

that have been U.S. allies since the end of World War II. What makes Turkey unique—and uniquely important to American interests—is its heretofore successful blending of many elements that coexist uncomfortably or not at all in many parts of the world today. Turkey is secular, it is Muslim; it is Western-oriented but also deeply connected to the Islamic world. It is committed to democracy and economic reform, all the more so under the current leadership of an openly religious party. Turkey's success in managing these competing and sometimes conflicting influences is crucial to bridging the growing chasm between the West and the Islamic world. Its success in doing so must therefore be a high American strategic priority as well. ▀

## Fight Al Qaeda

*Peter Bergen*

One of the most bitter ironies of the Iraq tragedy is that our occupation has been a godsend to Al Qaeda and its affiliates, drawing thousands of foreign fighters to the country over the past four years. As a result, jihadist terrorists have, for the first time, secured a substantial presence in a country at the heart of the Middle East. The Iraq war has also inspired a rising wave of terrorist attacks, from London to Kabul, and it has helped to spread militant ideas among Iraq's Sunnis, who were previously more secular than most other Muslims in the region.

A persistent Al Qaeda safe haven in Iraq will be a launching pad for attacks against American interests in the region, and even against the United States itself. The National Intelligence Estimate made public in July explains that Al Qaeda “will probably seek to leverage the contacts and capabilities of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, its most visible and capable affiliate and the only one known to have expressed a desire to attack the Homeland.” In addition, a safe haven would be an ideal location from which to attack “near enemy” American allies such as Saudi Arabia and to disrupt the world's oil supply, which Osama bin Laden has made a priority according to tapes he has released since 9/11. According to one U.S. counterterrorism official, an Al Qaeda haven in Iraq would also be a psychological boost for jihadist terrorists: “The reason Iraq is different than Afghanistan, especially for Al Qaeda is, Iraq is Arab land [and] Al Qaeda is still a predominantly Arab organization.”

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Indeed, America's top strategic challenge post-drawdown is to position itself in such a way as to prevent the emergence of a long-term Iraqi safe haven for Al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist groups. Establishing such a stronghold in the Muslim world has been an integral part of Al Qaeda's strategy. As Al Qaeda's number-two, Ayman al Zawahiri, explained in 2001 in his autobiographical *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, "Liberating the Muslim nation, confronting the enemies of Islam and launching jihad against them require a Muslim authority, established on a Muslim land that raises the banner of jihad and rallies the Muslims around it. Without achieving this goal our actions will mean nothing more than mere and repeated disturbances."

Such a jihadist haven would then become a launching pad for attacks on the United States and its allies. We have already seen previews: In 2005, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Iraq launched suicide attacks against three American-owned hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing 60. Earlier this year, Saudi authorities arrested 172 jihadists, some of whom had trained in Iraq, who were planning large-scale attacks on oil facilities, Westerners, and government officials. In May, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Iraqi branch of Al Qaeda—a quite profitable enterprise thanks to donations, kidnappings, and protection money—is now wealthy enough to provide funding to Al Qaeda central on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. And in July, an Iraqi doctor who may have had connections to Al Qaeda in Iraq launched attempted terrorist attacks in London and Glasgow.

What, then, is the best strategy to disrupt Al Qaeda in Iraq—now known by the more Iraqified name of the Islamic State of Iraq—especially given the likely withdrawal of at least a substantial portion of American troops in the next couple of years? The successful elimination in Anbar province of Al Qaeda forces suggests one approach—persuading, empowering, and bribing tribal leaders to do the work for you. Of course, like a game of whack-a-mole, Al Qaeda fighters have now migrated to other provinces such as Diyala. Applying the Anbar model to fight Al Qaeda in other parts of the country is a promising strategy, particularly since it uses relatively few U.S. troops to leverage larger local forces. The Shia-dominated Maliki government is not happy with such an approach, believing—probably correctly—that enhancing the powers of the Sunni tribes in any manner hurts its own interests. That unhappiness is a price the United States should feel comfortable accepting, given that its own interests are far from identical with those of the Maliki government's.

However, the United States cannot wholly rely on tribes of uncertain loyalties to secure its interests in Iraq, which include not only disrupting Al Qaeda but also securing a number of bases and the enormous embassy that is being

built in Baghdad. Other important functions the U.S. military will have to sustain after a withdrawal include training the Iraqi army and any other groups who might help American interests; gathering intelligence; maintaining some kind of reserve combat force; regularly deploying several thousand Special Forces troops for operations against Al Qaeda; and, of course, maintaining the logistical tail to supply all of those functions and soldiers. Given the need to successfully continue those various tasks, some estimate the United States will have to maintain a reinforced division of about 20,000 soldiers combined with logistical delivery teams of a further 10,000 to 15,000 to supply them. Those soldiers should not be stationed “over the horizon” in countries like Kuwait, but should remain inside Iraq for the foreseeable future. This is not only a practical demand of defeating Al Qaeda; after all, we don’t want to have to “reinstate Iraq” in some future emergency. It is also an important symbolic move, as a total U.S. withdrawal would confirm what Osama bin Laden has said for more than a decade—that the United States is a weak superpower, just as the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

Another terrorism-related challenge will be mitigating the blowback from the Iraq war, specifically, the creation of a whole cohort of insurgents and terrorists indoctrinated and trained to fight America and the West. Considering that Al Qaeda in Iraq has fought more of an unconventional terrorist war of suicide attacks and IEDs against the best army in modern history, the blowback stands to be more intense than what we saw from the alumni of the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s. Compounding this risk is the fact that Al Qaeda’s ideas have found more fertile ground among Iraqis than was the case among Afghans, who are culturally quite different than the Arabs who form the core of Al Qaeda. What’s more, there is the growing Iraqi refugee population: Already there are two million Iraqi refugees outside the country, most of them Sunnis, and two million more have been displaced internally. Those numbers are likely to increase significantly as the United States draws down in Iraq. We know from the experiences of the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan that refugee populations can be breeding grounds for militants. Considering that there are substantial refugee populations in places like Jordan and Egypt, this could prove a significant problem to important American allies and a huge destabilizing force throughout the region.

The best approach to managing this blowback from Iraq is for the United States and its allies to build a database that maps the social networks of the terrorists inside Iraq, as well as the foreign fighters who have gone back and forth between Iraq and their home countries. This master database of all the militants who have joined the jihad in Iraq would then be used to monitor, disrupt, and

capture terrorists in the future. (Imagine if such a database had been available to the United States and its allies after the Afghan conflict in the 1980s.)

The first building block of such a database should be identifying the suicide attackers in Iraq—who are mostly foreigners—a process that can be accomplished using DNA samples, accounts on jihadist websites, good intelligence work, and media reports. We know from former CIA officer Marc Sageman’s investigations of the histories of hundreds of jihadist terrorists that friends and family are the ways most terrorists join the global salafi jihad, and so this investigatory work should include an effort to identify friends and/or family members who brought the suicide attackers into the jihad.

Mapping social networks must also include identification of the clerical mentors of the suicide attackers, as it seems likely that only a relatively small number have persuaded their followers of the religious necessity of martyrdom in Iraq. Armed with that intelligence, the United States can turn to the governments of countries like Saudi Arabia and Morocco—where many of the suicide bombers in Iraq originate—and demand they rein in particularly egregious clerics. The U.S. government can make the argument that not only do those militant clerics and their followers threaten American interests, but that they will cause problems in their home countries (much like Afghan war veterans did in Algeria in the 1990s) as well.

According to counterterrorism officials, the U.S. government is already doing some of the work necessary to create such a database—for instance, by fingerprinting captured insurgents, using social-network software to map the insurgency, and beginning to collect some information on the foreign fighters who have gone to Iraq. However, much remains to be done to improve the quality of the information that is gathered in Iraq. According to a veteran U.S. counterterrorism official, “we don’t have the resources” to do a master database of all the jihadist terrorists in Iraq and their social networks. The official says that such a database, in addition to examining the family relationships of the jihadists, also needs to map the other “facilitative nodes” that bring young men into the jihad, such as websites, operational planners, financiers, and jihadist underground networks.

In Iraq, the United States faces a list of bad options, and the task is to pick the least of the worst. A complete pullout would deeply imperil U.S. interests in the region by making it difficult if not impossible to battle our main strategic

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threat in the region: a resurgent Al Qaeda bent on gaining a haven in the Middle East. On the other hand, keeping a force of around 30,000 American soldiers in Iraq for the foreseeable future (about the size of the force the United States presently has in Afghanistan), persuading or bribing the Sunni tribes to take on Al Qaeda's Iraqi affiliates, and building a master database of all the jihadist terrorists in Iraq and their social networks are all elements of a strategy that will allow the United States to salvage something from the Iraq debacle. ■

## Promote Liberal Democracy

*David Makovsky*

It seems a very long time ago that President George W. Bush gave his second inaugural address. In January 2005, he proclaimed that “the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.” With this soaring idea, deeply rooted in America's Wilsonian political tradition, Bush defined the organizing foreign policy principle for his second term in office. However, exactly a year after uttering those words, Bush's Middle East democracy initiative came to a halt when Hamas won a parliamentary victory in the West Bank and Gaza in January 2006. Suddenly, it became clear that the United States had erred by equating democracy with one election and by not forming policy around the establishment of liberal institutions, which would ensure that liberal means would not lead to an illiberal end.

But that does not mean the vision is unsalvageable. Indeed, American Middle East policy should still have democratization as a component, albeit not the centerpiece. On one hand, “realism” was never realistic for us as Americans; democratization is consistent with our values favoring individual liberty, and ultimately, we seek a Middle East that is more decent and humane. On the other hand, democratization serves not just our values, but our interests. Despite the policies Bush adopted that led to Arab enmity, the United States was never popular, even at the height of its involvement in the Middle East peace process in the 1990s. Authoritarian regimes in the Middle East deflect attention from domestic failures by focusing on foreign enemies, according to Hala Mustafa, an Egyptian editor. Thus, this deflection strategy has been paradoxical—the

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