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Gwyn Prins
Columbia University

Stanley Heginbotham

John Cooley
Christian Science Monitor

Steven van Evera
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jack Blum
Lobel, Novins & Lamont

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Gwyn Prins, Stanley Heginbotham, John Cooley, Steven van Evera, Jack Blum, and Jonathan Schell

The War on Terror

**From the EPIIC Symposium at
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Gwyn Prins is Alliance Research professor jointly at the London School of Economics and at Columbia University, author of Understanding Unilateralism in American Foreign Relations and The Heart of War, and advisor on security policy to several governments and to NATO.

Thank you and good evening. I've been asked to help us into this evening's discussion with two sets of framing observations. The problem about terrorism is that it is very strange, very frightening, and appears amorphous. So what I want to do is to try and bound the problem. I will do it in ways that are necessarily going to be controversial, some people may not like the way I bound them. That's fine — we can have a discussion as to how we should bound the problem.

The first issue is really the obvious one, which is to know what it is that we're talking about. Just before 9/11, I chaired a study for our Ministry of Defense in which we had the opportunity to look at what everybody was saying at that time in the open and in some of the not open literature. In the open literature, without any question, the best study on terrorism that was published before September 11, 2001, was by the Norwegian Defense Search Agency who pointed out that we were moving into a world in which the security threat to industrial countries from terrorism was most likely to come from what they called "low probability high impact events," precisely the sort that happened on that September morning.

But what we did in the study, and I will just rehearse it for you now, is to define quite closely what we mean by terrorism and what we do not mean by terrorism. So the first part of the proposition is that a terrorist act is an act by a non-state actor by definition. That means that the loose talk about state terrorism is strictly nonsense; it cannot happen. States cannot be terrorists. States do something much worse, they commit Terror with a capital T; the Committee on Public Safety in the French Revolution, Stalin, Mao. Terror has killed in history far more people than terrorism, and I might add that today there is no change from the trends of the 1990s, which is that terrorism is a secular phenomenon in the world, is in decline in terms of absolute numbers of attacks and numbers of people killed also.

Second, terrorist acts are acts that are aimed deliberately at randomly chosen victims. These are not targeted assassinations. The very point of the terrorist act is that everyone in this room should know that he or she is a potential target of a terrorist because, third, the acts are committed with the intention of compelling involuntary political change; people being made to do things that they wouldn't otherwise want to do.

And I suggest that those three are actually rather useful bounding parameters for the concept. And then we need to notice that terrorism, in the narrower sense that I've defined it, comes in two variants. First, there is traditional terrorism. Traditional terrorism is when a terrorist has a political demand that can be satisfied; that was the position with the FLN in Algeria, they wanted the French out, they

wanted an independent Algeria. It was the position with the IRA in Northern Ireland; they wanted the British out; they wanted a united Ireland. It is the position with the Tamil Tigers and so on.

Conditional terrorists are quite different from unconditional terrorists in the way in which they behave and the way in which they have to be handled, because unconditional terrorists are people who have no specific demand of you and me because you and I are infidels and we deserve to die. As the convicted leader of the Aum Shinri Kyo cult in Japan pointed out at the beginning of his trial, the only thing that they were trying to do was to kill very large numbers of people. They didn't succeed, fortunately, but that was what they were trying to do.

Now what tactics are available? Clearly type A conditional terrorism can be addressed in a number of ways because if you are the British government and you are confronted with the IRA you could capitulate. There are many people who think that that's exactly what Mr. Blair did with the so-called Good Friday Agreement, that he effectively gave the IRA what they were asking for and therefore they stopped doing anything further nasty. Or secondly, another interpretation of the Good Friday Agreement is that you can bribe a conditional terrorist, you can offer that person something to desist; it may be political, it may be other. If you don't want to deal with the person at all you can contain that sort of terrorist, you just throw a cordon of some sort such that they can't get out and they can't hurt other people. Possibly, you can deter such a terrorist, . . . possibly. I say possibly because I think it's much less clear that that is an open course of action. And, of course, you can get to them before they get to you. You can take preemptive action, which will often, of course, in the case of terrorists, mean assassination. Those are the options that you have for dealing with conditional terrorists.

When you turn to type B, the ones that we are now mostly worried about, unconditional terrorists, your options are much more limited. You can possibly contain, you can make sure that Mr. bin Laden doesn't get out of the hill country of northern Pakistan and southern Afghanistan. But the surest way of dealing with unconditional terrorists, and clearly the tactic of choice, is preemption because with these people there is no compromise possible. It is a fight to the death.

Now, the form of terrorism that has brought us to this panel this evening is very much in the second, B, category. So the second observation, briefly, is to offer some thought to what has made Islamic unconditional terrorism the sort that preoccupies so many in the West now. What has made that possible? Briefly, it's this: We live in strange times, and one characteristic of the present is that we have five continuing unfinished revolutionary processes going on in the world: unfinished revolutions in Eastern Europe, by my count the third revolution since the end of communism in Russia; the European revolutions surrounding the end of the European Union. Two sorts of revolutions in Asia, some to do with China, some with the Asian Tigers, and Islamic revolution, the unfinished questions about whether Islam can find a way to live viably with modernity.

But this is not happening in a world that has not changed in fundamental ways, ways that Jonathan Schell was actually prescient in reminding us of in his work almost twenty years ago. Because ours is a world where we have new actors and new factors. The actors are well enough known. We have large scale multinational corporations, and we have empowered individual actors who are new in the political order, and what makes both of them possible is information. Because empowering individuals, making possible the leverage that people get from the control and access

to information, make possible two very important processes; systematic synergisms bringing together things that otherwise might not, and risk cascades, of which more in just one moment.

Now it's inside that black box that we need to concentrate our attention. What happened on September 11 was that Islamic revolutions were able to come together with systemic synergisms to produce a risk cascade. In military terms the will, which was implacable, was able to be linked to means, and the means and the technical military brilliance of the attack of September 11 lay in the use of the means, was such that the terrorists themselves had to do virtually nothing. The timing of the operation was produced by the ABC airline guide, the skills were provided by flying schools in the United States, the timing of the attacks was clearly intended to produce the picture that you all saw, many of you I am sure in real time as it happened, the two attacks hitting the television schedules, and, of course, it will be in every mind as that airplane hit the tower you will all recollect that the pilot pulled it up; he was going at maximum speed in the dive and then he pulled it up about twelve stories. I was, as was mentioned, advising ITN at the time, we quickly called in a structural engineer and said, "What would you do if you wanted to knock down that tower?" And the answer is that you would hit it at exactly the point where the airplane hit it. Why? Because you have to melt the metal, and then you produce an effect with enough weight above that it will drive down the tower. Osama bin Laden was trained as a structural engineer. His company, his family's companies, are very large in Saudi Arabia.

Subsequently, we have had from Al Qaeda the bombs in Bali, in Saudi Arabia, the UN bomb in Iraq that killed the future Secretary-General of the UN, the Red Cross bomb that drove the Red Cross out of Iraq, two sets of Turkish suicide bombs. What these do, I would suggest, is that they underline the common threat to the West and its friends.

Now, there are the other consequences of the Islamic revolution as interpreted by Islamic fundamentalists who render it as a very simple black and white question. The world for them is divided into Dar al-Islam and the world of war in which we, the infidels, live; and we, as infidels, deserve only one thing, which is death. The only circumstance under which we will be spared is if we consent to the status of the infidel whose life is spared by the Caliph because the Caliph in his mercy allows that person to live as a slave in a condition of complete and abject political subordination. That's effectively the choice that is put to those of us in the West by this group, which is why it's a fight to the finish.

The final point that I would make, is something very important about the nature of the political dynamic of terrorists attacks. There is a piece of mathematical topography called a cusp catastrophe. Now the point about a cusp catastrophe is that the upper surface is safe to walk along. It goes up and down a little, but it isn't dangerous. Whereas, if you walk along the lower surface, there is a serious risk that you will, at a certain unpredictable point, fall over the edge. So you start off and you do not know that you are walking into danger. If you continue, then you go over the cliff. That's what happened with September 11. But if you take a course of action that leads you back to the safe slope, then you will find that you haven't put yourself into danger. The key question for all strategic analysts, all intelligence departments in the world today, is where are we in that circle? Where are we now, and where are we going? Those are the questions we have to answer with regard to terror and terrorists — two different phenomena. In particular, with regard to the

question of unconditional terrorism, we have to decide whether we have any options other than the two that I have mentioned: containment and preemption.


Stanley Heginbotham is former chief of Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division and Senior Specialist in American Foreign Policy, Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, and author of Conversation with a Patriot: What To Do about Iraq.

We are not in a global war on terror. We have a largely identifiable enemy, Al Qaeda and its associated organizations and institutions. It has attacked the United States primarily because of what it sees as American cultural, economic, and military imperialism in the Arab Moslem world. The command structure of the enemy is physically located in the mountainous remote historically ungoverned, and many would say ungovernable, North West Frontier province of Pakistan and adjacent areas in Afghanistan. It has a highly decentralized structure, which has institutionalized mature organizational patterns because many of its elements evolved in the insurgency against the Soviets in Afghanistan and in subsequent insurgency. We have a war on a terrorist organization and its allied structures and institutions.

I would submit that we are told that we are in a war on global terror because this is a rhetorical device that serves rather narrowly conceived national security and political goals of this administration. Now one can say, OK, well, you know, he's president, he wants to lead, he wants to state something that's going to be catchy and get our attention, is there anything wrong with that? I think it's very damaging and dangerous to simply repeat "we're in a war on global terror." I think we need to be specific about what we're fighting because it's a very important enemy and it deserves careful and focused attention.

The success of this rhetorical political device has had, I think, negative consequences from a national security perspective, and let me just spell out a few of them. First of all, it's very important to understand that that rhetorical escalation has been used as the justification for going into the war on Iraq. Iraq was defined as a rogue state, which, by definition, was hostile to all aspects of American society and sought weapons of mass destruction to distribute to terrorist organizations. This was not an empirical question, this was an assertion, and this was a central element in leading us into the war in Iraq. And I submit that that war had nothing to do with the war on the terrorist organizations that are the American enemy. But more important, it diverts not only public attention but enormous national security resources away from the appropriate and legitimate war on Al Qaeda and associated terror organizations.

Now, to a degree this was a calculated strategy, and I would very much commend to you Bob Woodward's book on *Bush at War*, because he obtained something close to a transcript of the early National Security Council meetings right after 9/11, and it provides discussions, particularly between Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld, saying we're in trouble because there are no targets out there, it's going to be very hard to find solid targets in Afghanistan. Condoleezza Rice, as the Soviet military expert, certainly knew that this was a problematic area, and they both agreed — we need a diversion. Let's be real clear, when we went into Afghanistan we had a goal which was to destroy Al Qaeda, not Taliban. Taliban was an impediment to reaching Al Qaeda. Our war was not with the Taliban, it was with and it remains with Al Qaeda. We have not succeeded in winning that war, but we have diverted national resources away from that war, and we don't have the resources to do both Iraq and Afghanistan, and we have chosen to do Iraq.



Also, independent of the diversion of resources, the war on Iraq has increased the threat of anti-American terrorism, which is our concern, in two ways: First, one of the challenges for terrorist organizations is to reach meaningful targets. We have given them an enormous gift by importing into Iraq a whole range of American targets and institutions but also a set of Iraqi institutions that are seen as complicit with American occupation. So we've facilitated the terrorist attacks in that sense and we've dramatically enhanced the recruitment pool for Islamic terrorists and for Al Qaeda specifically, and we have provided encouragement by invading and occupying an Arab country, for those who have sympathized with the institutions to provide support and protection which are also enormously important to terrorist institutions.

The third negative consequence I want to briefly touch on from this notion of a war on terror is that it has created an intellectual and policy climate that I believe discourages open analytic approaches to terrorism and terrorists. When one is at war one is at pressure to reify the enemy. Terrorists are evil, they are hostile to all aspects of American culture and society, they need to be fought and destroyed. To say that terrorists or terrorist organizations are products of cultural, social, and political conditions and that modifying those contexts and those conditions can moderate the threat of terrorism, can in some quarters be seen as bordering on disloyal.

So let me go to that point, briefly, and then make several points about the character of terrorists. First, the resort to terrorism is an act of political despair. It's a form of acting out against political powers that are seen as repressive and unassailable by political or conventional military means. It's the ultimate asymmetric tactic of the weak and of those who perceive themselves as intolerably weak. Humiliation is often a central component of those who are pushed to the extreme of becoming terrorists. I can't over-emphasize the enormous sense of humiliation and weakness that is felt in the parts of the Arab world that I have been familiar with since I lived in Israel in the early 1950s. It's a source of enormous frustration and humiliation and rage, and this is a very important element in provoking terror.

Terrorism is rooted not only in constructed identities, but also in constructive ideology, and it needs an ideology that provides a basis for saying we have been deprived of legitimate elements, we have historical grievances and we've been deprived of the resolution of historical grievances, and we need some kind of achievement and satisfaction.

Third, these worlds may or may not bear much relationship to the real world. Certainly, I think much of Al Qaeda and the Islamists, bear little relationship to the real world. In other cases they do, and in some cases terrorists are pushing for satisfaction that's quite reasonable and we need to recognize that sometimes terrorists have perfectly legitimate goals that are being pursued in an extreme way — ways that are not acceptable, but that doesn't mean the accommodation of their concerns is illegitimate.

Fourth, a central tactic of terrorists is to push to the extremes, to destroy moderation and moderates as plausible elements within a political process. Often terrorists kill people within their own society who are moderates. If you look at the Tamil Tigers, for example, much of their terror was directed by moderate Tamils because they wanted to eliminate the possibility of moderate solutions.

We know and we have heard about elements of anti-terrorist activities that are very important; protection of vulnerable targets, proactive attacks on the structures of terrorist institutions, building of human intelligence particularly so you can penetrate those organizations. But the other very important side of this is to modify




the context and the perceptions to try and do things that relate to the concerns of terrorists and terrorist organizations. One does not want to increase the levels of humiliation in the Middle East but to try and build a sense of confidence and autonomy and to promote indigenous alternatives to extremist ideologies.

John Cooley is Middle East Correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor in Beirut. His journalistic awards include the George Pope Memorial Award for distinguished career achievement in international reporting. His books include Unholy War: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism.

President George W Bush's war on terror has, since 9/11, become the main concern of his administration. In one of his rare, longer interviews, the one with "Meet the Press" on February 8, Tim Russert never asked the president about terrorism or what the word "terrorism" means. But Mr. Bush used the word or its variants twenty-two times by my count in that interview. Well, very few American politicians or commentators that I've noticed have dared to question the conventional wisdom that terrorism, or as our Israeli allies often prefer to call it, simply "terror," is the greatest threat facing the world. There's no agreed definition of terrorism. The word is so subjective that it can mean all things to all men while at the same time it is, through excessive use and abuse, becoming devoid of any real inherent meaning. We use it and abuse it by applying it to whatever we dislike or hate. This can be useful in fighting terrorism defined as objectionable political violence. The danger comes when people — whether governments, politicians or even law enforcement officers — use the word "terrorism" as a way of avoiding rational thought and discussion and sometimes excusing their own illegal and immoral behavior.

One classic literary case, paradigm if you like, of terrorism is Joseph Conrad's short novel, published around 1920, called *The Secret Agent*. A diplomat of an unnamed rogue state, perhaps belonging to a contemporary axis of evil, instigates a group of people to commit acts of "destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable, in fact, mad." The rogue states' purpose is to stir the British and other western governments to take extreme repressive measures. These measures would violate human rights to such an extent that the masses would embrace a widespread transnational revolutionary movement that will sweep simultaneously through western society and overthrow the established order. Conrad's story ends with both a bang and a whimper. The first chosen target of these terrorists' weapons of mass destruction, a bomb, is to be that Victorian era symbol of scientific progress, the Observatory at Greenwich outside London. The bomb kills the inadvertent suicide bomber before he can reach the Observatory. This is the bang. The whimper is the dissolution of the little group of would-be terrorists, some of whom scramble for safety and lose their lives in the process.

Although 9/11, by its huge scale, the number of its victims, and its careful planning was certainly a first in these categories, it was, of course, not a first in American history. On September 16, 1920, at lunch time in New York City a horse-drawn wagon pulled up outside J. P. Morgan & Company offices in Wall Street. About one hundred pounds of dynamite remotely detonated blew people and vehicles into the air and scattered half a ton of steel shards from steel window sashes in the wagon for blocks around. So forty people were killed and about three hundred maimed or wounded. It was a horse and buggy equivalent of Timothy McVeigh's Oklahoma City attack. The *St Louis Post Dispatch*, perhaps ignoring the possible



targeting of J. P. Morgan, reported, and I quote, “There was no objective except general terrorism.” The bomb was directed against the public, anyone who happened to be near. The Wall Street attack stunned an American public already traumatized by a World War, a flu epidemic, and fear of labor riots, immigrants, Bolshevik infiltrators, and bomb throwing anarchists. A red scare gripped the country. In some ways it resembled the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hysteria that followed 9/11.

Terrorism, whether in America or abroad, is a label applied more and more frequently these days to three quite different, quite separate kinds of threats and actions. The first is simply the criminal act of psychopaths like the murderer Charles Manson and his so-called family in California a generation ago. To outsiders at least such crimes seem to be aimless, violence for the sake of violence.

The second kind is politically directed action with such generalized motives that uninitiated observers sometimes have difficulty understanding or responding. Here we are reminded of Conrad’s cabal of London terrorists. Osama bin Laden’s original Al Qaeda movement stemming from the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan may fall in this second category. For all of his theocratic fatwas, communiqués, and tirades, bin Laden, to my knowledge, has never provided a really clear definition of exactly what he is for and what he is against, at least in terms that non-Arab minds, and the minds of many Arabs and Muslims as well, can readily understand.

The third category is specific in objectives, clear in motivation: Anti-colonial liberation, various other national movements, usually secular in nature. My own first encounter with this kind of violence was when I lived as a young reporter in North Africa in the early fifties. Morocco was still under French colonial protectorate. I was living in Casablanca; the French settlers lobby in Morocco in 1953 had prevailed on the government in Paris to exile the popular King of Morocco, Mohammed V, who had been promised, apparently by Franklin D. Roosevelt at the wartime Casablanca conference in 1943, that Morocco, like other colonies, would win its freedom and independence. The National Democratic Party began to resort to violence; they blew up a café in my Casablanca days killing several friends of mine. This was the prelude to years of covering much, much more violence in the eight year Algerian war and afterwards through three decades of Palestinian/Israeli conflict and several wars between Israel and the Arabs.

What can be done? First, the psychopaths. Any society contains marginal people who are or who can become violent with or without a cause. Some societies have tolerated or even venerated it. Think of the huge sums expended in the amusement of pleasure people derive from books, articles, films, and videos about warriors and gunslingers such as, to name just one recent example, the Hollywood film of Martin Scorsese, *The Gangs of New York*.

In the second loose category of violence, unless we include bin Laden and Al Qaeda, which is some ways would seem to fit in all three categories, one main objective seems to be money. The Mafia and organized crime in general and the virulent Mafia clones in Russia and in overseas communities of ethnic Chinese, Latin Americans, and others seem to have this objective.

The second category spills over into the third one, that of politically directed terrorism. Even the toughest imaginable American city mayor could not conceive of bombing Harlem because it houses drug dealers or downtown Miami because Colombian drug merchants may operate there. However, the Bush administration could and did invade Afghanistan for harboring bin Laden and followers, once our trainees and allies, not in George W. Bush’s war on terror, but rather in the war against what

we then called “world communism.” The same type of people, in some cases the same people or their sons or heirs, who trained in CIA or Pakistani military camps to use terrorism against the Soviet occupiers of Afghanistan, are now to be found in a prison camp of unlawful combatants in Guantanamo Bay. The veterans of the CIA-managed jihad against the Russian invaders of Afghanistan became the extended family, which bin Laden and company gradually molded into Al Qaeda, now a very loosely linked band of brothers.

Afterwards, Al Qaeda and its hangers on rebelled against corruption and worldliness of the Saudi ruling family and its supporters inside and outside the kingdom. America became a target, primarily at the beginning, I think, because of its unconditional support for the Saudi royal family.

In closing, based on my own past experiences in places like Algeria, Iran, Lebanon and Iraq, it’s a fatal flaw in policy to ignore or artificially to separate from the others the Palestine/Israel issue. This is the one Middle East issue that over a billion Muslims and many other people from Casablanca to Jakarta care about most and is most acceptable to breed violence and terrorism. Whether we like it or not, many millions overseas are ignoring or deprecating the most visible benefit of invading and occupying Iraq, the demise of Saddam Hussein. Unless better planning and rapid change truly do unify and democratize Iraq, both terrorists and non-violent critics of American policy will continue to equate the United States in the Middle East both with the European colonizers who were protectors of past decades and with the continued settler colonialism of the present time in Israel/Palestine.

Steven van Evera is professor of political science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict, and former Managing Editor, International Security.

How big is the Al Qaeda threat? I think it’s a very serious threat, by far the most serious threat the United States faces in the world today, much more serious than any threat that was posed by Saddam, even if we believed the realities that we were told about Saddam.

The second is that in general the administration, in my view, is waging the war on Al Qaeda following a bad strategy, it’s waging what ought to be a four front war on only one front. So I think there’s too little energy going into the war on Al Qaeda.

The third is that we’re also waging a war on too many fronts. I agree with what Stan Heginbotham said about the need to focus on Al Qaeda. I think this war should never have been defined as a war on terror, it always should have been defined as a war on Al Qaeda, and I think the war in Iraq was a mistake if for no other reason that when you’re in a deadly serious war you focus on the worst threat first, and you do not go after secondary threats, which is what we did by going into Iraq. We also should not define all the world’s terrorist outfits as anti the United States. There are scores of them out there, most of them have no beef with the USA and pose no threat to it. The United States should focus on groups that do threaten the United States.

The point is that I don’t think we’re going to wage the war on terror properly until there’s a large change in the United States national security establishment. I think today we face a changed world that is as much changed as the world was after World War II. Then, we had to re-orient from the German and Japanese threats

toward the Soviet threat, a large change in the United States security establishment was required. Today even bigger changes are required and we've heard some points mentioned earlier that add up to that general point, which is that the United States military services should not even be the key instrument in this war. The main instruments in this war are things like the State Department's Office of Public Policy, Center for Disease Control, the Coastguard, and other outfits that are not part of the main spearhead of United States national security.

So those are the four big points. Let me elaborate on the Al Qaeda threat. I think people should recognize that Al Qaeda is a new and different beast in the world of terror. It's not unique, but up until the early nineties the axiom among students of terrorism was that in the world of terror it was universally true that terrorists got a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead. This was Brian Jenkins' theory. Terrorists didn't aspire to mass killing. Now Al Qaeda's goal is to kill as many people as possible. The spokesman for Al Qaeda has been quoted as saying he believes Al Qaeda has a right to kill four million Americans, including a million children, which is extraordinary. When was the last time a major world figure claimed an entitlement to mass murder children? Hitler did it but he didn't claim a right to do it.

So this is a major change. Al Qaeda remains, I think, very powerful. About two thirds of their leaders are either dead or in custody, but their organization has merged into a more decentralized one, but still a very capable and dangerous organization. People should not take any comfort from the fact that there's not been another large attack on the United States. Investors should assume that some time in the next twenty years we're going to have some large attack in the United States.

Third, I think that we have a new, very ominous situation, which is that Al Qaeda, if they're clever, can gain access at some point in the next few years to weapons of mass destruction, due largely to America's own follies; the failure of the United States to energetically lock down nuclear materials and bio materials in Russia. Scientists in the former Soviet Union who know how to make bio-weapons and nuclear weapons, Pakistan and the failure to address correctly the danger posed by Pakistan and it's loss of control of its own weapons, and so forth. And the progress of technology makes deadly materials more widely known. So add all that together, this is a serious threat.

I am not somebody who played Jeremiah in the past and worried about threats. During the Cold War, I thought we usually inflated the Soviet threat, so I'm sounding a different tone than I have in the past.

I think of the war on terror as a war that should be waged on four major fronts: the offensive, which is the project of destroying sanctuaries where Al Qaeda operates and lives and rolling up its organization around the world — denying it sanctuaries. This involves preventing rogue states, preventing anarchy overseas, preventing civil war overseas, all of which create conditions for Al Qaeda to find homes. The Bush administration has put all its energy into this project, the offensive. And even there, they haven't done very well. They basically bungled the war in Afghanistan. They allowed Al Qaeda to escape. It goes against type to say this, you think of the Bush guys as very tough guys, who always want to use force, but they lost their nerve and allowed the Al Qaeda leadership to escape because they wouldn't put U.S. troops in. It sounds crazy because that's what happened. And then they failed to finish the job by understanding that there's a social political economic side to this, which is that you've got to prevent failed states from happening, and if you intervene in a failed

state, you've got to find some way to rebuild it. We're permitting Afghanistan to unravel and come apart. Also, I think the occupation of Iraq is permitting the possibility of a failed state to emerge there. So that's the next picture, the offensive.

And the defensive, homeland security, they've tripled spending for this so there's a lot more spending going on, but I still think it's a sort of half-hearted effort if you look at the details. Major U.S. infrastructure targets are still wide open for attack. The administration has been afraid to confront the nuclear industry. As a result they've not laid down the law with them and compelled them to protect your facilities more securely. They've been afraid to have a fight with the chemical industry, so they've not laid down the law with them and forced them to make changes, which will secure them from attack. And, by the way, if you know what you're doing in attacking a chemical plant, you can kill a very, very large number of people in an attack. U.S. insurance laws need change so that there will be an incentive for U.S. businesses to secure their buildings and other infrastructures so they can't be subject to terrorism. So there's a whole range of ways in which homeland security is something that's kind of waiting to happen.

Point three, is locking down loose nuclear and biological materials and scientists worldwide, which I just mentioned. These materials and people pose an extremely grave risk, especially if they get loose in quantity. The problem in Russia is that the system for protecting them during the Soviet age was the police state that surrounded the facility. The facilities themselves were very soft, but the materials were secure because the KGB was out there making sure no one gets anywhere without permission. When the KGB vanished we were faced with a huge security problem and for reasons that totally mystify me, I cannot tell you why this is, the United States government, and most especially the current administration, have treated this like a trivial problem, and they're spending only a billion dollars a year to lock these things down. They're on a schedule to finish locking down the nuclear materials in the year 2018, which is not very soon.

I'm talking here about materials to make 40,000 Hiroshima sized atomic bombs — vast amounts of material. If even a tiny amount of it were to erupt it would basically change world history. You'd have the possibility of vast destruction emerging. It's not something you want to play games with, and the administration has failed to employ a high level envoy to deal with this. They always complain that the Russians won't cooperate with us on this project, but you don't know the cooperation you'll get from the Russians until you send some Washington martyr over there who can tell Putin he's got the president's cell phone and cut a deal. I don't think people in this room know who's in charge of the project, because I don't know. Whoever it is is so obscure that it's someone who can't get anything done. Anyway, a billion a year, chump change, and everyone who's ever studied this problem can't fathom why this isn't treated like a national emergency. But it's not.

And fourth is the war of ideas. In the end, the problem with Al Qaeda cannot be solved or ended until there's some change of the terms of debate in the Islamic world, and that, in turn, requires some organized effort to effect the terms of debate. To me that breaks into two problems; one declaring ideas and arguments—public diplomacy as it's called — where I think the administration is proceeding with very halfhearted efforts, never putting top people in charge, not proceeding in a way that makes much sense. And the second is changing those policies that the United States cannot really defend, and there the chief policy is the Arab/Israeli question and the United States posture towards the U.S./Israeli conflict.

Just to speak about the first one for a moment. If you look at the Office of Public Diplomacy you see rapid changes in the focus, we were in charge. We've seen some floundering around in terms of approach. I think that the United States could achieve a lot if it did public diplomacy properly in the Middle East, because, in fact, my view is that the Al Qaeda litany against the United States is mostly false and it could be answered, should be answered, and it really hasn't been. If you look at the parts of the world where bin Laden does best, those things are believed. It's widely argued in Pakistan that the Israelis knocked down Twin Towers, that three thousand Jews didn't show up for work on 9/11, and so forth and so on. These things are obviously refutable, so we should refute them.

Second, with regard to the Arab/Israeli conflict, the United States should move energetically to get back on a peace track. The Bush administration has not been doing what everyone knows you must do to end that conflict: frame a final status settlement that the United States endorses, like the Clinton plan. Bush hasn't done it. Frame a schedule for the implementation of the roadmap, and operationize the meaning of the terms of the roadmap. Bush hasn't done it. So there's been no action pushing that forward.

The final point: I think that the Iraq war is a danger to our national security because it's diverting intelligence, special forces, expertise, high level management, other assets and skills, away from the war on Al Qaeda into what will be a very long term, very difficult problem in Iraq that we never should have gotten ourselves into.

Jack Blum is partner in the Washington D.C. law firm Lobel, Novins & Lamont, former Investigative Attorney, U. S. Senate, author of Covert Operations: The Blowback Problem.

It's really interesting to be the last one on. So many of the things I was going to say have been said. If you look at the numbers on acts of terrorism they're actually going down globally, and we also know that you can track and plot incidents of terror against the level of tension in particular situations so that when, for example, there are real negotiations and pressure for peace settlement on the Arab/Israeli front, the acts of terrorism are lower. And when people who think they have grievances have a way of seeing them settled you actually do something about acts of terror.

Terrorism has been around for a long time, and even the United States has been involved, at least indirectly, in being a state sponsor of it. I'm old enough to remember when some veterans of the Bay of Pigs came back and began some enterprises out of Miami under the tutelage of a fellow named Orondo Bosch. One of the veterans of the Bay of Pigs put a bomb on a Cuban Airlines plane, later ended up in Venezuela and then came back and is living in Miami where he has a street named after him. So do we know about terrorism? I think so.

We had some fools out of the Bay of Pigs affair, Ignacio and Guillermo Novo Sampol, guys who randomly put bombs in mailboxes, were picked up in a parking lot in Queens shooting a bazooka at the UN. Twenty minutes after they were arrested a lawyer, who usually handles affairs for Langley, shows up and says, "Oh, let them go. They're two of ours." The guys are later arrested for bombing a car in Washington that was occupied by the former Foreign Minister of Chile who was killed in the bombing. Over the years it has been convenient in covert operations to encourage movements that are generally trending in your direction and encourage their lunatic stuff by providing them with means and capacity and encouragement so that they help your political objectives. It's a way of having plausibly deniable

events occur that assist you, and you avoid the need to have state action or provide foreign assistance to actually solve genuine problems. We do that a lot.

So in Afghanistan it was very convenient to encourage Islamic militants to take on the Russians, and we did that, and we encouraged the Saudis to fund the Islamic militants there, and we actually helped recruit and create the cadre of people who then go off and become the base for Al Qaeda. And, of course, the Pakistanis, what did they do? They take the same militancy and they use it in Kashmir and provoke near nuclear war. They also, by the way, use it to cover their own proliferation of nuclear weapons. So here we are in a bizarre situation talking about proliferation of nuclear weapons. We say we've got to stop Al Qaeda doing it, and our allies, the Pakistanis. You thought we didn't know? It turns we knew it all along, but we couldn't say anything because they were helping us create the Islamic militants who were fighting the Russians.


What don't I understand here? The problem is no covert thinking, no forward thinking. It's all tactical. Nobody thinks about consequences, future, where we're going, or for that matter about the real problems; the issues of education and governance and how do we actually deal with this terribly messy and complicated world.

And that brings me back to what are the grievances of these Al Qaeda people? One of the prime grievances is Saudi Arabia, and that's a place to be grieved about. It has slavery, it has no human rights, it has as repressive a group of religious police as exist on earth, and no one in the United States can say anything about it. And the reason is money, a lot of it, and oil, a lot more of it. These are issues that actually burn in the minds of the Saudis who are trying to express themselves politically and have absolutely no outlet for doing it.

I'm amazed by some of the things that don't get talked about because of these issues of money and influence. I was in Dubai and I discovered there's a market where children are for sale. Now, if I can find that out in about fifteen minutes in conversation, why doesn't anybody talk about it? Why all the way through the Gulf are there Russian women for sale, missing Filipino women. But these issues are not talked about and it's all part of this mix. I get very upset.

Finally, everybody thinks about what a clever group of people Al Qaeda were. Of course the take off was Tom Clancy's book, *The Sum of all Fears*. We promote it, we encourage it, we show them what to do, and we provide funding. We actually have the CIA out buying back Stinger missiles, 1500 of them that we'd floated out to these nut cakes. And going up we had agents with, really, bushel baskets of money, buying back Stinger missiles from Afghan railroads. So what is this all about, and why don't we talk about it when we're doing theoretical models? Well, I will go to my second very important point.

I'm involved with some political organizations in Washington that do extensive polling. Their polling shows that over the last fifty to sixty years, when you bring up issues of national security and war and peace and you ask people who's better at it, Republicans or Democrats, on national security issues the Republicans always win. Foreign issues, who's better at it, Republicans or Democrats? Republicans win. Economic issues, it's the other way around. So if you can frame the general political environment as a war environment, guess what? It's politically useful. Permanent war environment is even more useful. The Cold War as a permanent political proposition was useful. The war on drugs, which in part was also a substitute for talking about race in American politics, was useful. If you try to look at the political rhetoric and then at what was happening on the ground, the divergence between the



two was enormous. The things that you were talking about, the failures to follow through that seemed so obvious, but failure is only identified when you look at the problem and say how do we solve it? Because there are real things to be done. So, for example, my wife works in public health, the public health budgets at the county level have been cut. At the same time the administration talks about weapons of mass destruction and bio-terrorism and all the rest. What's going on here? The answer is the rhetoric and the reality don't match, but nobody much cares because we're talking about political manipulation, not reality.

Now having said this, the question is what do we do to make things work? The process of mutual legal cooperation is somewhere between nil and plus one and a half when it comes to criminal activity and terrorism. We have a system that is a bi-product of international law from the time of the Hapsburg Empire in which you go through a series of steps where the nation-states exchange information through formal processes. Best case, the processes take six months. When the Al Qaeda people were getting their thing going there were cells that were under investigation and prosecution in Italy, in Spain, in Germany. Did our guys know anything about it? Hell no, those were criminal cases, and nobody knew how to share that information. Nor was there machinery for working the investigation across international boundaries. The business of sharing information is so bad that a guy who was suspected as being a key part of the team, two weeks ago walked out of a courthouse in Germany laughing because the United States wouldn't provide evidence for the German judge to convict him because it might disclose a source or method. Meanwhile we have Zacharia Moussaoui in the slammer in the United States and we can't get the evidence from the French because we're insisting on applying the death penalty. Is this idiocy or is this idiocy?

Yes, there have been some marginal improvements in the judicial system and in cooperation since September 11, but if you compare what's going on in that arena to what is in fact going on in the military arena and the cost and the emphasis on war, with the solution being war in Iraq, you're left absolutely breathless.

Jonathan Schell is Harold Willens Peace Fellow, Fellow of the Center for the Study of Globalization at Yale University, author of many books including The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People and The Fate of the Earth.

I think that there's been a very interesting and somewhat surprising drift in the conversation this evening, because if I hear it correctly what's being said is that, this supposedly endless war on terrorism is not being fought as hard or as effectively as it should be, and I think that's a bit interesting and surprising. In fact I want to take that drift of thought a little further and provocatively state that I don't think that the war on terror can be endless, as suggested, on Al Qaeda, because I don't think there is a war on terror. I think there was one, but now it's over. Let me explain what I mean.

Of course, you can speak of a war on anything, war on drugs, war on poverty as has been mentioned, but that's all metaphor, and, of course, in that same sense you can speak of a campaign against terror, which I do think exists and should exist, as a war on terror. There was actually a war on terror, it was the war in Afghanistan in which the Taliban was overthrown in the effort to get at Al Qaeda, but somehow we missed them, which is one of the complaints that we've heard about the unseriousness of our war on terror or our campaign against terror, as I would call it. I think, in fact, however, there is a danger of endless war here, and we've been hearing that

perhaps we're not fighting this war on terror as effectively as we could. But I'd like to suggest that the problem isn't just that we're aiming at that target but somehow or other missing it. I want to suggest that really another target has been put up on the board, and I want to say a few things about what that is.

So let me just talk for a moment about the origins of the Bush foreign policy post September 11. As we've already heard, of course, a key element was to define the effort in prospect as a war on terror, not as, let's say, a campaign against Al Qaeda, a more limited and definite thing. By naming the campaign as a war, the president really put the world on notice that the full, awesome military of the United States would be brought to bear, and, of course, by naming the generic terrorist the target wasn't Al Qaeda. That suggested that there was no corner of the earth where this might not take place. I think you can really see the evolution here as one of a series of expanding goals in which these were the first two critical expansions, calling it war and calling it terror.


The second was, of course, the idea that we were told regimes [were] as responsible as the terrorists themselves, as the president put it very shortly after September 11. So that introduced the famous idea of regime change, a very serious escalation, of course, and this was a very radical idea in terms of previous American policy.

But then came another expansion, which really may have been the most important of them all. Having lumped together terrorists and the regimes that supported them, so-called rogue regimes, into one lump, the president went on to incorporate into this policy the gravest issue that any president of our era has had to face and still faces, and that is the danger from nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction. And, of course, that step of expansion occurred in the president's Axis of Evil speech in which he named three countries that were in the gun sights of the United States: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, and by implication they were cited as lessons for other countries that ought to watch their step. As the president put it, the United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons, thereby subsuming the question of weapons of mass destruction, which has existed for more than fifty years under the rubric of this war on terror.

Once you've taken that step you can't wait until someone has the weapons of mass destruction, you have to go out there and get at them preemptively, and that led, of course, to the idea — as famous as regime change — of preemptive war. And so the president said that containment and deterrence, which had sufficed during the cold war, would no longer be enough. In the new era we had to move to the idea of tough preemption.

When you put all of this together, and the White House did so in its document *The National Security Strategy of the US*, which you can find on the White House website, it really amounted to an assertion — and this is not something that you look for between the lines, it's right there in the text of the document and of other speeches and documents of this administration. But the United States was really asserting an absolute, global, permanent, global dominance, including this right of preemptive war and of so-called regime change. Now the president didn't call this plan an imperial one, but many of the supporters of the policy have done so, and this word has somehow gone from being a term of abuse to being rather a term of praise in our time. I think that this is the policy that came to life in the war on Iraq, and to call this a war on terror is really to abuse language.

I'm not going to go through all the points about how there were no connections



with Al Qaeda and so on and so forth, but I think we miss the point if we try to understand the war on Iraq, or this entire policy which really does have a danger of endless war attached to it, if we try to conceive it as a sort of botched or misbegotten war on terror. I think it's about something else altogether. I think it's about hegemony, I think it's about dominance, I think it's about supplanting a previous system of world order based more on cooperation with one based on military force with the United States in the lead. Because I don't think we should make any mistakes about it, I think that the United States has now embarked on an imperial enterprise, and I don't think this is subtle or indirect. It has actually begun the actual occupation of countries like the British and the Raj in previous generations.

Many of the features of imperial rule that we have seen in the past have made their appearance here, and I'm speaking of the really tremendously awesome disparity in power between the conqueror and the conquered, which has been a feature of imperialism from its earliest days — well in modern times at least — down to now. We see the scramble for loot, in this case oil, the high sounding ideals about which the great turn of the century writer on imperialists, Hobson, described perfectly when he said, "Imperialism has been floated on a sea of vague, shifty, well-sounding phrases, which are seldom tested by close contact with fact."

So in concluding, I would say that we should really rephrase our question and not ask if there is an endless war on terror, but whether there will be endless imperial wars.✿

