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Lexicon and Struggle

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Winners and losers of a war may already be known long before the first shot is ever fired if a belligerent has prepared or long term strategic information operations (IO). This is the one weapon of mass destruction we as a nation can ill afford to lose control of, but yet it seems it is the one 'weapon' that lacks a priority commensurate to its power. IO is, in theory, a continuous loop that runs the entire "spectrum from peace to war and back to peace and it involves all elements of the national government, not solely the military".¹ It is supposed to be a sequential process in which guidance originates from the National Command Authorities (NCA), through the various departments within the government and performed simultaneously at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels through public diplomacy, foreign aid, cultural exchanges, education, law enforcement, electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations (PSYOP), deception, and operation security (OPSEC) to influence, disrupt, or usurp the adversary. So what does all of that have to do with warfare? In a word, everything.

What Kind of War are We Fighting?

Before we get further embroiled in semantics of insurgency, unconventional warfare, guerrilla warfare, small-wars, or even brush-fire wars we should remember that the type of warfare we are engaged in is revolutionary warfare with an Islamic face. Though the U.S. government was slow in realizing that fighting an ideology with technology (i.e. primacy of the military option) was not the answer, it has yet to craft a strategic communication piece that encompasses the whole of government, the private sector and academia.

Many Muslims have succumbed to the joys of watching Islamist violence played out on their television and computer screens not realizing that they are like those who have eaten bread and salt with their enemy. From now on it will become increasingly difficult for Muslims to object to and resist those actions that are now firmly associated with Islam and its adherents. It is this association that has reinforced the polarizing belief that in the end what counts is not the difference between moderate and radical Muslims, but between Muslims and non-Muslims. The real answer is that Muslims and only Muslims can, and must, moderate those aspects of culture and religion to which the Islamists have laid claim.

¹ Dan Kuehl. "Defining Information Power". Number 115, June 1997
<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF115/forum115.html> (accessed January 26, 2008).

Islam has many schools of thought, of law and has numerous sects; and not all of these schools, sects and Islamic scholars agree with each other on how Islam should be practiced and defined, nor do they agree on how the Koran should be interpreted or the application of Mohammed's Hadith. The strands of Islam throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia range from those that praise Osama bin Laden as a hero to those that do not espouse violence or jihadism, and do not accept that Muslim deaths are merely the 'collateral damage' by Islamic terrorists.² Because of these disagreements there is a violent struggle within Islam itself which is playing out in many ways unknown to most Westerners with the result that many Western political leaders granting legitimacy to those groups that claim to speak for the "Muslim community" but who are in fact front organizations for various Islamist groups, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood.

Warfare Defined

A French Army officer, Colonel Gabriel Bonnet,³ wrote that revolutionary warfare was the "application of irregular warfare methods to the propagation of ideology or political system." The aims of such warfare are the overthrow of governments and replacing them with a regime along their ideological lines, assisted by the active participation (or passive indifference) of the population to support the cause willingly or through coercion. The aim is to conquer the population physically and morally because no revolutionary war (call it insurgency if you wish) can be won without at least a measure of popular support.

The reason that the Islamist's strength seems to ebb and flow is because in the fight for the human terrain we are still coming to grips with the concept that ideologies are not interchangeable. Not everyone wants to be like us – while at the same time not everyone wants to be like those we are fighting. For example, the reason that the Taliban has a base of support and is able to continue to function even with the high rates of casualties they sustain is because, at a certain level, many Pashtun's identify and accept the Taliban's ideology and that it is essentially a Pashtun insurgency – just not an all encompassing one that *all* Pashtun's actively support.

Revolutionary warfare is only a single aspect of a far larger political/cultural/religious struggle that cannot be defeated solely by strength of arms. The enemy sees the struggle as a rationale endeavor while many of the academic and cultural elites in the West are unwilling to articulate an encompassing philosophical reason to defend what it is we profess to believe in. There are those in positions of power in the West who instead of leading the defense of the West are actually frustrating such efforts by giving justification to the Islamist goal. This is either done out of a deep sense of historical amnesia and self-loathing or because their ideological make up

² It was Ibn Tammiyah's Takfirist ideology formed the basis for a more "acceptable" practice; where self-proclaimed Islamic scholars (not clearly defined) could name other Muslims as *kufir*, a practice termed *takfiri*. This justified such killing if they did not adhere to a more fundamentalist form of Islam as purportedly taught by the Salafi. These are strands of medieval Islam which are touted as the roots of today's Jihadist movements which pledge to rid the planet of infidels and apostates. The re-establishment of the Caliphate is a utopian image that has also been employed by the Salafist Takfirist's which for many, but not all, in the Islamic world is a unifying symbol.

³ Colonel Bonnet was a professor at the French Army War College and author of "New Psychological Warfare Concepts Based upon Experience in Indochina," (Paris: Payot, 1958).

sees in the Islamists a continuation of a Marxist style revolution with the Muslims being the new proletariat.

This lack of a united front to defend against Islamism has only compounded the serious lack of analysis of the ideological content of Islamism and its consequences in oppression, the order of gender hierarchy and acts of violence. What is lacking in the West is the critical debate about Islamists' view of 'the other.' Though one could argue that these have been already addressed – it's just that here in the West the Islamists deny what they say when confronted. What is their view of those not sharing their religious interpretation, homosexuals, and 'liberated' women? What is their view of democracy and violence? And when they are caught espousing the hate they often do – why are they not called on it and held accountable for it?

The ideology should first receive criticism and be brought to light. Only after that should there be a study of how these values are put to practice in congregations, associations and Muslim schools. Society should regard this form of extremism in the same manner as it does other extremist groups. We must understand the mechanisms of extremism and at the same time forcefully condemn its views and applications. The U.S. has been focused almost exclusively on known members of terror groups, with almost no attention given to the ideology of Islamic supremacism and jihad that inspires terrorism. The Koran's exhortations to warfare which are highlighted by Islamists are lethal whenever taken seriously by Muslims. Those who profess to reject jihad violence should have no problem combating, in cooperation with non-Muslims, the ideology that fuels it. However, the U.S. has no counter ideology response other than disjointed messages, and various outreach style programs to Muslims overseas and in America to better address the issue of radical Islam and open dialogue.

There are ideological similarities between Islamism and other forms totalitarianism notably the cult of violence, xenophobia, anti-liberalism, and anti-Semitism. Islamism has an obsession with purity, a trait common to all forms of not only fascism, but also all forms of totalitarianism. Nazism, Communism, and Islamism each have an ideal by which all are measured. Communism has Marx and his disciples, Nazism has its Aryan supermen of a mythical past, and Islamism has its many myths and scapegoats, a divine right to carry out its global aspirations in the personage of the ideal man (*al-insan al-kamil*) - Mohammed. Purity is an unforgiving master, and allows its keepers a nearly unlimited arsenal of offenses to justify their cruel and often counterproductive whims... an infinite line of hoops for the masses to jump through.

Other similarities between Islamism and other forms totalitarianism is that each in turn y despise the concepts of democracy; free markets and the modern world save for when it comes to harnessing the advances of free societies to pursue weapons and to export their ideology. All yearn to a return of a romanticized past full of empires and glory all of which were "stolen" from them by real and imagined humiliations which need to be avenged. And finally, they would sooner call for the destruction of their own societies and people than engage in any form of co-existence or compromise with the hated unbeliever that would engender a lessening of their doctrine of absolutism.

Therefore, Islamism, Fascism with a religious veneer, may not fit the dictionary definition of fascism exactly point-for-point, but it certainly is its brother under the skin, and thus Islamism

and those who follow the ideology of Islamic supremacism, are appropriate shorthand for the enemy. And like all forms of totalitarianism, Islamism is engaged in leader worship; all pay heed to the incorruptible truths of only one great book; all share a strong revulsion to the arts and literature that they deem as degenerate and decadent; all suppress human expression in the form of jailing, executing and terrorizing artists and intellectuals and destroying those works they decide are offensive.

Propaganda Playbook

Reaching a global audience has never been easier than with the technology explosion and cost availability of the Internet and satellite television. The U.S. is the nation that has gotten the world to drink Coca-Cola, to eat at McDonalds; which pioneered 24-hour cable news; whose movies are watched the world over and whose music can be heard on every continent – so why do we seem to lag in the realm of information operations? Perhaps it is because in the U.S. we are more accustomed to political warfare on the home front than against a foreign enemy that is not a uniformed entity but rather an idea that transcends all boundaries of nationality, ethnicity, class – but attempts to unite via religion.

As Americans we are far from exhibiting an unflinching acceptance of our own government's decisions; instead those decisions are usually targets of severe criticism. Even though internal conflicts are the most dangerous in wartime they are impossible to suppress in a democracy. The best that can be achieved is to temporarily persuade the population to suppress their right to complain, to be pacifists, to dislike any particular group, and all the other thousand and one things that those in democracy comment on without ever thinking that it could be any other way. And it is this very element of our society that leaves us open to exploitation by not only our avowed enemies but by those in our country who are sympathetic to the Islamists cause and assist in sapping our will to resist.

In a letter between the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, and the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, Bin Laden stated: "...it is obvious that the media war in this century is one of the strongest methods: in fact, it's ratio may reach 90% of the total preparation for the battle."⁴ This statement is in line with Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "propaganda of the deed" and of the long understood Islamic tradition that while "brutal fighting" was required it was not enough to insure victory. Jihad had long depended on the assistance of the "sincere scholar's pen or preacher's voice or wealthy man's contributions to be the most valuable forms of Jihad."⁵ The fact that the West has taken so long to grasp the Islamists well-documented concept of warfare indicates the urgent need to truly understand our opponent and the synergistic effect of religion, culture and politics.

⁴ Mr. Chuck De Caro. Notes taken from his lecture on "soft war" at the National Defense Intelligence College, Washington D.C., April 23, 2008. Mr. De Caro is a former CNN special assignment correspondent who is who is credited with the term "soft war" to describe the use of propaganda and media in order to gain strategic advantage over the enemy. He is a consultant to various corporate organizations and the U.S. government.

⁵ Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1998) p. 442.

In one passage of one letter, one of our bitterest enemies laid out the framework of their strategic playbook. But there are problems – the West in general and the U.S. in particular has difficulty in Information Operations (IO) because of our own media domination. Many in the Western media loathe anything that has *not* somehow been filtered through their “objective” lenses, thus official DoD communiqués are treated with perhaps more scrutiny than those made by the Islamists. Perhaps that is a legacy from the Vietnam era when the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office⁶ had pushed stories that were often overly optimistic compared to what commanders in the field were reporting thus causing cynicism to grow when these discrepancies came to light.⁷

In a global market with many choices of news and information many outlets tailor their message to fit a certain demographic – which is understandable in a business sense– but is myopic in what is at stake. When a media outlet such as the BBC, an entity whose budget is provided by the British government, does not refer to British soldiers as ‘their’ soldiers there is a problem...and it goes far beyond objectivity. We should not concentrate on seeing the media as an enemy; we should enlist it to help defend our nation from the enemy. The embedding of journalists is a good program and needs to be expanded, to include inviting reporters from smaller regional media outlets to embed.

There are those who make or influence policy decisions who are not familiar with, or tend to sugarcoat, the leading writers of the Islamist movements such as Dr. Youssef al-Qaradawi; Sayyid Qutb, Hajj Amin al-Husseini; or Sheikh Hamed bin Abdallah al-Ali.

Focusing solely on the high profile personage of Osama bin Laden has given us a severe case of tunnel vision and target fixation, and has lead us away from the deeper meaning of this war. It is not about *one man*; it is instead about a *shared vision*. The average revolutionary fighter does not have complex political ideologies running through his head – rather he knows what the goal is and has distilled the complex theological and political theories of an entire ideology into a poster-board type mentality of easy to remember phrases and concepts and whose strategy can be boiled down to, “Think globally, but act locally.”

The Islamists are engaged in a struggle they see lasting generations and who have been enabled throughout the Muslim world by vast amounts of wealth to become a multifaceted global movement that operates throughout the Muslim world, to include immigrant Muslim communities in the West. Islamists base their IO on a narrative that is commonly accepted by their targeted audience and utilizes emotional images to reinforce several key themes:

⁶ This is a correction to the original version of this article that read MACVSOG vice the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office.

⁷ General Westmoreland and President Johnson had been telling the American public throughout 1967-8 that the war in Vietnam was all but won only to have North Vietnam launch their massive Tet Offensive in February 1968. And while the Tet Offensive did not achieve even one of the strategic objectives laid down by General Giap of inspiring a “popular uprising” in the South; and in fact it resulted in the Viet Cong cadres in South Vietnam being all but destroyed, the second order effect was that the American public felt they had been “lied” to by their government concerning the “real situation” in Vietnam. This perception then caused the American public to distrust their governments involvement in Vietnam resulting eventually to a loss of popular support for our efforts in South Vietnam.

- Islamists address a select portion of the Muslim population vulnerable to a core supremacist ideology that has never been repudiated by main line Islamic scholars.
- Islamists build on accepted Koranic tracts that are reinforced in the mosques, schools, popular culture and framed through the Palestine - Israeli conflict.
- The high rate of illiteracy in much of the Muslim world⁸ makes it easier to tailor their message with a heavier emotional content. And less to fear of their target audience searching out other sources of information.
- The prevailing attitude of using existing cultural attitudes to promote Islamist ideas can be best summarized by Sheik Hassan Youssef, a leading Hamas member, “We like to grow them from kindergarten through college.”⁹
- Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and even the Shi’ite equivalent, Hezbollah, all use a message that is an outgrowth of what is commonly accepted as the ‘truth’ among many Muslims, and is repeated in their local media, mosques and schools, that Islam is under siege by the “Zionist entity” (Israel) and the U.S.
- Islamists rely on a process we can call “validation through confirmation” in which the U.S. takes the time to confirm the authenticity of an Islamist communiqué, for example Osama bin Laden, and by doing so have done the Islamists job of proving the authenticity and importance of the message.
- Islamists rely on parity perception. Each time the President of the U.S. or other head of state responds directly to an Islamist leader it elevates that individual to the same level and he is thus perceived as so important that the President must acknowledge him.
- Islamists target the West via ‘lawfare’ and political correctness. Islamists advocacy groups threaten lawsuits based on charges of racism and religious discrimination (i.e. Islamophobia) against those who challenge their actions in the West.
- Islamist theologians reinforce that the only guarantee to enter heaven is to die while waging Jihad for Islam. This type of sacrifice is held in extremely high esteem in certain segments of society; so much so, that parents often express their desire for their children to become martyrs.¹⁰

⁸ Arab Human Development Report 2002 compiled by the United Nations Development Program.

⁹ Richard Leiby. “Where Rage Resides: For the Ordinary People Of Gaza City, Death Is a Way of Life,” *Washington Post*, April 24, 2002.

¹⁰ One mother of a 13 year-old, who died during the *Intifada*, told a journalist, “I am happy that he has been martyred. I will sacrifice all my sons and daughters (twelve in all) to Al-Aqsa and Jerusalem.” Kelly, Sam. “A Deadly Game,” *The Times*, London, October 19, 2000.

- Islamists use the logic thread that in Islamic law, Jihad warfare may be defensive or offensive,¹¹ and that U.S. presence anywhere in the Muslim world should obligate all Muslims to defend these Muslim lands from U.S. ‘attack.’ Offensive Jihad is in line with Mohammed’s command that Muslims offer non-Muslims conversion to Islam, subjugation as inferiors under Islamic rule, or war until all unbelievers submit. Thus, offensive Jihad is justified because Allah commands it, and whoever resists the Islamists attack is therefore ‘attacking’ Islam and offensive Jihad becomes defensive Jihad. Such beliefs are reinforced in textbooks and popular culture throughout the Middle East giving the Islamists claim that it is they who are actually doing what all Muslims are *supposed* to do.

To neutralize Islamic terrorism the U.S. must target the very population that gives them strength and assist in sparking a change.

- Identify Islamist Goal: Islamists are determined to establish an Islamic state greater than the historical Caliphate.¹² To ignore the call to re-establish the Caliphate, as a mere slogan is a failure to recognize how powerful slogans are in forming public opinion.
- Concept of the Caliph: Under Islamic law, only the Caliph¹³ is authorized to wage offensive Jihad, and is the primary reason why Islamists want to restore this office.¹⁴ This exposes the totalitarian aims of the Islamist movement even as it presents itself as a defensive action against Western evils. The legal authority to mobilize all Muslims is crucial for understanding the enemy. We must pose the question, who is going to be in charge? And to play on the petty rivalries and egos of each group leader and ideologue.
- Take Charge of the Debate: Stop allowing the Islamists to determine the phrases to be used to describe them. Use the terms familiar to Muslim audiences to discredit Islamists and their actions.¹⁵
- End of Tolerating Intolerance: Nothing emboldens aggression more than tolerance. The mantra of multiculturalism has allowed Islamists to grow and has led to whole communities of Muslim immigrants to resist the historical trend of assimilation into their

¹¹ Jihad is ordinarily *fard kifaya*, an obligation on the Muslim community as a whole. Jihad becomes *fard ayn*, or obligation for every individual Muslim to aid in any way he can, if a Muslim land is attacked.

¹² At its height of power the Caliphate stretched from Spain, across North Africa and the Middle East and ending in present day Indonesia.

¹³ For Sunni Muslims the Caliph was the successor of the prophet Mohammed as the spiritual, political, and military leader of the Sunni Muslim community.

¹⁴ In 1924, the new secular government of Turkey abolished the office of the Caliphate, and this is identified by many Islamists as the source of all of their current troubles ranging from Western influence, disunity, laxity in Islamic observance, and of course the creation of the state of Israel.

¹⁵ Douglas Streusand and Harry Tunnel, “Choosing Words Carefully: Language to Help Fight Islamic Terrorism.” National Defense University, Center for Strategic Communications, May 23, 2006.

adoptive countries. Highlight that inclusion and acceptance in the West means achieving the quality of life they could never attain back in the old country.

- **Getting Passed by:** Use current UN and NGO studies that show the reason for the problems in the Middle East are not the result of vast conspiracies but the legacy of allowing self-appointed religious leaders who know nothing of economics, government or science to control governments. Highlight that Islamism is just one more in a long line of failed ideologies that blame others for self-induced failure.
- **What's Their Plan:** Ask what is the Islamist plan for economic and infrastructure improvement? Highlight how the mountains of money, material and lives wasted in the pursuit of totalitarian dreams would have been better utilized pursuing economic and academic freedom.
- **Press the renewal of *Ijtihad*:**¹⁶ Remind the various Muslim populations that Wahhabism is not synonymous with Muslim.
- **Islamic Feminism:** Half of the global Muslim population is female and are the key to changing attitudes over the long term. This movement is nothing like the Western type; it is conservative and works for gender equality while respecting their cultural norms.

Political ideas are only as popular as what they actually deliver. Such initiatives would be viewed favorably by the targeted audiences if advertised and implemented consistently. The best IO we can generate is an improved standard of living for members with tangible results that can be seen, felt and perceived by the targeted population that will result in their believing in what the U.S. is saying and doing.

Lessons Still To Be Learned

Information Operations is perhaps the most important weapon in the arsenal to shape the battlefield. Granted, we are not likely to convince the Arab world to change many of their long held beliefs and to completely disavow those that promote Islamist terrorism, but there are ways that we can communicate to the so-called Arab Street, and to do so means a break from bureaucracies and lawyer approved news speak.

An individualistic themed approach would be more effective than a broad based appeal because much of the targeted audience is somewhat cynical of any official sounding message being directed at them from foreigners. A generalized trait of Arab culture is that Arabs tend to prefer forging relationships with people rather than organizations; Arabs trust in people and not institutions. Therefore, the more personal the approach to the Arab 'heart' is the fastest way to get to the Arab 'mind.' Essentially, IO comes down to some basic factors:

1. The responsibility of having a vision for IO planners must come from senior government officials to create government-wide concepts because the legal and policy issues are far

¹⁶ *Ijtihad* is the Islamic practice of reasoning with sacred texts and traditions of the local custom – removing the “contamination” of the Arabian Peninsula on the indigenous populations.

more difficult than the technical ones to keep pace and engage in, and support long term IO missions.

2. Like anything else in combat IO is best summed up by CSA General Bedford Forrest's motto of getting "there first with the most."¹⁷
3. IO is part of the planning process and supports all operations – before, during and after. Explaining why you are fighting in the middle of the fight is too little way too late.
4. Manufactured news stories and overt propaganda efforts with their 'clear and compelling narrative' are truly the only strategic weapon that the Islamists have. AKs and RPGs are nice, but aren't going to last long when hit with superior weapons directed by superior intelligence and information. Stop the information war and the Islamists flounder - and many people – especially Arabs - start realizing that Islamism is just one more empty ideology that will only increase, and not alleviate, their plight.
5. IO efforts must be aggressive and continuous. The further establishment of websites, increased access of journalists to the "secret" machinations of how we conduct military and civil operations can highlight that we are flesh and blood people who strive to better their lives and who do not callously lump all Arabs or Muslims as the enemy.
6. No one will tell our story better than we will. No international news agency is going to give the U.S. good press due to (a) competition for regional market share – demographics and advertising profits puts us at a disadvantage for that part of the world; (b) overt support for the U.S. may mean access to where the action is (i.e. Arab territory) is either denied or will get the reporter killed; and (c) many Western journalists harbor quite open sympathy for the Marxist narrative of the Islamist "anti-Imperialist" passion play. If we don't control the message then someone else will.
7. Decentralized IO is absolutely required, but it is not being done out of fear that the perceived benefit of such operations is less than the potential risks. Governments are by nature hierarchical and risk averse, which is understandable because they naturally want to mitigate the risks involved. And that anything released to a global audience needs to be sanitized and approved by the lawyers so as to have a CYA Plan for whoever authorizes the release. However, there is a law of diminishing returns to risk avoidance – if done too intensely opportunities will be lost.
8. It is important to stress that anything that is an outright fabrication and produced by the USG will eventually be exposed and that the exposure of that fact alone will do more

¹⁷ 'In the first interview at Murfreesboro, TN, Forrest was asked by Duke & Morgan to what he attributed his stunning success. The General replied that he "just got there first with the most men." Of course, Forrest rarely had the most men, but was adept at finding the weak point and bursting upon it with an overpowering thrust with more men than the enemy had at that point.' Source: *General Nathan Bedford Forrest Historical Society* <http://www.tennessee-scv.org/ForrestHistSociety/quotes.html> (accessed on February 22, 2009).

damage to us than the falsified message will have done to the enemy. While the lies broadcasted by our enemy will often not be called to account, while any questionable statements by our own government will. The enemy can be hopelessly beaten in IO not because of any particular adroitness on the part of the U.S. or our allies, but because we base our collective messages in truth – whereas our enemies, both internal and external, are too often unwilling to deal in the truth.

9. Those threatened by Islamism need to understand why this fight is important. A re-running of President Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” is perhaps the best advertising campaign for explaining the complexity of a pluralistic democracy in a common language that was able to remind, reinforce and articulate the reasons why ‘we fight’ and how this fight involves each one of us.

Though having an aggressive IO campaign is good, but to be successful we must have a voice from *within* the targeted audience do the speaking. An outside voice, no matter how fluent in the local language and custom will always be that – an outsider and therefore always suspect. The voice, like the change itself, has to come from within, and in that regard I don’t think we are utilizing enough moderate Arab reporters, journalists, and bloggers to get the story out. In news, particularly in the Arab world, he who hits the street first and is loudest is the one people will listen to. Media outlets rely on stringers to give them stories (i.e. 2006 Hezbollah ran the media in that war through their use of stringers) and in OIF many journalists sat in the *Palestine Hotel* in Baghdad and relied on stringers to provide stories and video without verifying the credibility (usually to the detriment of Coalition efforts). Such ‘yellow journalism’ can cut both ways, we don’t tell them what to print, just give the facts that OPSEC and INFOSEC allow and let the Arabs write in the style that resonates with their audience.

Furthermore, to assist in these efforts we must make sure that they are able to get copies of the messages quickly. Prior to any operation, be it military, humanitarian relief etc., a pre-formatted release of the basic interrogatives should be filled out with operational security in mind so before the dust has even settled the population impacted can read, see and hear about it before the enemy has a chance to counter it. There are too many self-imposed obstacles to getting the word out and will cost us the initiative. We must give the information to those who know how to communicate best within that culture – give the message to our Arab allies, and let them get the word out.

Dr. Gabriel Weimann, Director of Communication, University of Haifa, Israel, studies the phenomenon of terrorism and its proliferation in the Internet. Currently he and his team monitor over 6,860+ websites, worldwide, in 24 different languages, and one thing that all terrorist groups (not Islamist exclusive) have in common is that they all have multiple websites and use the Internet for similar purposes (i.e. data mining; propaganda; agitprop; fund raising; networking; instructional; inner debates; recruitment, etc). The trends that he, and others have noted, are listed below and there is no reason why these trends cannot be incorporated by us to be used against the various terrorist groups and their supporters.

1. Narrowcasting: Instead of broadcasting a single message to the entire world, they are crafting their messages to target specific demographics within their constituency and

opposition. In this way the groups can target children with comic book style characters, Japanimation style cartoons, video games¹⁸, quizzes and prizes. Such groups also target the recruitment of women with guide books of how to raise children for the Jihad, first aid, how to become a *mujahidette*, and how to support the ‘cause’ (i.e. Al Qaeda’s “*Al Khansa*” and Hamas’ “*Al Qassam*”).

2. Synergy: Incorporating multimedia options so web visitors have a single place to share, post and view videos, audio clips, news articles and hyperlinks to other interesting sites. The production value and layout are similar to most professionally managed blog sites.
3. Virtual Communities: These sites are focused on the Muslim diaspora throughout the world and are actively trawling for the alienated, frustrated, and angry youth...not necessarily radical or even Muslim. They are seeking those who want a place to belong, to be accepted and desire a group identity and whose approaches are very similar in some to the way cult movements in the late 1970s and 1980s which targeted those – especially in the West - who wanted “meaning” in their life. Some of the sites provide the ability for sympathetic facilitators to spot, recruit and potentially mobilize likeminded individuals.
4. Debates on Line: Provide forums for those who are sympathetic or just curious to ask more about the group’s ideology. Many sites cater to this trend by hosting a FAQ tab that the visitor can read to find out more. These services allow for groups to have debates amongst those sympathetic to the cause or with/against other groups (i.e. Hamas v Fatah). Such formats do offer a great opportunity to exploit fissures in ideology, goals, highlight hypocrisy and petty jealousy and rivalries of these groups – but again they are moderated. The amount of free play tolerated usually relates to the amount of moderation and association to the group. Which means, the more open the site the less likely it is to be an official web page of a particular group since those sites tend to no longer engage in open debates about operational or ideological matters.

Relativity

IO is situational dependent, based on the audience, the desired outcome, the activity undertaken, and time-scale of the operation in which the IO is tasked to support. Although the ultimate target of all information operations is the human psyche (or morale) and not the enemy’s technological capability, we must be mindful that it is not the end all of IO. Until Western governments are willing to rewrite doctrine, break down the territorial purviews of the different components, and overcome the distaste for political warfare, we will not achieve strategic IO synergy. Ultimately, effectiveness is measured by the achievement of our policy aim. However, this may not be known due to a lack of a campaign plan or worse, lack of a clear strategic vision. The weakness of any IO strategy is that it is based on the precarious nature of both the domestic and international political situation, and that for strategic IO to be effective it may take years, decades, or even generations to confirm that the desired aims were achieved. All of this feeds into “expectation management” because our nation and leaders demand ever faster results at

¹⁸ Video games include Hezbollah’s “Special Force”; PLO’s “Under Siege” and Al Qaeda’s “Quest for Bush” (which also targets Grand Ayatollah Sistani).

ever-lower costs. We must account for time when dealing with human dynamics, when trying to persuade a target audience, as they are individuals and not a singular mass with a hive mentality.
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Our recurrent fascination with ‘flash to bang’ or ‘effects based operations’ often works against us because it leads us to focus on instant effects even though the areas in the world where IO is needed the most are in those same areas in which time figures most prominently. It is in such areas that often the effectiveness of an IO campaign is justified via methods of production (i.e. numbers of leaflets printed, leaders spoken to, messages broadcasted) because these provide forms of tangible results that are easily demonstrable to policy makers. While methods of production may track the expenditures of time, resources and personnel they do not equate into actual results per se. This is a critical issue because quantifiable data points are desired by commanders and politicians to justify budgets and manpower as well as answering those who question the value added for having a long-view of IO. Effectiveness is restricted by the time frames that IO is tasked to operate within (i.e. a four year presidential administration).²⁰

Finally, all IO falls under the heading of motivation. This can be assisted by detailed analysis (anthropology, sociology, and psychology to tell us about our opponent and what he thinks is important - good and bad), and historical data. Effectiveness is conducted by careful planning (integration; synchronization; deconfliction, unity of effort, etc.) but requires strategic patience and a clearly articulated strategic vision. The last point seems to be the one thing that we are lacking and until it is rectified all the benefits and results that we are currently achieving may be temporary at best.

Conclusion

Neither defeatism nor denials are effective strategies. Yes, the situation is very serious, but all is not lost. Much more needs to be done politically, militarily, legally and educationally to dissuade Muslims both here and abroad from taking up the cause of Jihad against the U.S. Our current policies of providing all Muslim groups legitimacy through political correctness will give us more Islamists and not less because such policies give the Islamists and their apologists the cover they need to continue recruiting and plotting the destruction of those very institutions that protect them.

This “moral insanity,” as writer Victor David Hanson put it, isn’t particularly new. It had occurred in the 1930s and led to the destruction of France; it just about destroyed England, and led the United States into hibernation until a monumental act of outrage, Pearl Harbor, galvanized it. One would think that 9/11 could be seen as a similar monumental act – but it wasn’t because our government under President Bush didn’t treat it as one and the ‘Pearl Harbor

¹⁹ Dr. Russell Rochte, National Defense Intelligence College, comments on IO sent to the author by email on January 12, 2009.

²⁰ MSG Russell Ermeling, 320th POC, USAR, comments about measuring IO effectiveness sent to the author by email on January 9, 2009.

effect' was downplayed.²¹ What many have yet to truly realize is that the only way we will be able to defeat the threat of Islamic terrorism is through Muslim/Arab culture. And let's be honest, those cultural elements that support and promote Islamic jihad will not change unless something drastic forces the supporters of Islamism to alter their behavior. Accepting this would allow us to build a strategy whose goals and the means to achieve them are realistic and can be told in an honest manner to the public that will have to bear that cost.

As early as 1909, Homer Lea touched on the threat of Islamism indirectly in his book *The Valor of Ignorance*.²² He advised his readers that it is important that the world should never forget that over 1,350 years ago on the Arabian Peninsula a nomad gathered together a small force of fiercely loyal and brutal fighters who were outnumbered, under financed, and lacked any permanent base of supplies but were animated by an ideology that enabled them to conquer all the kingdoms and empires around them. This small band of determined men created an empire of their own that stretched all the way to India in the east, across the Middle East, the whole of North Africa and all the way to the borders of present day France. This man, Mohammed, re-wrote laws, replaced gods, dethroned kings and conquered millions. For the West to think that it has nothing to worry about and that the various armed forces of our own nations is enough to guard against an enemy that depends on stealth, migration, conversion, intimidation, socio-religious controls and exploits the generosity and good nature of those that they have sworn is their religious duty to murder is sheer lunacy. No nation has ever survived an onslaught by a war-like people for long.

The lesson Mr. Lea stressed was that while money can equip an army it can't make it fight – only cultural norms can, and that is one commodity that Islamists and their supporters have an overabundance of – the glorification of combat and the absolute righteousness of their cause. Our enemy has the potential to once again become a whirlwind and become the latest of the giant-killers who conquer those societies that have become complacent and passive, allowing their martial spirit to wither as they sleep in imagined safety. This has happened in every era, in every part of the world regardless of ethnicity, race, or creed. The times we live in today are no different.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Army Special Operations Command, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

²¹ Mr. Michael Orris. Notes from a telephone conversation regarding the historical similarities of the reluctance of democracies to quickly deal with a "gathering storm" until it is almost too late on December 20, 2008.

²² Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1909. This book dealt with not only combat throughout history, along the lines of Social Darwinism, but that America was unaware of the growing threat of a militant Japanese Empire and that our naïve belief that the U.S. could never be invaded, or conquered, had led to the destruction of numerous nations and kingdoms throughout history.

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