration to this effect and dismiss it as “hype,” since the “real” truth lies in the cost-benefit analysis. This type of psychologically soothing “we’re right, they’re wrong” approach is particularly commonplace in op-ed pieces. While the cost-benefit analysis might be, in fact, what led to the American decision, in terms of deterrence what matters is not how the decision was made, but how it was understood. It must be remembered that the onus is not on the challenger to prove his rationality. Rather, it is upon the defender to understand the challenger’s rationality and tailor deterrence decisions and messages accordingly.\(^2\) While most of the criticism of the intelligence community has focused on the lack of warning prior to September 11,\(^3\) an equally important shortfall is the failure to grasp just how consistently ineffective, or at least incoherent, the American deterrent message was. In fact, these two intelligence tasks are almost one and the same. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke point out that in practice “there are important limits on the extent to which the defender can rely on feedback to assess the adequacy of his deterrence effort. Under these circumstances, the defender is necessarily dependent upon intelligence indications that his adversary is getting ready to challenge the status quo in order to evaluate and improve, if necessary, his

\(^1\) Of course, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from public statements alone, which have multiple functions and intended audiences and are thus open to many interpretations.

deterrence posture.”\textsuperscript{4} Thus, early warning is a vital intelligence function with both strategic and tactical implications.

Recognizing the need for in-depth knowledge of a challenger in order to custom-make deterrence decisions is not new. Neither is the awareness that doing so is difficult and without guarantees – there remains no x-ray to a man’s soul.\textsuperscript{5} Having said that, it is apparent that psychological hurdles have prevented even accurate and reliable knowledge from being used to its full potential. We mentioned above the obviously low regard bin Laden had for American deterrent power. Why didn’t American decision-makers take bin Laden’s statements seriously and respond with more vigor before September 11? The answer to this question is obviously complex – standing in the way of such a response were serious issues of international and federal law, state sovereignty and the limitations of intelligence, to name but a few. Additionally, though, there appear to have been various forms of psychologically caused blindness, or at least a narrowing of vision. Human beings – whether Americans or Saudis, Christians or Muslims – tend to believe that others see them as they see themselves. Americans see the reluctance to use force as a sign of responsibility and strength, and we assume that others see it in the same light. We assume that our ability and credibility are self-evident, and often dismiss nay-sayers as


Bin Laden and his followers dismiss “infidels” delusional, crazy or just wrong. The goal should not be to prove who is right and who is using the same terms. In the arena of public and diplomatic debate, yes, right and wrong is a useful construct. When entering the strategy planning fray, however, such thinking must be left at the door.

In addition to the mirror imaging noted above, it has been observed that analyses of potential and actual challengers are often crippled by the psychological obstacle known as “the tyranny of the best estimate,” and which reflects the defender’s stubborn preconceptions and wishful thinking. To remedy this problematically narrow and often inaccurate type of assessment, Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, in a series of RAND studies prepared for the Joint Staff in the wake of the Gulf War, suggest an analytic hedging strategy to reduce the uncertainties inherent in such analysis. Their methodology entails the development of multiple behavioral models of a challenger, and while based on a host of more-or-less universal (among the “limitedly rational”) behavior

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7 Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 2.
9 The methodology is akin to exploratory modeling, in which a universe of plausible, but uncertain outcomes is mapped in order to identify favorable solutions that are robust across outcomes. In practice, Davis and Arquilla have found that when dealing with heads of state, it is rarely necessary to create more than two main models – that of an “incrementalist” and that of a “conqueror” – to appreciate “the most important alternative plausible trains of thought by the opponent.” Davis and Arquilla, Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis, 10-11. We will not create full, formal models of bin Laden here. Such models would be useful, as it is not immediately obvious that the two-model approach that Davis and Arquilla have found sufficient for heads of state is appropriate for the head of a terrorist group. That said, the idea behind the methodology – exploring alternative modes of thought for challengers – is consistent with the recommendations in the psychology literature and which lie at the heart of this entire study.
10 Davis and Arquilla, Thinking about Opponent Behavior, 8-9.
patterns, specifically recognizes the that “the background and culture of a particular opponent is often critical in making judgments.” The combination of the multiple model methodology suggested by Davis and Arquilla with the placement methodology of Neustadt and May yields a solid framework for understanding defender deterrence policy decisions from the point of view of the challenger, making use of culturally and historically relevant information while providing a measure of rigorous protection against the weaknesses of often speculative area expertise. Davis and Arquilla are explicit in recognizing these weaknesses: “regional specialists should be asked to describe all the players, ideas, factors, and possibilities (including, importantly, ones they do not regard as likely); they should not be relied upon for high-confidence predictions and should not be encouraged to make them lightly.” For their part, Neustadt and May hold no illusions about placement; they describe it as providing a sophisticated guess for decision-makers. Employing these complementary methodologies offers an even greater level of sophistication and, hopefully, accuracy.

Operation Enduring Freedom’s legacy will depend ultimately on just how enduring its deterrent message is: merely wiping out many al-Qa’idah members will not suffice. The overt statements of American officials and the massive show of force and resolve in Afghanistan and to a lesser degree in the Philippines and elsewhere, combined with large-scale, global law enforcement efforts suggest that the American response to the September 11 attacks could be

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11 Davis and Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis*, 78.
12 Ibid., 39 n12. Davis and Arquilla’s methodology was “predicted” in more abstract terms more than 20 years earlier by Alexander L. George, writing about the usefulness of Leites’s operational code: “Knowledge of the actor’s approach to calculating choice of action does not provide a simple key to explanation and prediction; but it can help the researcher to and the policy planer to ‘bound’ the alternative ways in which the subject may perceive different types of situations and approach the task of making a rational assessment of alternative courses of action.” Alexander L. George, “The Operational Code”: 200. Emphasis in the original.
seen as a new approach to counter-terrorism strategy. While it might be too late to deter al-Qa’idah specifically, current American actions undoubtedly are being studied carefully by al-Qa’idah and other terrorist groups around the world. In the remainder of this chapter, we shall examine a number of policy options with an eye to meeting America’s strategic goal of deterring would-be challengers, focusing specifically on counter-terrorist actions aimed at various elements of terrorist systems, including individual terrorist leaders and the societal bases of support for terrorist groups (both prescribed by Dror), and the potential these actions hold for enhancing or detracting from deterrence. We shall then discuss possible American and allied actions that might have more general deterrent effects on entire terrorist systems.

**Targeting Individual Terrorist Leaders, Technical Specialists and Ruling Elites**

The deterrent value of targeting individuals and members of the ruling elite has been the subject of some speculation in studies of Middle Eastern conflicts. Gabriel Ben Dor posits that such targeting has been an effective deterrent in past wars, noting that the threat in 1973 to the Egyptian Third Army, “based on an officer corps consisting of the sons of the ruling elite,” had a far greater impact on Egyptian decision-making than did the economic damage caused by the War of Attrition in 1969-70. Ben Dor goes on to suggest that Saddam Hussein’s decision not to use chemical weapons stemmed from his fear that doing so would lead to an allied response that would not only unseat him, but threaten him personally. 

As part of a policy that has both coercive and deterrent goals, Israel has targeted specific leaders and technical specialists of terrorist organizations for decades,

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with mixed results. Best known, perhaps, was the decision to hunt down the members of the Black September PLO faction that were involved in the attack at the Munich Olympics in September, 1972. While all of those targeted were eventually killed (it took almost six and a half years to catch up with the most elusive of the group’s leaders), the operation came with considerable costs in terms of manpower, resources, a short-lived attempt to counter-assassinate Israeli intelligence officers and the death of an unfortunate victim of mistaken identity.  

In recent years, and especially since the re-ignition of violence in late 2000, Israel has continued to target the leaders and technical specialists of Islamist groups, primarily in the West Bank and Gaza. Here too the results have been mixed. On the negative side, in a culture where being placed high on Israel’s most wanted list is a badge of honor and martyrdom is exalted (even by family members), the assassination – or attempted assassination – of individuals, which has repeatedly


come with collateral casualties, has served as a rallying point for revenge-seeking surviving group members. The question as to which side’s attacks precipitate the other’s quickly devolves into one of chicken and egg. Additionally, as demonstrated by the assassination of both Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 and of Rehavam Ze’evi in 2001, it is possible to successfully counter-target the Israeli leadership as well. Finally, as the groups facing Israel have become increasingly cellular in nature, targeting individuals has become less akin to the removal of vital links in a chain and more akin to eliminating nodes in a redundant network – the organizations have suffered setbacks, but have not fallen apart.

On the positive side, however, obliterating these groups by means of assassination is not the goal, and such actions have been both disruptive and costly to the targeted organizations. Specifically, among those targeted have been both charismatic leaders and, perhaps more importantly, those whose claim to fame is the possession of useful technical skills, especially bomb-making. While it remains relatively easy to acquire or make explosives, technical expertise, though ultimately replaceable, is in demand on both ends of the technological spectrum. Manufacturing sophisticated weapons obviously requires electrical, electronic, chemical and/or other engineering skills (not to say advanced degrees). Low-tech weapons, especially volatile, improvised explosives like the commonly used triacetone triperoxide (TATP), also demand a measure of know-how for safe handling. Suicide attacks require still others for logistical support.

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Another value is indirect: aside from the leadership or technical hardships are the unspoken implications of a successful assassination. For the Israelis to be able to identify a specific car carrying a target that was ostensibly hidden amongst a population of over three million suggests that Israel has exceptional technical intelligence capabilities and/or that there are almost certainly leaks from human intelligence sources within the terrorist organizations. That is, even among the leadership of these groups and despite the compartmentalization that they deftly practice, information is passed to the Israelis rapidly enough for them to respond operationally. The bottom line for the terrorists is that they are never certain about whom they can trust, which only heightens their sense of being constantly on the run and thus distracts their mental and physical energies toward self-preservation. The Israelis are not always successful in their assassination efforts, but 100% success is not required to throw a wrench in the works.

The disruptive nature of assassination is fairly clear, and is complementary to other, less violent means to the same goal, such as economic and political sanctions, which have taken a far greater toll in collateral damage. And while these measures raise the costs of action, an important factor in deterrence, whether disruption in general and assassination in particular consistently contribute to deterrence remains less certain. The Palestinians appear to be a case in which the perceived status quo is worse than almost anything that the Israelis can threaten to do. Actions continue to speak louder than words and, with few short-term interruptions, Palestinian terrorism has not been deterred by increasingly aggressive Israeli responses. On the contrary, the various

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21 Pillar discusses the likely impact on terrorist operations of the deaths caused by the 1998 cruise missile strikes on al-Qa’idah targets in Afghanistan. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 103.

Palestinian terrorist groups continue to compete for destructive primacy. The conclusion in this case, then, is that while targeting the groups’ leadership has been operationally disruptive, in the broader picture the groups are largely undeterrable and targeting individuals – even when putting family members at risk – has not changed that basic calculus. Keeping in mind that deterrence is only part of an overall strategy, however, Jenkins believes that those terrorists who pose a threat but are both undeterrable and are unlikely to turn away from violence for whatever reasons (ideology, risk-seeking, lack of alternatives, etc.) nevertheless must be eliminated.

For groups whose point of departure is less bleak than that of the Palestinians (as might be the case with bin Laden and al-Qa’idah), the targeting of individuals holds greater deterrent potential. As noted above, bin Laden and other members of al-Qa’idah, in making Taliban-led Afghanistan their base of operations, in their efforts to escape the American onslaught, and in the reported claims that they moved their families out of harm’s way prior to and immediately after September 11, have demonstrated that extended self-preservation remains a high priority. Even the suicidal among terrorist groups seek death only on their own terms. It is possible that if bin Laden or the leaders of other, similar groups felt that actions against American interests carried a very high likelihood (i.e., carried with it a clear American commitment) of a very high personal cost, deterrence might be more within reach.

Establishing that likelihood is easier said than done, as Israeli successes in locating terrorist leaders might be the exception rather than the rule. Compared to the Sudan or Afghanistan, for example, the West Bank and Gaza are tiny. It

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23 A recent RAND study has concluded that attacks on enemy leadership almost never achieve desired deterrent or coercive effects. The Israeli counter-terrorism case is one of many examples presented. Stephen T. Hosmer, *Operations against Enemy Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).
remains very difficult to track down mobile terrorists, especially across often unregulated borders. These difficulties argue against a declared policy of assassination in that successes might be so few and far between (note that – as of this writing – Saddam Hussein is still alive and in power and bin Laden’s status and whereabouts remain unknown) as to make the policy appear ineffective, thus stripping away much of its deterrent value. Technical and human intelligence will be the key to the ultimate effectiveness of such a policy, which should remain unclaimed.

**Collateral Damage and Targeting Populations**

Nuclear deterrence is predicated to some degree on the targeting of non-combatants. As Islamist terrorist groups are largely dependent on supportive constituent populations, can the general population be targeted to deter these groups? On the surface, the answer appears straightforward and appealing: if the population is forced to pay a price for the crimes of a terrorist group, popular support will wane and the group will fall in line. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to work in practice. Recent Middle Eastern cases where non-combatants have been punished have not yielded the hoped-for results. Namely, the sanctions on Iraq and the closures of the West Bank and Gaza and the demolition of terrorists’ families’ homes have not led to any perceptible change in the behavior of either Saddam Hussein or the Palestinian terrorist groups. In both cases, the blame typically has not been placed on these actors, but rather on the shoulders of the United States and Israel, respectively.

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24 Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.

25 Two cases where the use of overwhelming force against Islamists and their civilian “hosts” did succeed in changing their behavior are the Syrian destruction on the town of Hama in 1982 and the somewhat less brutal Egyptian actions against Islamists in upper Egypt in the late 1990s. Here too, however, it remains an open question whether the population holds the Islamists or the governments responsible for those crackdowns.
Even more strikingly, a recent Gallup survey in Muslim states found that “[i]n every nation in which this question was asked, including Turkey, a majority of those interviewed express the view that the American military action is either largely or completely unjustifiable.” Moreover, in five of the six countries in which the question was asked (Turkey was the exception), “more respondents actually view the U.S. military actions in Afghanistan as largely or totally unjustifiable than voice the same judgment regarding the attacks of Sept. 11.”

The perceived motivations for the military action included the stated American reasons, but also included the desire to establish and extend political control of the region, to gain control of Afghanistan’s natural resources and to start a war against Muslims and Arabs.

The misperception of cause and effect at work in these cases has a number of underlying causes. The general sense of resentment and even hatred for the United States and Israel is certainly a factor, as is the psychological inclination to disregard nuanced messages for simpler, more familiar understandings of events. The view of martyrdom and its associated promises of a glorious afterlife is important in this context as well. Equally relevant, however, is the lack of political accountability enjoyed by Middle Eastern rulers in general and by despots and terrorist groups in particular. Very few of the people between Morocco and the Indian border have any meaningful say in who governs them and how. As a result, the tradition of holding government, to say nothing of individual rulers, accountable is weak. Insofar as terrorist groups are sub-state actors, they are able to enjoy the best of all worlds. When they achieve “victories” in their attacks, and when they provide social services in poor communities, they are hailed as heroes. Because they are not official

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26 This was the most commonly given reason in four of the countries, but was given by only 25%-31% of respondents.
representatives of a state, they are rarely held accountable for any negative repercussions their actions may bring.\textsuperscript{28} Even a credible countervalue threat, therefore, seems unlikely to contribute significantly to deterrence. One way this could change would be if terrorists escalated by using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons, and the U.S. saw fit to respond in kind.

It is also worth noting that terrorist groups’ status as sub-state actors makes it harder for the international community to hold them responsible for their actions as well. It is much easier (though not easy) to bring Libyan intelligence agents or Slobodan Milosevic to justice than it is the members of a shadowy, unofficial group. Moreover, responding to terrorist actions by targeting non-combatant populations that did not elect the terrorists to represent them threatens to undermine – in international fora – the very moral high ground that distinguishes the United States from the terrorists themselves. It is perhaps significant that more than 56 years after the end of American involvement in World War II – involvement initiated by Japan – the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is repeatedly mentioned in Islamist charges against the United States.\textsuperscript{29} Any use of CBRN weapons obviously would have very long-term political repercussions.

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\item One example where a group was held publicly accountable can be seen in the popular outrage after Egyptian Islamists attacked tourists at Luxor. It is unclear whether the anger was the result of moral revulsion or because of the economic damage due to the resultant reduced influx of tourists from abroad, an important source of Egyptian income.
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The Bush Doctrine: Getting Allies on Board

Effective counter-terrorism policy, on the military, law enforcement and other fronts, requires a high degree of multilateral cooperation, and the exigencies of responding to September 11 have provided the United States with some strange new bedfellows. The rapid building of coalitions, the spontaneous and orchestrated demonstrations of support and identification from allies in Europe and southeast Asia, NATO’s invocation of Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty and the commitment of allied forces to operations in Afghanistan all contribute to deterrence by demonstrating the breadth of international ostracizing of terrorist groups and the regimes that support them and by raising the costs of using and supporting terrorism. To be sure, the regimes that have been identified as supporters of terrorism are all acutely aware of the fate of the Taliban. At the same time, the behavior of some traditional allies has weakened deterrence. Specifically, official Saudi behavior both before and after September 11 has been particularly disruptive to American efforts to deal with al-Qa’idah.

The lack of legitimate political opposition, combined with the perceived and actual failures of competing political and economic ideologies and practices (e.g., socialism, democracy, etc.) have led to the creation and sustenance of Islamist opposition movements throughout the Muslim Middle East. These movements enjoy the advantages of long-established, ubiquitous networks of mosques and religious schools, the above-mentioned lack of formal, political accountability to the populations they serve and the pride of place that is inherent to orthodox claims of legitimacy and authenticity. The religious nature of the Saudi kingdom

30 Jacob Lassner points out that religious opposition to territory-based authority, in fact, has a long history in the Islamic world. Jacob Lassner, The Middle East Remembered: Forged Identities, Competing Narratives, Contested Spaces (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 113.
in general and of the ruling family’s claims to power in particular has made this phenomenon particularly acute there.

Widely discussed in the wake of September 11 is the Saudis’ unenviable position. Almost completely dependent on the outside (i.e., Western) world for both income and national defense, they remain permanently engaged at the highest levels with that world. At the same time the ruling family owes its legitimacy to its ideological marriage to the conservative Wahhabi movement and to its role as the Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques (i.e., Mecca and Medina). In the eyes of many Islamists, bin Laden included, this juxtaposition of Islamic religious responsibility with coziness with and reliance on Western powers is unacceptably contradictory. The ruling family has worked hard to hedge its bets through a mix of suppressing, co-opting and exporting its opposition, while maintaining its relationships with Western powers, allowing the continued presence of U.S. forces in the kingdom and leaving many of the genuine socioeconomic problems of the kingdom unaddressed.

September 11 demonstrated graphically – and not for the first time – that the Saudis’ attempts to please all of the people all of the time has come with tremendous costs for the United States. Specifically, the Saudi blind eye toward

the terrorist training and export of the kingdom’s sons, the worldwide financing of “charities” with links to terrorist groups and of schools with virulently anti-Western curricula, and the direct payments to families of suicide bombers in the West Bank and Gaza all fan the flames of hatred and resentment towards the West and/or facilitate terrorist actions. Also relevant in terms of deterrence is the Saudi (and to a lesser extent, Yemeni) foot-dragging and even interference in the American investigations of terrorist actions that took place on Saudi soil or in which Saudis are suspected of complicity. So too the refusal to allow American forces to use bases in Saudi Arabia in response to the September 11 attacks.

Keeping Saudi terrorists beyond the reach of American law enforcement efforts and impeding American efforts to attack terrorist targets means that there is potentially little or no cost to such challengers; predictably, deterrence fails.

American tolerance for Saudi misbehavior has been explained by some as the cost of ensuring regional stability and the unobstructed flow of oil. Though oil remains in many ways the life-blood of the global economy, the American quest for regional stability by supporting corrupt, at times overtly hostile and brutal regimes is proving to be a dangerously myopic policy guideline, one that not only stands in stark opposition to many of the principles upon which the United


36 Jehl, “Holy War Lured Saudis as Rulers Looked Away.” This apparently includes squandered opportunities to arrest bin Laden and Hizballah/al-Qa’idah operative Imad Mughniyah, responsible for the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985 as well as the 1983 Beirut embassy bombing. Teitelbaum, “Deserted.”

States was founded, but which also threatens America’s long-term deterrent power towards the terrorist groups that feed on the increasingly disaffected populations of ostensibly friendly states. As Bernard Lewis has pointed out, public anti-American feeling in the Middle East is greatest in precisely those states with which the United States has the strongest ties: Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the same states that provided most of the September 11 hijackers.

**Deterrence Is Not Enough**

George and Smoke, in their seminal work on deterrence, note that deterrence should not stand alone, but must be supplemented by what they call “inducement.” Without such balance in foreign policy, they point out, “reinforcement of deterrence in a crisis may succeed in deterring the opponent, but at the cost of hardening his conviction that the defender is unresponsive to the legitimate interests that lie behind his effort to obtain a change in the situation. As a result, the initiator may resolve to prepare more effectively for the next round by acquiring additional military or other capabilities with which to neutralize the defender’s deterrent threats.”

Practicing inducement is not the same as accepting the sophistic “root causes of terror” arguments of terrorism’s apologists. There are innumerable examples of the dispossessed, disenfranchised, discarded and/or disregarded who have not turned to terrorism. Inducement does, however, offer the potential to improve the status quo and thus reduce the appeal of and perceived need for violence.

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40 George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 604-10.

41 George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 579. This is evident, for example, in the Palestinians’ increasing efforts to acquire anti-tank and other more advanced weapons in preparation for further conflict with the Israelis.
Some of the issues that bin Laden and al-Qa‘idah have adopted as their own are legitimate in absolute terms. The Arab-Israeli conflict, for a host of political, cultural, historical, religious and other reasons, is a malignant source of frustration and humiliation.\textsuperscript{42} The riches of the Saudi royal family, while perhaps not as great as they once were, still dwarf the shrinking per capita income of the kingdom, making the problem of taxation without representation ever more acute. As discussed above, the sanctions on Iraq have been more effective in galvanizing anti-American feeling in the Middle East than they have in weakening Saddam Hussein. A minor Iraqi public relations coup, the sanctions have become a widely felt source of outrage.\textsuperscript{43}

The list of grievances, of course, goes on. Not all of them are legitimate; others are beyond the control of the United States. However, to the extent that the United States takes Middle Eastern humiliations and grievances seriously and works to correct them, it stands to gain in two significant ways. First, it will reduce the costs of maintaining the status quo,\textsuperscript{44} thus raising the relative costs of challenging the American deterrent threat. Second, by doing so, the United States can work to take the rug out from under terrorist groups like al-Qa‘idah, which burn public anger for fuel. The importance of inducement as a complement to deterrence underscores the importance of minimizing perceptual biases in analyses of foreign actors: distorted or narrow images can lead decision-

\textsuperscript{42} A poll (of unspecified accuracy or quality) of 2000 Saudi men and women conducted by the al-Watan newspaper shortly before Israel’s April 2002 incursion into the West Bank found that 60% of Saudis hate the United States (the original Arabic used the word “hate”). Of these, 75% said their hatred was based on U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestinian issue; 20% said it was related to the Gulf War; and the remaining 5% traced its roots to the aftermath of September 11. “Saudi Newspaper Poll Finds 60 Percent of Saudis Hate the United States,” Associated Press 8 April 2002.


\textsuperscript{44} Williams, “Nuclear Deterrence,” 116.
makers to focus on and ultimately implement misguided, ineffective or even counterproductive inducement measures.

The combined effects of the two-pronged deterrence/inducement approach will vary in terms of time horizons and where individuals are in the process of joining a terrorist group. As noted above, in the immediate term, for already active terrorists, especially those in groups with vague, unrealizable goals, neither deterrence nor inducement is likely to have great impact on their actions. For most of them, the die is already cast. Osama bin Laden is not going to “go legit,” regardless of what the United States says or does. On the other hand, in the longer term, among those who have not yet joined terrorist groups or those whose commitment has not yet fully crystallized, the deterrence/inducement mix that results in the high likelihood of death plus the creation and development of alternative channels to effect political or social change might shrink the pool of potential terrorist group recruits. In what might be called the medium term, the existential threat to terrorist groups posed by the smaller recruitment base is likely to lead the shrinking nucleus of already committed terrorists to engage in increasingly violent activities as a way of demonstrating their continued potency. Dangerous times are ahead.

The oft-repeated concern about American pressure for political and economic reform, respect for human rights, etc. is that doing so might bring Islamists to power, as almost happened in Algeria in 1991. The regimes in place now, the argument goes, represent the more stable and familiar lesser of two evils – the devil we know. The concern is not unfounded. Many of the Islamist opposition groups that might assume or seize power (or have already done so, as in Iran

45 Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.
and in Taliban-led Afghanistan) in the states of the Middle East are overtly hostile to the United States and its interests, have expressed disdain for democracy, threaten to limit the rights of women and minorities and have used terror as a means to achieve political and other ends. Setting aside for the moment that the regimes currently in place are guilty of many of the same offenses, the dilemma pits the principles of governance enshrined in the Declaration of Independence against the First Amendment separation of church and state, which, while not a foreign policy goal, nevertheless makes the idea of Islamist rule anathema to many American policy-makers.

The foreign policy goal of supporting stable, if not altogether admirable, regimes is based in part on the idea that American governments and businesses have to deal with foreign governments, not with their discontented populations. How these “stable” regimes rule their citizens is often brushed off (in deed if not in word) as “internal affairs.” This premise has been shattered, however. Through the use of terrorism, the heretofore voiceless and angry populations of Saudi Arabia and Egypt have found a way to speak directly with the American government and the American people. Their ambassadors to the United States do not have offices in the Saudi and Egyptian chanceries; they crashed airplanes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside. The Saudi government funds these groups in an effort to win their acquiescence, but it is the United States that has ended up paying. Far from being an internal matter, the nature of rule in the states that the United States supports increasingly will be an American problem, one that makes the defense policy goal of deterrence less achievable. Regime stability by itself is no longer an acceptable foreign policy end. Seeing it as such is tantamount to deficit spending the security of future generations of Americans. There is no guarantee, of course,

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that democrats would replace the current Saudi and Egyptian regimes if the United States withdrew or reduced its support of them, but what is perceived as American complicity in maintaining oppressive rulers would be alleviated.

Implicit in American concerns about regime change is the assumption that given a choice, the populations of Middle Eastern states would elect Islamist parties to power. This does not have to be the case. It is true that today Islamist parties are the most vocal and ready sources of opposition in many Middle Eastern states. As mentioned above, though, this is largely because Islamist parties are the only ones that have been able to survive the suppression of other types of political opposition. A gradual opening of political opportunities for Islamists and non-Islamists alike might very well lead to the eventual benefit of the latter. Additionally, as pointed out by Graham Fuller and Olivier Roy, in states – even monarchies like Jordan – where Islamist parties have been allowed to participate in politics, they have proven to be quite clearly bound by local norms and rules. It bears mentioning again: Islamist parties are also nationalist and populist parties. They are both the product of and are required to serve their national traditions and populations.”

The influence diagram below summarizes the various factors that influence deterrence towards a movement like al-Qa’idah.


49 Influence diagrams were first applied to the issue of deterrence in Davis and Arquilla, Thinking about Opponent Behavior, 16-17.
Deterring Islamist Terrorist Groups

Containment and Kennan’s Crystal Ball

What if Islamist parties came to power nevertheless? Suffice to say that in the Islamic world, as elsewhere, it is far easier to be in the opposition than in power. Once in power, Islamists have become subject to popular expectations as well as (at least external) accountability. Roy, in his The Failure of Political Islam, notes that power has led to remarkable practicality and ideological compromise, if not democracy, particularly among Islamists in Iran.\(^\text{50}\) The demands of international relations force even “Islamic” states to play by certain rules. State power provides the rest of the world with a known address, complete with identifiable interests, of the formerly disenfranchised Islamist NGO. It is easier to hold Iran responsible for terrorism it sponsors than it is an NGO like al-Qa‘idah. Of course, it provides little consolation to know that if an Islamist opposition group

\(^{50}\) Olivier Roy, The Failure of Political Islam (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). A particularly interesting example of this practicality can be seen in the dramatic success of state-sponsored birth control efforts in Iran, following years of state-encouraged population growth that fed an economically and socially unsupported 50 percent population increase between 1976 and 1986. Today 60 percent of the Iranian population is under 25. See Jim Muir, “Condoms Help Check Iran Birth Rate,” BBC News 24 April 2002, Internet:
took power in Saudi Arabia, the United States could, if necessary, attack that resultant state’s interests. After all, the United States does not want to bomb oil refineries, it wants to use them.

There is one stable thing about Saudi Arabia, however: it will remain a petroleum-based rentier state for the foreseeable future. Whatever governmental alternative to the Saudi monarchy that might emerge will need to sell oil to the United States and other countries. Frankly, aside from pilgrimage-related revenues, it’s all the country has. The kingdom cannot afford to engage in embargo warfare today as it did in the mid-1970s. As Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal put it, “This is like cutting off your nose to spite your face.” Further, while the West is understandably concerned – given its experience with Nazi Germany – about democracy gone bad, the utter dependence of the Middle East on the outside world makes the prospect of a “hijacked” regional polity becoming a similarly threatening world power extremely unlikely. With U.S. troops out of the country and a popularly chosen government, residents of Saudi Arabia will have far less (not to say nothing) to complain about vis-à-vis the United States. Again, in such a situation, the status quo will be more appealing than challenging the United States – augmenting deterrence – and the personal grievances that make al-Qa’idah a uniquely Saudi phenomenon will largely disappear. Yes, the suffering in Iraq and Palestine have been part of al-Qa’idah’s list of complaints. It is unlikely that such extra-national


52 This statement came in response to Iraqi calls for an oil embargo to protest the April 2002 Israeli operations in the West Bank. “Saudi Arabia: Oil Not a Weapon in Mideast,” Reuters 19 April
issues alone, without the domestic Saudi woes and the perceived American complicity, would have been enough to mobilize Saudi citizens into such an organization. Note that we are witnessing comparatively little anti-American Islamist terrorism from nationals of states whose regimes are identified less with the United States. Algeria is the most noticeable example, especially since Algerian Islamists have directed their terror towards the Western supporters of that state’s regime, videlicet, the French.

In the even longer term, Roy and Fuller do not fear Islamist power because ultimately it will yield concrete evidence for the peoples of the Middle East that Islamism cannot and will not cure all the region’s ills. The Nile will remain overtaxed; populations will continue to grow faster than regional economies and national infrastructures; corruption will not end, but merely change hands. The net result, they argue, will be either greater flexibility and moderation by Islamist regimes or their eventual ouster. Throughout Roy’s study, he is aware of strong parallels between the empty promises of Islamism and those of communism. In another piece, he concludes thus:

Islamism is helpless against long-term sociological evolutions – urbanization, Westernization, expanded role of women – which will undermine the basic tenets of its ideology. Whatever judgement we pass on Islamism, it will not survive the test of actual rule – and it will fail faster than communism.

53 Fuller, “Islamism(s) in the Next Century,” 144.
54 Roy, The Failure of Political Islam, 3-7.
Others have noticed ideological similarities as well, comparing Islamism not just to communism, but to fascism and to other types of totalitarianism. \(^56\) Francis Fukuyama refers to the phenomenon as “Islamo-Fascism,” \(^57\) while Fuller notices that “as with the socialist critique of capitalist practice, the Islamist diagnosis of the problem is probably better than the prescription for remedy.” \(^58\)

The observed parallels between Islamism and communism have led Daniel Pipes to call for a similarly parallel American policy of containment towards Islamism. \(^59\) Citing George F. Kennan’s July 1947 \textit{Foreign Affairs} article, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” (the so-called “X-Article”) – an early post-World War II attempt to place the Soviet leadership, renowned for being one of the formative documents of American containment strategy – Pipes calls for “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment.” \(^60\) Indeed, the parallels between Soviet behavior identified by Kennan and that of modern-day Islamists are remarkable:

[The Party leadership] doubtless believed – and found it easy to believe – that they alone knew what was good for society and that they would accomplish that good once their power was secure and unchallengeable. But in seeking that security of their own rule they were prepared to recognize no restrictions, either of God or man, on the character of their methods. And until such time as that


\(^{57}\) Fukuyama, “Their Target: The Modern World.”


\(^{60}\) Ibid.
security might be achieved, they placed far down on their scale of operational priorities the comforts and happiness of the peoples entrusted to their care.\footnote{George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} 25.4 (July 1947): 569. In the original publication, the author is identified only as “X.”}

Beyond the brutalities of totalitarianism, the predicted and observed ideological adaptability of Islamists faced with the exigencies of power can also be found in Kennan’s analysis:

\[\text{T}\]he leadership is at liberty to put forward for tactical purposes any particular thesis which it finds useful to the cause at any particular moment and to require the faithful and unquestioning acceptance of that thesis by the members of the movement as a whole. This means that truth is not a constant but is actually created, for all intents and purposes, by the Soviet leaders themselves. It may vary from week to week, from month to month. It is nothing absolute and immutable – nothing which flows from objective reality. It is only the most recent manifestation of the wisdom of those in whom the ultimate wisdom is supposed to reside, because they represent the logic of history.\footnote{Ibid., 573.}

Does it follow, then, that Kennan’s prescription for containment fits the case of Islamism? Not exactly. Aside from the unique circumstances of the Cold War – the superpower symmetry of capabilities, vulnerabilities and understandings (all of which are absent in this present case)\footnote{Ibid., 573.} – there are other factors that argue against the effectiveness of containment. American prevention of Islamists’ achieving power will not work in the long run if that is the will of the local Muslim populations. Locally unwanted regimes cannot be externally maintained indefinitely. At issue here is the course to be taken by a religion. Its roots run far
deeper than did those of Soviet communism, and its course can only be decided upon by the faithful. This is not to say that there is nothing the United States can do to shape the futures of Muslim states. One of the hallmarks of religion – and Islam is no exception – is that it responds fundamentally and dynamically even to the behavior of those outside the fold. The United States can catalyze the process through which the hostile strains of Islamism will disappoint and be rejected like their Soviet predecessor, and it can do so easily – by being true to itself, its core values and its laws, in short, by exporting the American Revolution.

Fuller and Ian O. Lesser are correct in calling for policies that address specific behaviors rather than refer to Islam or “Islamic fundamentalism,” for doing the latter “only ha[s] the effect of highlighting the ideological dimension,” and the fact remains that most Muslims have not chosen the path of al-Qa’idah. The goal of American policy is not to contain Islam. Rather, it must be clear to all that uniformly administered policies focus on actions – whether by Islamists, Israelis, Russians or Red Chinese. By conditioning American support, trade, technology, funding and all the other benefits of being an American ally on democratic reform, open markets, human rights and compliance with international law – as is called for, but only selectively practiced, in U.S. law – and by credibly challenging Islamist threats when they appear, the United States can engage in a policy not of containment, but what might be called “constrainment,” with a significant deterrence component. Arguably, the cutting of trade with and non-and counter-proliferation efforts aimed toward Iran show that such a policy is already in practice. Make no mistake: this is not a call for a more ethical foreign policy because of some disjointed idealism. Rather, it is a call for a balanced policy of deterrence and inducements – in a similarly balanced mix of principle

63 Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.
and realpolitik – with the aim of heading off future human, national and international tragedies.

Islamism’s spread will be kept in check only by indigenous Muslim populations, and if Roy and Fuller are correct, Islamism will ultimately collapse on its own. The United States and its allies can, however, accelerate the process by constraining Islamism’s practitioners’ ability to hold on to power at all costs. This will be even easier than in the Soviet case for two reasons. First, the states of the Muslim Middle East are exceedingly reliant on the outside world for survival, even for basic foodstuffs, to say nothing of automobiles, armaments and other high-tech manufactured goods. They cannot stand alone. Second, the spread of information technology means that more and more Middle Easterners know how life is elsewhere, under alternative political structures. It is not by chance that the Iranian regime has outlawed and recently increased its confiscation of privately owned satellite dishes.

In his call for containment, Pipes recognizes the limits of American influence: “Someone… other than Americans will be needed to conceptualize and deliver the anti-bin Laden message, someone with the necessary Islamic credentials and deep understanding of the culture. That someone is the moderate Muslim, the Muslim who hates the prospect of living under the reign of militant Islam and can envisage something better.” Fukuyama also sees the need for historically absent local action:

No Arab governments have decided on their own to voluntarily step down in favor of democratic rule, like the Spanish monarchy

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66 Pipes, “Who Is the Enemy?”
after the dictator Franco or the Nationalists in Taiwan or the various military dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and other parts of Latin America. There is not a single instance of an oil-rich state in the Persian Gulf that has used its wealth to create a self-sustaining industrial society, instead of creating a society of corrupt rentiers who over time have become more and more fanatically Islamist. These failures, and not anything that the outside world has done or refrained from doing, is the root cause of the Muslim world’s stagnation.

Fifty-five years ago, Kennan also realized that America could not do it all:

It would be an exaggeration to say that American behavior unassisted and alone could exercise a power of life and death over the Communist movement and bring about the early fall of Soviet power in Russia. But the United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power. For no mystical, Messianic movement – and particularly not that of the Kremlin – can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs.

Having said that, Kennan concluded his piece as we will conclude ours: by calling on American decision-makers to have faith in the principles upon which the United States was founded and grew strong, and to act accordingly, for they have and will continue to serve it well. His words are as sage today as they were when they were written, at the dawn of another frightening, challenging time in American history:

Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin’s challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.

Conclusion

Though deterrence has been one of the cornerstones of American defense policy for decades, it is clear that deterrence is not a tool that easily can be applied as-is to the problem of counter-terrorism. After examining a number of plausible historical, psychological and other reasons that deterrence was not achieved vis-à-vis al-Qa’idah prior to September 11, we analyzed a number of deterrence policy prescriptions from the Cold War era, many of which assumed that relevant interactions would take place between states. In the current context, we believe that some of those prescriptions, designed to strengthen deterrence, in fact would have the opposite effect. We conclude, therefore, that analysts and decision-makers must pay careful attention to the contextual framework of the current conflict, and particularly that of what is in many ways a non-traditional enemy, as well as to the psychological factors that influence their own as well as their adversaries’ perception of events and foreign policy messages in order to determine the most effective courses of action against the various specific elements of the terrorist system. Doing so will not come naturally. Rather,

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68 Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 582.
69 Ibid.
analysts and decision-makers need to be trained in the often simple techniques that can at once limit the distorting effects of psychological biases, lend insight into the perceptions of others and create openness to previously unconsidered models and policy options. It bears reiterating that deterrence is a substrategy that cannot stand by itself. Complementing deterrence with a package of gradual inducements selected on the basis of the insights gained through the kind of cultural and social psychological analysis discussed throughout this dissertation offers the long-term potential to achieve the goal traditionally assigned to deterrence alone: allowing the United States to deal with future contingencies by avoiding them, by creating situations where attacks are not even attempted.

In drawing from the experiences documented in the case studies, and applying relevant lessons to the case of deterring al-Qa’idah, we have tried to demonstrate in practical terms the importance of recognizing and addressing the effects of motivated and unmotivated psychological biases on foreign and counter-terrorism policy-making and analysis, and to provide examples of how to do so. More important, however, than the specific methodologies used here are the ideas upon which they rest. Specifically, the distortion and narrowing of vision caused by these universal, naturally occurring biases affect intelligence analysts and policy-makers alike. Both groups’ understandings of foreign actors and policy options stand to be improved by the continued development of analytic methods and mindsets that allow for a wider spectrum of possibilities. The potential lethality of future combat with terrorists or with other as yet unknown antagonists both at home and abroad underscores the importance of this kind of improved analysis and the collection of lessons learned it can provide over time.