Endless Kill List, Endless War: High Value Targeting and the War on Terror

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Black Swan

*"A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped…Many people jumped. Perhaps hundreds. Nobody knows."—**Leap, Bryan Doyle***

Introduction

  The morning of September 11, 2001, was a crystal clear morning. Clear enough for people on the street in New York City to watch the hijacked planes—two of them, Boeing 767s to be exact—crash into the World Trade Center. Clear enough for people in Arlington, Virginia to tell one another about the low-flying plane, the one they thought had been bound for Reagan National Airport but had crashed instead into the west wall of the Pentagon. Clear enough for people in Shanksville, Pennsylvania to see the smoke rising from the burning remains of the plane that had been aimed at the White House. It had crashed instead into a grassy field as the passengers fought the hijackers—four young men who had been selected and trained for this mission by the Afghan-based terrorist network al Qaeda—for control of the aircraft. In the immediate aftermath of the first attacks, as people in the plane bound for the Pentagon realized that the plane was not going to land safely, as they got on the phone to friends and lovers to say goodbye, members of the recently inaugurated George W. Bush administration sat in the underground bunker at the White House and started talking.

  The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) informed the administration early in the day that al Qaeda, the nebulous Sunni extremist terror network based out of Afghanistan, was more than likely responsible for the attack. Sitting around the table that morning, CNN on in the background playing and replaying a loop of the towers collapsing,

administration officials talked about the Khobar Towers attack, the World Trade Center attack of 1993 and the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania. They talked about Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden, founder of al Qaeda, and his declaration of jihad against "Americans Occupying the Country of the Two Sacred Places (PBS Fatwa)," which had been published in 1996. They started talking about al Qaeda's organizational structure, its recruitment strategies and its connections with Pakistan, Iraq and Saddam Hussein. While the initial discussion focused on the organization itself, talk quickly turned to its relationship with the Afghani government, the Taliban, and the linkages between leaders of the Taliban and leaders of al Qaeda (Mayer 2008). Just a day later, on September 12, the idea of attacking Iraq and removing the Hussein regime as part of the campaign was floated; though it was disregarded in the short term by the administration, it would be pulled off the shelf less than a year later and put into place (Woodward 2002).

Thousands of miles away, in a cave in the mountainous terrain of Northern Afghanistan, al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden sat surrounded by his closest advisors. "I found [O]sama Bin Laden with another group, a guard, security guard, the number of which was about 20 to 25 people. I found him in a cave inside a mountain in a rough terrain, rough mountain terrain with some villages, some small villages and some bedouins who lived there (Worthington, Ghaith Testimony)," explained bin Laden's son-in-law Sulaiman Gaith, who was summoned to the cave to discuss the attacks with bin Laden that night. They were glued to the television, the small one that had been set up to tap into a satellite and broadcast a grainy image of those planes crashing into the towers. The twenty-five or so men sitting in that cave, the ones who had planned and funded the devastating attacks, were also talking. They were talking about the structure of the United

States; what it might do in response to the attacks, what the implications of that reaction might be, whether or not the US reaction would fall in line with al Qaeda's goals for the attack.

Bin Laden asked Gaith to join him for a cup of tea, and asked him to share his own opinion; what would the US do, he asked, in response to the largest attack ever executed on US soil? Gaith told him in no uncertain terms that he thought the US would target bin Laden personally, and would also topple the Afghan government, the Taliban. Bin Laden nodded quietly, and then asked Gaith to commit himself to the cause of propagating al Qaeda's message, from that moment forward. At the end of the conversation, he paused and looked at Gaith. "What you expected may actually happen (Worthington 2014)," he said.

Coercive Diplomacy and Brute Force

In the White House bunker on the afternoon of 9/11, as ideas were being floated around and shot down, as people were banging their fists on the table and demanding answers, the administration struggled to define the nature of the threat posed by al Qaeda. They hauled in members of the CIA bin Laden unit (up until this point an office located behind a suburban mall in Virginia) looking for answers about the ambiguous transnational actor, grasping for a way to combat this unprecedented threat to the homeland (Zeman, Wise, Rose, Burrough 2004). Speaking to the American people about the attacks a week later, Bush told the American people "Night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack (Axis of Evil 2001)." Two things set the 9/11 attacks apart from any other threat that the United States had faced: the magnitude of the attack *on US soil*, and the fact that it was perpetrated by a non-state actor.

In attempting to respond to the threat, the Bush administration pursued a two-track strategy. Initially, the administration made the decision to go after al Qaeda by focusing on the traditional Westphalian states that afforded al Qaeda 'safe haven;' first in Afghanistan, and then in Iraq. This decision was based on a certain set of assumptions, formulated in a Cold War era world, where the primary players on the international stage were states that controlled the use of force within their boundaries.

The administration's first step in Afghanistan was diplomatic—it held the Taliban responsible for bin Laden's actions, and ordered leader Mullah Omar to hand over bin Laden or risk invasion. When Omar did not cooperate with US demands, the administration moved quickly to invade Afghanistan and topple the Taliban. In justifying the attack, the Bush administration referenced the blow to its international reputation if it failed to follow through on the threat against the Taliban; Omar's unwillingness to cooperate required a decisive military response to deter other states from harboring terrorists within their boundaries (Woodward 2002).

In the case of Iraq, the United States focused primarily on the possible connection between al Qaeda and the Hussein regime, which was accused of possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (Woodward 2002). Though the administration initially drew a connection between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, the connection turned out to be based on faulty evidence; Iraq had not, as it turned out, been connected in any way with al Qaeda, nor did it have any role in the 9/11 attacks (Woodward 2004). However, by the time that aspersions were cast on the evidence linking the two, the Bush administration had made a series of escalatory threats to the Hussein regime. Fearing a loss of credibility if it backed down, the administration invaded in 2003. "It is the credibility of everybody

that this gangster can yet again beat the international system…To let this threat in this part of the world play volleyball with the international community this way will come back to haunt us someday. That is the reason to do it (Woodward 2004)," explained then-National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice in reference to Saddam Hussein.

The administration's initial strategy in the war on terror fits into a paradigm laid out by author Thomas Schelling. In discussing the repercussions of the creation of nuclear weapons for norms of warfare, Schelling identifies two different ways in which states use military power—through brute force and coercive diplomacy. Coercive diplomacy "tries to structure someone's motives, while brute force tries to overcome his strength (Schelling 1966)." Coercive diplomacy is violence undertaken with a clear end, to force an adversary to capitulate to a certain demand or term. Brute force, the alternative to coercive diplomacy, is violence undertaken simply to remove the enemy from the battlefield, as though he were a tank in the way of an advancing army. Coercive diplomacy requires knowledge of "what an adversary treasures and what scares him (Schelling 1966)," a conception of who the enemy is and how to manipulate him. In dealing with other state actors in the war on terror, the United States relied on traditional coercive diplomacy, issuing bellicose threats and backing them up with military force.

While the administration initially focused on the role of Iraq and Afghanistan, it also turned its attention to dismantling al Qaeda as an organization. Instead of relying on coercive diplomacy, however, the administration chose to respond to al Qaeda with a strategy grounded in brute force. In doing so, the Bush administration framed al Qaeda as not only a military or political enemy, but as an ideological enemy, an anti-Western, anti-democratic, immoral force. In vilifying al Qaeda as entirely the 'other,' the

administration painted the war on terror as a sort of 'clash of civilizations' between the United States and an ideologically driven, irrational actor. "We have seen the depth of our enemies' hatred in videos where they laugh about the loss of innocent life. And the depth of their hatred is equaled by the madness of the destruction they design (Axis of Evil 2001)," said President Bush in his infamous axis-of-evil speech. We can distill two basic perceptions about the nature of al Qaeda from the administration's rhetoric regarding al Qaeda, and also by the strategy that it chose to pursue. First and foremost, the administration viewed al Qaeda as a monolithic and ideologically (not strategically) driven actor, thus an actor that could not be negotiated with in the traditional sense. Second, the administration identified al Qaeda's goals as total annihilation of the US, making any sort of diplomatic engagement impossible.

What is Al Qaeda?

Sitting on the floor of the cave of Tora Bora in his traditional white robe (salwar kameez), one hand resting lightly on the barrel of his Kalashnikov rifle, Osama bin Laden looked CNN interviewer Peter Bergen in the eye (Asharq Al-Awsat 2013). "The U.S. government has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous, and criminal through its support of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. And we believe the U.S. is directly responsible for those killed in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq. Due to its subordination to the Jews, the arrogance of the United States regime has reached the point that they occupied Arabia, the holiest place of the Muslims, who are more than 1 billion people in the world today. For this, and other acts of aggression and injustice, we have declared jihad against the U.S. (Osama bin Laden 2001)." His voice was quiet, oddly contrasting the virulence

of his message; around him, his advisors nodded along, interjecting occasionally to clarify a point.

In assessing al Qaeda as an organization, the majority of Western scholars have classified it as a rational—if highly motivated and nontraditional—actor. These scholars have painted al Qaeda as a strategic actor that has co-opted terrorism as a tactic to achieve a very specific set of goals. A framing best articulated by author Martha Crenshaw, this body of work approaches "terrorism as a form of political behavior resulting from the deliberate choice of a basically rational actor, the terrorist organization (Crenshaw Causes, 380)." Scholars that advocate for treating al Qaeda as an inherently rational actor paint a picture of the conflict between the United States and al Qaeda as a type of asymmetrical war. "The resort to terror tactics itself is a strategic choice of weaker actors with no other means of furthering their cause (Trager Zagorcheva 2006, 94)." The counterargument, best articulated by Christopher Fettweis, portrays al Qaeda as a fanatical organization that is so committed to its ideology that it values beliefs over organizational survival and effective strategy (Fettweis 2009, 269).

A close examination of al Qaeda reveals a rational actor with clearly articulated grievances regarding US foreign policy in the Middle East. Lacking a conventional army with which to militarily engage the US, the organization has resorted to attacking civilians in the hopes of achieving its goals. Terrorism is a strategy, suicide bombing a tactic, both in pursuit of a two-pronged approach. In the short term, al Qaeda is trying to force the US out of the Middle East in the hopes that without US backing, secular and Westernized governments in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen will crumble. In the long

term, al Qaeda hopes to establish an Islamic caliphate governed by shariah law in the lands of modern-day Iraq and Syria (Aaron 2008).

Because al Qaeda was conceived around a particular set of ideas, and not a single leader or political ideology, it is inherently a fluid organization with links and connections in all corners of the Middle East and North Africa (Cronin 2006). In the years leading up to the 9/11 attacks, it was a hierarchically structured organization run by bin Laden. With the help of Egyptian-born second in command Ayman al Zawahiri, al Qaeda's message spread from its base in Afghanistan into the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. Though it initially focused its attacks on Arab targets (Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for example), it increasingly turned against the US in an attempt to reduce backing for these secular regimes over the course of the 1990s (Coll 2004). Bin Laden's (and al Qaeda's) popularity skyrocketed in response to attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and the attack on the USS warship the *Cole* in 2000 (Coll 2004).

After the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, al Qaeda morphed from a hierarchically structured organization into an ideological movement; in 2002, at the height of its popularity, 10 new powerful affiliates developed (Affiliates Dataset). Al Qaeda today is "more like a nebula of independent entities (including loosely associated individuals) that share an ideology and cooperate with each other (Cronin 2006, 33)." Though many groups claim affiliation with al Qaeda, studies of the origins and goals of these smaller cells (al Shabaab in Somalia, for example) reveals that these local variations are often not actually connected with bin Laden's Afghani-based cell. "Although many groups boast of a connection to al Qaeda's ideology, there are often no logistical trails and thus no links for traditional intelligence methods to examine (Cronin 2006, 35)."

The US Response

In the Situation Room at the White House, in the days and months after 9/11, however, these short and long-term goals and the particular nature of bin Laden and Zawahiri's relationship were not being discussed. Senators and National Security Advisors and the Vice President himself were banging their fists on tables and shouting at CIA Director George Tenet, desperate to do something—anything—to prevent another attack. In formulating an al Qaeda strategy, the Bush administration abandoned the strategy of diplomatic coercion that it had employed when dealing with states like Iraq and Afghanistan. It chose instead to pursue a strategy of brute force focused solely on *eliminating* al Qaeda in all of its iterations. "There is only one way to protect ourselves against catastrophic terrorist violence, and that is to destroy the terrorists before they can launch further attacks against the United States (Cheney Speech 2003 Heritage Foundation)." In addition to judging al Qaeda as both irrational and undeterrable, it also did not seek to understand the differences between affiliates and al Qaeda central, framing the organization as a hierarchically structured, leadership-dependent organism.

In pursuing a strategy of brute force, the administration developed two new programs that were radically different from anything the US had done before. Identifying al Qaeda as undeterrable led directly to the choice to try to eliminate, rather than coerce, al Qaeda. Believing it to be leadership-dependent, the administration sought to destroy 'high value targets' or individuals judged to be important to the organization's capacity to execute imminent terrorist attacks. Implicit in this approach was the assumption that removing these individuals would degrade the organization and eventually destroy it.

This strategy developed into two different programs; the Rendition, Detention and Enhanced Interrogation Program (RDI) and the drone campaign.

The first program, one of the most controversial programs the US has ever developed, is referred to as the Rendition, Detention and Interrogation Program (RDI) and was essentially an expanded and updated version of traditional rendition or extradition. It involved capture of terror suspects anywhere in the world followed by 'rendition' to either their home country, a third country or a US 'black prison' in an undisclosed location with the goal of interrogation. Interrogations were carried out by foreign governments that routinely torture detainees, but the White House also approved a list of 24 brutal techniques that could be used by the CIA, military personnel and CIA contractors in these sessions. The 'enhanced interrogation techniques,' as well as virulent prisoner abuse that had taken place at black sites in Iraq and Afghanistan, were exposed in early 2004, sparking a virulent public backlash against the program.

Largely in response to this public outcry, the administration turned to the newly inaugurated technology of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) armed with Hellfire missiles to survey, track and assassinate terror suspects. The program began in Yemen in 2002 and in Pakistan in 2004. Drones were used most extensively in Pakistan between 2004 and 2012. As al Qaeda has continued to spread to new theaters over the course of the past ten years, the administration has expanded the scope and reach of the program into new countries and territories; drones are now being used in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and the Philippines, all countries in which the US is not engaged in traditional warfare. Since inception in 2004, drones have become the centerpiece of the administration's counterterrorism strategy. Barack Obama, inaugurated in 2009, had

initially criticized both the RDI program and the drone program but ended up expanding the strike campaign in Pakistan dramatically. Both administrations have predicated justification for the program on the grounds that it is necessary in order to disrupt and prevent imminent terrorist attacks, and also on the assumption that strikes degrade al Qaeda over time by removing skilled operatives from the proverbial 'battlefield,' defined as anywhere in the world al Qaeda has a presence.

Initial critiques of the program centered on the questionable legality, under both domestic and international law, of assassinating individuals outside the scope of the traditional battlefield without affording them any sort of presumption of trial (even the somewhat 'sham' trial afforded to detainees under the RDI program). As the program escalated in scope and reach, critics also questioned whether or not the fact that drones violated international sovereignty would result in a loss of popular support for the US among key allies in the Middle East. Additionally, critics asserted that the civilian casualties associated with Hellfire strikes (coded 'collateral damage' by the administration) would so enrage populations in the countries where strikes were taking place that they would radicalize ordinary civilians and make them more receptive to al Qaeda's powerful anti-Western propaganda.

Structure of this Thesis

This paper will examine the development of the US counterterrorism strategy, from the development of its assumptions about al Qaeda to the development of a brute force strategy centered on High Value Targeting (HVT). Though it would be ideal at this point to examine both the RDI program and drone program in tandem, the RDI program has been almost entirely dismantled at this point. Therefore, the analysis will center on

the drone program because the effectiveness and repercussions of the program are especially salient at this time. This paper will first examine the development of the brute force, HVT strategy as it played out in the development of the RDI program and subsequently into the creation of the drone program. The program's effectiveness will be assessed based on the standards that the current Obama administration has articulated: whether it is effective at disrupting and preventing imminent attacks against the US and its allies, and whether it has been successful in degrading al Qaeda's operational capability in the long-term. The term 'allies' will refer to any state that has formally pledged its allegiance to the US in the 'war on terror,' and will define terror attacks on that government, civilian and military population as an attack against US interests.

In assessing the validity of the assumptions at the foundation of this strategy, this thesis will analyze the goals, motivations and organizational structure of al Qaeda over the course of the past twenty years. It will attempt to determine whether or not al Qaeda is indeed an irrational actor focused on annihilation of the US, and its use of terrorism as a strategy in the conflict with the United States. It will also examine al Qaeda's strategy moving forward, and responses to the drone program.

This thesis will also examine critiques of the program, again judging them by their own standards; whether or not the program has been responsible for increased anti-US sentiment among key regional allies, and whether or not the program has been responsible for a radicalization of civilians in countries where strikes are executed. It will also assess whether or not increased anti-US sentiment as a result of drone strikes is inherently linked with pro-al Qaeda sentiment; or, more simply, whether or not being anti-US necessarily leads to an attraction to al Qaeda among ordinary civilians.

I have laid out four general hypotheses here, two justifying the necessity of the program and two leveling critiques against it. The first hypothesis is that drone strikes are effective at preventing imminent al Qaeda attacks against the US and its allies. Second, that drone strikes are effective in preventing the rise of new al Qaeda affiliates. The third hypothesis is that drone strikes erode US support among key regional allies by violating sovereignty. The fourth is that drone strikes radicalize ordinary citizens against the US, making them more receptive to al Qaeda recruitment. In attempting to test these hypotheses, I rely on a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics to draw preliminary evidence either in support of the existing hypotheses or against them. I use data collected from open sources and aggregated by three different non-governmental organizations without a bias in favor of either al Qaeda or the US in this conflict. I aggregate three main types of data for use in testing these hypotheses: numbers of drone strikes, numbers of al Qaeda attacks, public perceptions of the US and al Qaeda and perceptions at the level of an individual respondent on the association between anti-US sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment, culled from survey data.

In testing both the effectiveness of the drone program and the validity of the critiques leveled against it, I focus on the state of Pakistan and its associated semi-autonomous territories (**F**ederally **A**dministered **T**ribal **A**reas, also known informally as Af-Pak because they are along the porous border separating Afghanistan from Pakistan). First and foremost, there is more publicly available and reliable data on survey data and strike/attack data for Pakistan than for any other country involved in the war on terror. Secondarily, Pakistan clearly pledged allegiance to the US in the war on terror in the days after 9/11; though there is internal division between the government and military

regarding support for the US (and a fair amount of support for al Qaeda itself among members of the security service, the ISI), Pakistan can clearly be denoted an 'ally in the war on terror' because of its willingness to aid US efforts against al Qaeda within its own borders and also across the Middle East. Finally, Pakistan stands alone as the key 'battlefield' for the US in the war on terror, because what remains of upper level al Qaeda militants (former members of the Afghan mujahideen and associates of bin Laden and current al Qaeda figurehead Ayman al-Zawahiri) have found sanctuary in Pakistan. Additionally, al Qaeda in Pakistan has managed to create its most dedicated regional affiliate, known among policymakers as the 'neo-Taliban,' an insurgency based out of FATA and loyal to al Qaeda's overall goals. Thus, Pakistan stands alone as the premier battlefield on which the US will succeed or fail at curbing the al Qaeda threat.

The results of the analysis paint an interesting picture of the conflict between al Qaeda and the US in its current iteration. First and foremost, the data suggests that the drone program has been ineffective at reducing al Qaeda attacks in Pakistan, and is in fact associated with an increase in Qaeda attacks. Second, the data suggests that drones are very unpopular among ordinary Pakistani civilians, but that this lack of popularity does not inherently translate into anti-US sentiment. Additionally, the data suggests that anti-US sentiment also does not automatically translate into support for al Qaeda. In fact, US popularity in Pakistan was eroded by the 2003 invasion of Iraq and has remained low ever since. However, the escalating tit-for-tat campaign of attacks between al Qaeda and the United States has significantly eroded al Qaeda's popularity in Pakistan (which was fairly high in the early 2000s) because of rising civilian casualties associated with increased attacks.

This paper will proceed in three parts. In the first chapter, I will outline in more detail the assumptions that the US holds about the nature of al Qaeda, where those assumptions come from and how they have played into the development of a brute-force campaign that relies on the strategy of HVT. Next, I will examine the RDI and drone program in more detail, focusing on the similarities and differences between the programs, as well as the evolution from 'capture' via rendition into 'kill' via drones. In the second chapter, I will examine al Qaeda as an organization in relation to US assumptions; its roots, its goals and motivations, and the way it has evolved since 9/11. I will establish Pakistan as the key of al Qaeda's future strategy, and as the main battlefield on which the drone war is being waged. Finally, in the third chapter I will examine the data on the drone program and on al Qaeda attacks in order to assess the effectiveness of a HVT strategy predicated on the assumption of the necessity of brute force, and the repercussions of that strategy. I will conclude with the policy implications of these conclusions, as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Hitting the Mercury

*"Are you concerned what will happen once you've hit the mercury with the hammer in Afghanistan and the Al-Qaeda cadre has spread all over the world?"—**Sir Richard Dearlove, Head of MI5, September 12, 2001.***

*"No. Our only concern is killing terrorists."—**Cofer Black, Former Head of Counterterrorism Center (Taylor, 2007).***

Introduction

Sitting around the small conference table of Air Force 1 on the morning of 9/11, the fledgling Bush administration faced a type of national security threat entirely different than any the US had confronted before. The attack on the homeland had been what scholar Nassim Taleb has defined as a 'Black Swan' event, or an event that is simultaneously "outside the realm of regular expectations, because nothing in the past can convincingly point to its possibility. Second, it carries an extreme impact. Third, in spite of its outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for its occurrence after the fact, making it explainable and predictable (Taleb 2007)." In classifying 9/11 as a Black Swan, Taleb suggests that 9/11 was so far outside the purview of what the Bush administration (and moreover, the world) could have expected that there were simply no 'working theories' in place as far as how the US should respond. "The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today," President Bush wrote that night in his diary, reflecting this sense of total shock perhaps most saliently (Woodward 2002).

In framing its initial response to the threat, the Bush administration thus turned to existing paradigms of international relations. These paradigms were, for all intents and

purposes, the only tools in America's toolbox. The US had previously faced threats

almost exclusively from traditional Westphalian state actors; in responding to threats

from these actors, it had historically employed coercive diplomacy (with some notable

exceptions, for example the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) with the goal of

forcing the enemy to capitulate. In the case of Afghanistan, Bush exercised coercive

diplomacy in the case of the Taliban; in a speech on September 20, 2001 he warned the

Taliban to withdraw support for al Qaeda immediately. "The Taliban must act and act

immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate

(Washington Post Speech Text 2001)." When the Taliban failed to hand over bin Laden

and his associates, the administration chose to hold the Taliban responsible for al Qaeda's

presence in Afghanistan, and to open a traditional military engagement in Afghanistan

with the explicit goal of toppling the Taliban.

In addition to invading Afghanistan, the administration also turned almost

immediately to Iraq. The records from the Situation Room that day reflect that within five

hours of the initial attack, Rumsfeld had raised the possibility of "going after Iraq as a

response to the terrorist attacks" and had asked Deputy Defense Secretary Paul

Wolfowitz to look into the possibility of a connection between bin Laden and Iraqi

President Saddam Hussein (Woodward 25). "Through the lens of the post 9/11 world, my

view changed. The lesson of 9/11 was that if we waited for a decision to fully materialize,

we would have waited too long. I reached a decision that we would confront the threat

from Iraq, one way or another," Bush explained in his memoirs (Bush 2010). Though the

invasion was publicly justified on the grounds that Iraq possessed WMD and also had

connections with bin Laden, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld would later justify the

intervention on the grounds that the US needed to maintain credibility in the international system by backing up threats with military action. "Once the president had laid out his objective of regime change, and begun the process of troop deployments and CIA work, then if they didn't follow through, they would be like Clinton—a lot of bold talk and not much action (Woodward 2002)."

In short, the administration chose to execute a strategy based on coercive diplomacy when dealing with traditional Westphalian states in the international system. It issued threats and backed those threats up with military action. In order to maintain credibility in the international system, it employed coercion by threat of violence. While there were obviously differences between the motivations for the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 'deterrence' piece that applies to both relates to the US attempt to propagate a norm against a nation-state harboring terrorists, and to back up threats with military action in order to retain credibility. In this was an implicit notion that these states could be coerced, that they would respond to this type of threat. "Al Qaeda has found tacit and active support from nation-states…The objective is to induce these states to change their practices (Posen 2001, 43)." The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, however, did not succeed in eliminating al Qaeda's presence in either country. In Afghanistan, al Qaeda simply slipped across the border by way of the Tora Bora mountains to the semi-autonomous tribal areas of Pakistan, where its followers found (and continue to find) sanctuary (Tora Bora Report to Committee on Foreign Relations 2009). In Iraq, the destabilization wrought by the US invasion created new sanctuaries for al Qaeda affiliates to spring up (Kydd and Walter 2005).

In addition to pursuing this state-centric strategy, the US also attempted to dismantle al Qaeda at the organizational level. When it came to dealing with the nebulous, shadowy al Qaeda network, however, the United States abandoned the strategy of coercive diplomacy. This choice was based on two basic assumptions about the nature of al Qaeda. First, the US classified al Qaeda as an ideologically (not strategically) motivated fanatical actor that could not be engaged diplomatically. It was portrayed as an alien 'other,' so radical in nature that it would not respond to traditional coercion. Second, the US judged al Qaeda's motivations as an organization that was ideologically uniform and motivated by a desire to annihilate the United States. "First, terrorists are thought to be 'irrational' and therefore unresponsive to the cost-benefit calculation required for deterrence. Second, as Robert Pape argues, many terrorists are said to be so highly motivated that they are 'willing to die, and so not deterred by fear of punishment or of anything else. Third, even if terrorists were afraid of punishment, they cannot be deterred because they 'lack a return address against which retaliation can be visited (Trager and Zagorcheva 2006)."

Based on these assumptions about al Qaeda's goals, the US developed a strategy grounded in brute force rather than coercive diplomacy. In developing this strategy, the US also identified al Qaeda as a hierarchically structured organization highly dependent on the knowledge and skill set of individual actors (Cronin 2010). With the goal of targeting individual actors it judged inherently important to the operational capacity of al Qaeda, the administration embarked on a campaign of High Value Targeting, and inaugurated the 'capture-or-kill' strategy with the goal of removing these terror suspects from the battlefield. In targeting individuals, the Bush administration developed two

highly controversial programs: the Rendition, Detention and Interrogation Program (RDI), and the use of unmanned aerial aircrafts (drones) to seek out and assassinate militants across the Middle East and North Africa. Over the course of the eight years that Bush was in office, a combination of international, domestic and inter-bureaucratic pressure rendered the RDI program unsustainable. The administration responded by shifting more heavily to the use of drones, particularly in the countries of Yemen and Pakistan, where the US was not engaged in traditional warfare. When Barack Obama took office in 2009 he acted to end the state-centric wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, he continued the curtailed version of the RDI program and significantly increased funding and reliance on the drone program.

In this chapter, I will argue that the two programs are inherently similar and dependent upon the same notions regarding the necessity of relying on brute force in the battle against al Qaeda, and the same understanding of al Qaeda as a hierarchically structured organization dependent upon individual actors to execute operations. I will examine the timeline of the development of the two programs, and will give a brief narrative of the relationship between the failure of one program and subsequent development of the other.

Capture-The Rendition, Detention and Interrogation Program

Before the 1990s, the issue of terrorism—both domestic and international—was largely conceived of as an issue of law enforcement, far outside the purview of what the military or the CIA might be responsible for handling. It was not until 9/11, and Bush's famous 'war on terror' speech that the United States began to conceive of counterterror policy in the context of war. While the distinction is important for a number of reasons, it

is especially salient when it comes to US treatment of terror suspects. There are different rules and regulations governing the treatment of detainees whether they are under the purview of the US criminal system or the jurisdiction of the military. The Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution, the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture (ratified by the US in 1995) prohibit cruel and unusual punishment against anyone in US custody, citizen or not, at home or abroad. "Neither international nor domestic law conditions the right not to be subjected to torture on citizenship or nationality. No detainee held by U.S. authorities—regardless of nationality, regardless of whether held in the U.S. or in another country, and regardless of whether the person is deemed a combatant or civilian—may be tortured (Human Rights Watch Torture 2004)." The US military has its own justice system, with its own rules and regulations regarding treatment of enemy soldiers and civilians in combat (defined under the Uniform Code of Military Justice); the Geneva Conventions and other statutes of international law additionally regulate treatment of armed combatants in wartime (ICRC 2014).

The RDI program began in the late 1980s. Rendition itself, which began under the Reagan administration, was initially not distinct from extradition; it was originally defined as capture of a suspect and transfer to the US or their home country, where they were afforded the right to a fair trial and presumption of innocence until proven guilty (Grey 2007). As former CIA director Porter Goss described the rendition program prior to 9/11, it was a "polite way to take people out of action and bring them to some type of justice (Grey 2007)." There is some debate about whether or not torture was used when individuals were returned to home countries that routinely torture detainees. While torture

may have occurred in some cases, it was not the express purpose of the rendition, nor was the US particularly interested in culling information from these individuals (Grey 2007).

The aftermath of the Cold War brought about a rise in virulent Sunni extremism across the Middle East and North Africa, a spike that can be explained by a number of factors. Most salient to the US was the end of the Soviet war against the US-backed mujahideen in Afghanistan. The end of the war left thousands of young men trained in combat and schooled in Sunni extremism without a campaign. Many of these men were barred from returning to their home countries because of their participation in the jihad, and were simply left stateless (Coll 2004). Others scattered across the Middle East and North Africa. In Afghanistan, the rival factions of the mujahideen that had been united against the common enemy of the USSR descended into brutal civil war (Coll 2004). When the Sunni fundamentalist Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 1994, many of these former mujahideen either allied with the new regime, or settled down into the semi-autonomous and ungovernable regions of northern Afghanistan and across the border into Pakistan. The end of the Soviet-Afghan campaign and subsequent end of the Cold War created the perfect breeding grounds for the rise of Sunni extremism, first in Afghanistan and Pakistan but later across North Africa and the Persian Gulf.

The post-Cold War rise in Sunni extremism coincided with the Clinton administration's attempt to 'clean up' the CIA after a series of internal scandals in the early 1990s. In 1995, the Clinton administration ordered the CIA to perform a "scrub" of the agency. "According to some estimates, as much as 60% of the [agency's] contacts were lost as a direct result of this 'scrub' policy (Martin 2011)." The sudden loss of sources of human intelligence left the agency without actionable ways to respond to

Sunni extremism and the associated rise in terrorist activity, initially targeting US allies in the region (namely Saudi Arabia and Egypt), but later moving to directly target the United States. In the increasingly tense climate, the agency turned to the only tool it had left—the rendition program, and expanded it dramatically. Instead of 'rendering' people to either the United States or their home country for the purpose of putting them on trial, the CIA began transferring people to third countries in order to question suspected terrorists and obtain actionable information about upcoming attacks. A Presidential Decision Directive issued in 1995 formally codified this shift (Mayer 2008). At this point, however, the program remained limited in scope. Between 1990 and 2000, there were less than 70 renditions to a third country. Despite the grey area of interrogation by a third party, "every suspect who was apprehended…had been convicted in absentia (Mayer 2008)."

After 9/11, however, the program expanded dramatically, for two main reasons. First, the inauguration of the 'one percent' doctrine (the brainchild of Dick Cheney) significantly lowered the threshold of evidence required to capture and hold a terror suspect. "Even if there's just a 1 percent chance of the unimaginable coming due, act as if it is a certainty… As to 'evidence,' the bar was set so low that the word itself almost didn't apply (Suskind 2006)." The administration's framing of US response to terror threats in the post 9/11 atmosphere was the equivalent of DefCon1 in the military: high alert, immediate and decisive response to even ambiguous or uncertain threats. Suddenly, terror suspects (both in the United States and across the world) who previously had been immune from arrest because of a lack of evidence were fair game for the FBI and the CIA. These suspects, whose names were culled from both tips and sources the CIA or

FBI had picked up, as well as databases of Middle Eastern and European allies, were captured from the suburbs of Sweden to the terminals of JFK International Airport (CRS Extradition Report 2010). In the pre-9/11 framework, these men would have been treated as criminals and put in the domestic court system; after 9/11, "it was an article of faith in the hard-line group that the criminal courts were not up to the challenge of handling terrorism (Mayer 2008)."

In addition to these suspects, the invasion of Afghanistan left the US with thousands of captured Taliban and al Qaeda militants. The administration did not want to repatriate these detainees to Afghanistan, fearing that they would swell al Qaeda's ranks, but did not have a solution for dealing with them. "With the new global war on terrorism now effectively labeling tens of thousands of Islamic militants as enemies, the whole country of Afghanistan invaded…the main problem of the CIA and the US military at the close of 2001 was that both were now swamped with prisoners and potential prisoners (Grey 2006)." Some of those captured were simply "the slowest guys on the battlefield (Honigsburg 2009);" others had been sold for ransom at the prompting of the US, which had dropped flyers in Afghanistan telling people they would "receive millions of dollars for helping the anti-Taliban force catch al Qaida and Taliban murderers (Honigsburg 2009)." Hundreds of people with no ties to al Qaeda or even the Taliban got caught in the dragnet after 9/11, some as young as ten and twelve, and found themselves at the mercy of this new ad-hoc program (Honigsburg 2009).

The Bush administration expanded and restructured the RDI program in response to this influx of potential terror threats. In doing so, it conflated Taliban soldiers with al Qaeda operatives, issuing an executive order in November of 2001 that designated both

'enemy combatants.' The purpose of this new terminology was to classify these detainees as outside the purview of the Geneva Conventions. "The administration introduced the category of enemy combatants, a classification that has never been recognized by the Geneva Conventions, as a way to circumvent the conventions and provide cover to mistreat and torture detainees (Honigsberg 2009)." Almost immediately, the CIA began constructing secret detention facilities for holding these detainees. After 9/11, "instead of just sending people to third countries, we're holding them ourselves. We're taking people, and keeping them in our own custody in third countries," explained an ex-FBI agent discussing the program after 9/11 (Mayer 2008). These "ghost prisons" were opened in at least 8 countries (including Romania and Poland), and the host countries were financially rewarded; some were even promised help in joining NATO if they participated in the program (Mayer 2008). "We told them we'd help them join NATO if they helped us torture people," one former CIA officer explained (Mayer 2008)." In addition to these CIA-run detention facilities, the administration also handed prisoners to foreign countries—Syria and Egypt, for example—to be interrogated in their existing detention facilities (Grey 2006). There were, in addition to these CIA-run black sites, a number of military-run detention facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, including but not limited to facilities at Bagram Airforce Base in Afghanistan and Abu Ghraib in Iraq. While these were under the purview of US coalition forces, the CIA also participated in detainee interrogation (Associated Press 2013).

In addition to developing these black sites, the administration set up a parallel legal system outside the purview of either the Constitution or international law. The same executive order establishing the status of these detainees as 'enemy combatants' also set

up a court system run by the US military (called the military commission system) for prosecuting and sentencing these suspects. Though the right of the President to create a parallel court system via executive order was overturned in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, the Military Commissions Act (MCA) of 2006 legalized the military commission system (CCR Factsheet 2014), and also affirmed the legality of classifying certain suspects 'enemy combatants.' The administration also approved the opening of a detention facility at the Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for long-term detainment of terror suspects (NPR Guantanamo Docket 2014). The administration claimed that the geographic location of the facility (outside the borders of the US, but under control of the US military) meant that anyone held there would not be afforded protections of the Constitution. As Deputy Assistant U.S. Attorney General John Yoo explained, "The federal courts probably wouldn't consider Gitmo as falling within their habeas jurisdiction (Honigsburg 2009)." The result was essentially to place anyone held at Guantanamo outside the protections of domestic, as well as international law.

In August of 2002, the purpose of all this legal maneuvering became explicitly clear in a now-infamous Office of Legal Counsel memo, written by Yoo, and signed by Assistant Attorney General Jay S. Bybee (Mayer 2008). The memo examined restrictions on detainee treatment enumerated in the United Nations Convention Against Torture (which the US formally ratified in 1994) in the context of this new global war on terror, and proceeded to redefine 'torture' to make it close to impossible to commit. "These statutes suggest that 'severe pain,' as used in Section 2340 [of the Convention Against Torture], must rise to a similarly high level—the level that would ordinarily be associated with a sufficiently serious physical condition or injury such as death, organ failure, or

serious impairment of body functions—in order to constitute torture (Bybee Memo)."

Issued alongside the memo was a list (which remains classified) of techniques that the

CIA could use on detainees, both at the facility at Guantanamo Bay and in the CIA-run

black sites; these included 'stress positions,' sexual humiliation, forced nudity, restriction

of food and water, slamming detainees into walls, punching/slapping detainees and the

simulated drowning technique infamously known as 'waterboarding' (Guardian Q&A

2010). At Guantanamo, interrogations were run by military personnel; at the black sites,

as well as the facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, interrogations were run by a mixture of

CIA and military personnel, CIA contractors and sometimes, members of the local

security apparatus.

In the spring of 2004, however, the program began to face public scrutiny. The

Inspector General of the CIA, then John Helgerson, released an internal, classified report

suggesting that some of the enhanced interrogation techniques (specifically those used on

high-level detainee Khalid Sheikh Muhammed) constituted cruel and degrading

treatment, and exposed agents to possible legal action (Helgerson Report 2004). It

alarmed many of the agents involved in the program, as they began to consider the

possibility that if the administration reversed its position on the techniques, they could be

'left holding the bag,' so to speak. "The 106 page report by John Helgerson kicked out

the foundation upon which the CIA detention and interrogation program had rested, and it

raised questions about whether CIA officers might face criminal prosecution for the

brutal interrogations carried out inside the agency's network of secret prisons (Mazzetti

2011)," journalist Mark Mazzetti claims in his book about the war on terror.

In addition to the Helgerson report, an article published by the New Yorker and written by Seymour Hersh in May of 2004 detailed rampant prisoner abuse (including extremely disturbing pictures) at the US run Iraqi detention facility at Abu Ghraib (Hersh 2004). While treatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib far exceeded the 'permitted' enhanced interrogation techniques outlined for use at Guantanamo and in the black prison sites, the article called attention to the blurred lines between detainee interrogation and abuse (Hersh 2004). Also in May 2004, CIA director George Tenet testified in front of the 9/11 commission, on renditions, further drawing domestic and international attention to the covert and controversial program (Extraordinary Rendition, JSS). Suddenly, the American public, as well as the international media and European countries that had granted the US use of their airports en route to the Middle East were facing scrutiny over the program, over whether what the US was doing constituted torture, where the black sites were and who was being detained.

Kill: The Development of the Drone Program

The damning Helgerson report and near simultaneous release of Hersh's report and associated photos left the CIA in need of a new politically defensible strategy. In an effort to develop a new policy that would have minimal public backlash, the agency turned to the use of armed drones to replace the nefarious RDI program. "If there was one thing that had catalyzed the CIA's escalation of lethal operations, it was the completion of a devastating internal report in May 2004 by the spy agency's inspector general," claims Mazzetti (Mazzetti 2011). In a follow up interview, he explained that he "never found anything flat out or explicit" connecting the end of one tactic to the increased funding and use of the other. However, Mazzetti claims that the 2004 Helgerson report

"caused all sorts of alarm bells inside the CIA and the administration" and was "effectively the end of the CIA detention and interrogation program as it was known at that time (Mazzetti Interview 2013)." John Bellinger, Legal Adviser to the NSC from 2001 to 2005, explained in a personal interview that there "are really incredible parallels between the two programs…they were both proposed to the White House by the director of the CIA, both run by the CIA, and the proposal put the White House in the position of risking saying 'no' to a new program and potentially risking another al Qaeda attack (Bellinger Interview 2013).

The drone program itself traces its roots back to the bloody NATO campaign in the former Yugoslavia, when drones piloted by the CIA reported Serbian troop positions to the UN allied Bosnian military (Glyn Williams 2010, 3). In 2001, a few days after Bush entered office, US Air Force engineers strapped a Hellfire missile to an unmanned drone, and fired it at a model tank in the middle of the desert in Nevada. The missile hit the target and did not destroy the drone (Zenko 2012). This opened the door to a wide range of possibilities for the use of armed drones in the war on terror (Mazzetti 2011). After 9/11, the CIA was given free reign, operationally and financially, in the war against al Qaeda. The armed drone appeared on the scene at just the right time, when the administration was putting a lot of pressure on the CIA to come up with a new counterterror strategy. "The armed version of the Predator was quickly put into use after the 9/11 attacks. The new climate was captured by Bush's pledge to get bin Laden 'dead or alive' (Glyn Williams 2010, 4)." The capability to attach missiles to drones very suddenly changed the administration's capacity to target al Qaeda operatives in their

sanctuaries—in Afghanistan, where the US was engaged in a traditional military engagement, but also anywhere in the world that those sanctuaries might be found.

Yet the new capability also came with questions. Perhaps most pressing was the question of whether drones with attached Hellfire missiles were legally permitted to assassinate suspected terrorists outside the battlefield of Iraq and Afghanistan. Leaving aside the question of international law, domestic law (specifically Executive Order 12333, first signed into action by Gerald Ford and renewed by Ronald Reagan) prohibits political assassination by the US government. "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination. No agency of the Intelligence Community shall participate in or request any person to undertake activities forbidden by this Order (Federal Register, EXEC 12333)." In developing a legal framework for deploying drones outside the traditional battlefield, the Bush and subsequently Obama administrations developed two legal arguments allowing them to circumvent this assassination ban.

The first argument was that using drones was constitutionally legal because of the constitutional right, and inherent duty, of the President to take all necessary measures to protect the United States from enemies foreign and abroad. "The President has the authority to respond to the imminent threat posed by al-Qaeda and associated forces, arising from his constitutional responsibility to protect the country (Department of Justice 2013)." The second legal provision that both administrations have used to defend the program is the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), passed by Congress on September 14, 2001. The document, similar to the War Powers Act, gives the President carte blanche authority to wage war against al Qaeda and broadly defined al

Qaeda associates. "That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons (AUMF 2001)." In addition to these two domestic provisions, both administrations have justified the program as lawful under international law because of "the inherent right of the United States to national self defense under international law…and the existence of an armed conflict with al Qaeda under international law (Department of Justice 2013)."

While both administrations have relied on all three justifications, both in internal Department of Justice memorandums and in public defense of the programs (in speeches given by White House legal advisors and by President Obama in speeches to the nation), the Bush administration exercised more leeway in relying on the constitutional provisions granted to the President to defend the nation, essentially arguing in favor of a more powerful, less constrained executive branch. The Obama administration has claimed legality for the program more specifically through the provisions of the AUMF, rather than relying on the broader justification laid out in the Constitution. "This administration has taken great pains to emphasize that it has been relying on congressional grant of authority rather than the president's own constitutional authority to conduct most of its counterterrorism operations. It has wanted to do that to contrast itself with the Bush administration, which had, at least early in its tenure, relied heavily on the president's constitutional authority (Seeking Daylight 2012)." The Obama administration's use of a more narrow legal justification for the program may be partially an attempt to distinguish

itself from the unpopular policies of the Bush administration, but is also an attempt to narrow the scope of presidential authority to set a precedent for future administrations.

Initially, however, drone strikes did not engage these powerful questions of international and domestic law. The Predator first fired missiles in October of 2001 in Afghanistan, where the US was engaged in an explicitly declared, traditional military engagement (Glyn Williams 2010, 4). Then, in early 2002, the CIA began operating Predators from a US-owned airbase in Jacobabad, Pakistan (Glyn Williams 2010, 5). Though capable of carrying missiles, the drones were used exclusively in a surveillance capability. In November of 2002, however, the CIA fired its first drone-deployed (launched from a military base in Djibouti) Hellfire missile directed at an individual outside a traditional theater of combat. The agency targeted Abu Ali al Harithi, who had previously been linked to the deadly attack on the *USS Cole* in 2000 (TBIJ Yemen 2014). This was a watershed moment in US counterterror policy. For the first time, the CIA had targeted and killed an individual using a UAV, piloted from an airbase in Afghanistan. The attack was successful in that al Harithi was tracked and eliminated. However, the strike also killed five of Harithi's companions, including an American citizen named Kamal Darwish (TBIJ Yemen 2014). Though organized by the CIA (specifically by George Tenet, then-director) the strike was physically called in by Lieutenant General Michael DeLong, a CENTCOM commander from 2000-2003 (Priest 2012). Intelligence support from a JSOC team on the ground in Yemen also helped Tenet and DeLong decide where and when to strike (Yemen Campaign 2014).

Less than a month after the publication of a piece in the New Yorker describing the enhanced interrogation techniques and accompanied by glossy photos of detainees in

body bags at Abu Ghraib, the CIA executed its second legal strike with a drone—this time in Pakistan. From 2004 until 2012, the CIA expanded the drone program in Pakistan extensively; though the program also expanded into Yemen, Somalia and the Philippines, the number of strikes in Pakistan far exceeded the number of strikes in any other campaign.

I have chosen to focus specifically on the development and effects of the program in Pakistan here because Pakistan both offers the most reliable data on US actions and represents al Qaeda's central base of support in the Middle East today (and has since the Tora Bora incident of 2001).

Analyzing this very first strike in Pakistan in 2004 gives us an opportunity to examine how the drone program works in Pakistan. The first strike, undertaken by the CIA with the support of the Pakistani government, targeted Taliban commander Nek Mohammed, who had been "linked to an assassination plot against General Musharraf (TBIJ Data Pakistan)," in exchange for "access to airspace it had long sought so it could use drones to hunt down its own enemies (Deal Sealed in Blood 2013)." This 'goodwill strike' served the purpose of shoring up support with the Pakistani government, whose public support and control over Pakistan was threatened by the rise of extremism in FATA. There is evidence to suggest that JSOC was also given carte blanche to run drones in Pakistan as part of this initial deal; however, the delineation of control over drone strikes in Pakistan between JSOC and the CIA is extremely murky (Glyn Williams 2010, 7).

While it is clear that both the CIA and JSOC run the program in Pakistan, it is also apparent that the private security contracting firm Xe (formerly known as

Blackwater), has also been given authority to conduct strikes. Xe was created in 1997 as a private training firm for law enforcement and military personnel; however, after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the US government began contracting Blackwater (through a no-bid contract) for a variety of types of military support in Iraq (CRS Report Blackwater 2012). Currently owned by former Navy Seal Erik Prince, Xe has expanded its services into Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and possibly Somalia since then. Xe has reportedly supported both CIA and JSOC run drone strikes out of US bases in Shamsi and Baluchistan. "It's Blackwater running the program for both CIA and JSOC," said the source. When civilians are killed, "people go, 'Oh, it's the CIA doing crazy shit again unchecked.' Well, at least 50 percent of the time, that's JSOC [hitting] somebody they've identified through HUMINT [human intelligence] or they've culled the intelligence themselves or it's been shared with them and they take that person out and that's how it works (Scahill 2009)."

While this first strike was executed by the CIA, the Pakistani government claimed credit for the attack, setting the precedent in Pakistan for future attacks. A fair-weather friend at best in the war on terror, Pakistan could not risk alienating anti-government sentiment by admitting it had given up sovereignty over its airspace to the United States in exchange for help in the war against the rise of Islamic militancy. "In secret negotiations, the terms of the bargain were set. Pakistani intelligence officials insisted that they be allowed to approve each drone strike, giving them tight control over the list of targets. And they insisted that drones fly only in narrow parts of the tribal areas — ensuring that they would not venture where Islamabad did not want the Americans going: Pakistan's nuclear facilities, and the mountain camps where Kashmiri militants were

trained for attacks in India. The ISI and the CIA agreed that the United States would never acknowledge the missile strikes and that Pakistan would either take credit for the individual killings or remain silent (Deal Sealed in Blood 2013)."

Following the success of this first attack, as well as the powerful deal brokered between the ISI and the CIA, drone strikes in Pakistan began to rise. In 2008, however, the United States made the choice to stop seeking prior approval for strikes from the Pakistani government, out of concern that certain members of the ISI were 'tipping off' members of the al Qaeda-linked Haqqani network (Landay Interview 2013).

Following his inauguration in 2009, President Obama significantly expanded the drone program throughout 2009 and 2010 (Glyn Williams 2010, 7). Bellinger attributes the escalation of the program under the Obama administration partially to the political prominence of the program in relation to the RDI program. "I do think the Obama administration looked at what happened to the Bush administration on detention and said we want to avoid detention at all costs (Bellinger Interview 2013)," Bellinger explained. Obama had spoken out publicly against the RDI program during his campaign, and his failure to successfully close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay was a sticking point with his liberal voting base (Bellinger Interview 2013). This left him in an uncomfortable place. He had entered office promising his voting base that he would set himself apart from the Bush administration's approach to the war on terror, one he had sharply criticized during the campaign. He did not want to put more people at Guantanamo, especially after the very public failure to close it. Ye he was also facing the same threat matrix the Bush administration had faced—a point that was driven home especially powerfully on Christmas Day 2009, when a Nigerian man trained by the

powerful Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen and by cleric Awlaki attempted to detonate a bomb on board a Northwest Airlines flight bound for Detroit on Christmas Day, 2009. Additionally, escalating terrorist attacks in Pakistan by increasingly radical Taliban offshoots increased the urgency of doing something in response to what seemed an imminent threat (Landay Interview 2013).

In fact, in addition to continuing the drone program, the Obama administration actually expanded the target base. In the summer of 2008, on its way out of office, the Bush administration quietly expanded the drone targets to include 'signature strikes,' or strikes that targeted people in the Af-Pak region who were displaying "patterns of behavior" that suggested al Qaeda links (ProPublica 2010). These strikes targeted men of 'military age' carrying weapons or associating (in often ambiguous ways) with individuals deemed 'suspicious' by the administration. These strikes were used not only to get rid of terror suspects, but also to fight local insurgencies, initially in Pakistan. Under the Obama administration, the scope and number of these strikes expanded, and this new type of strike began in Yemen as well (ProPublica 2010). Approval for signature strikes, and the list of people targeted under 'personality strikes,' came from the Oval Office itself (Kill List 2011). In short, the drone program as it was used in Pakistan was quietly expanding from specifically counterterrorism into counter-insurgency, in both Pakistan and Yemen; in Pakistan, to protect US coalition forces across the border in Afghanistan, and in Yemen to bolster the weak, US allied government.

These strikes were coordinated from both Pakistan proper and by military personnel and CIA operatives working out of control centers in the United States (Langley, Creech, Nellis, March, Hector, Davis-Monthan, Hancock), but also by CIA and

JSOC personnel in Pakistan (Scahill 2009). These missions are supported by contractors from Xe and also, more recently, by Pakistani contractors through the firm Kestral Logistics, a Pakistani run military contracting firm close to the Pakistani government (Scahill 2009). Because of these different nodes of control regarding the drone program, the question of specifically 'who pulls the trigger' may vary from strike to strike. While the majority of strikes in Pakistan have been run through the CIA, JSOC has been instrumental in choosing, locating and executing targets in Yemen and Somalia (Priest and Arkin, 2011). While the Pakistani government was not given the chance to approve each strike before it was undertaken, there is no doubt that it was at the very least aware of the escalation of the drone campaign, and gave its tacit support to the program (Glyn Williams 2010, 8).

THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Total CIA Drone Strikes by Year in Pakistan (correct as of 18/3/13)
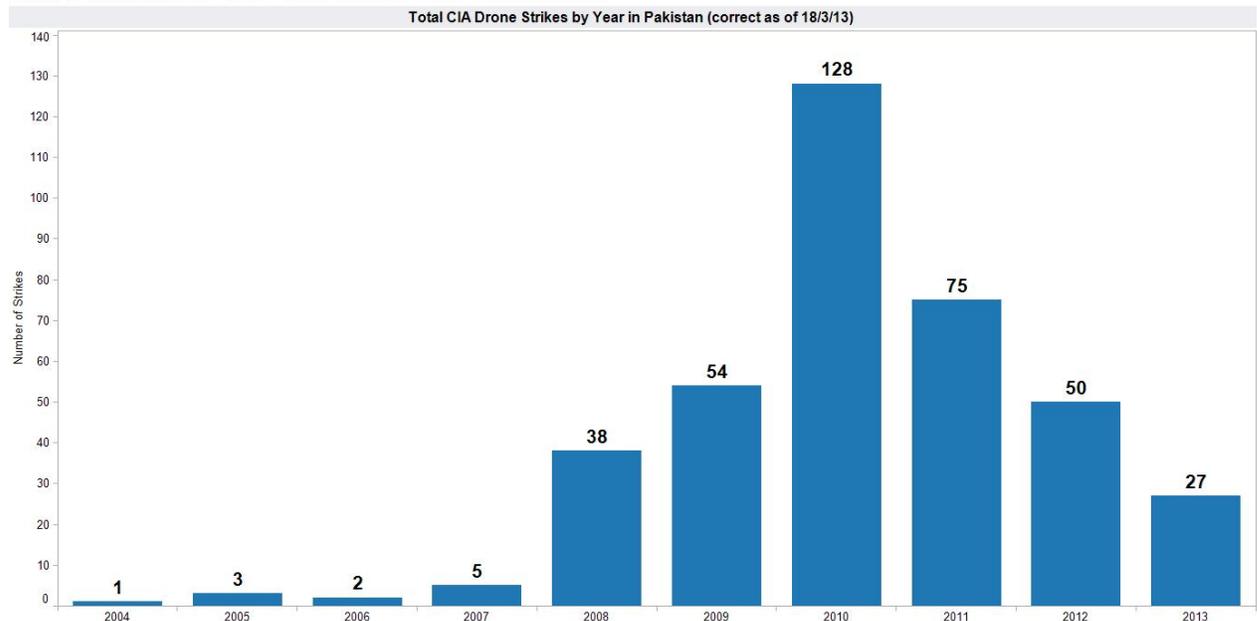
Conclusion

The RDI program and the drone program were predicated on the same assumptions about the nature of the enemy. Al Qaeda was judged so fanatical in its

devotion to ideology that negotiation was deemed impossible. This portrayal lumped together uniformed Taliban soldiers, civilians, lower level al Qaeda militants and the rare dedicated and highly trained al Qaeda operative. General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2001 to 2005, described the detainees included in the RDI program as "the worst of the worst…they would gnaw through the hydraulic lines in the back of a C-17 to bring it down (Honigsburg 2009)." An FBI interrogator involved in the RDI program explained, "terrorists…[are] unlike enemies of the past and so need to be treated differently (Mayer 2008)." In a speech publicly defending the drone program, Obama justified lethal action against terrorists, claiming, "We will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings (Obama Speech 2013)," and went on to describe radicalized individuals as 'deranged and alienated.' Thus, the enemy has been painted as inherently irrational, wholly impossible of being engaged in a rational negotiation.

Additionally, the organization as a whole is presumed to be solely dedicated to annihilation of the Western world in a Huntington-esque clash reminiscent of the Crusades (Huntington 1993, 27). "These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life," George Bush told the American people on September 20, 2001 (Bush Speech Transcript 2001). In this framework, there was no room for negotiation; any engagement with the organization would inherently present an existential threat to the homeland. In defending the drone program, Obama expressed a similar portrayal of the enemy. "We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first (Obama Speech Text 2013)."

In the next chapter, I will examine the structure of al Qaeda in relation to these assumptions in an attempt to determine their value; I will examine al Qaeda from its inception to the nebulous movement that it has become today in an attempt to identify the organization independent of US perceptions.

Chapter 3: The Base

"Anyone who tries to destroy our villages and cities, then we are going to destroy their villages and cities. Anyone who steals our fortunes, then we must destroy their economy. Anyone who kills our civilians, then we are going to kill their civilians."—**Osama bin Laden, 2002**

Introduction

Western scholars and policymakers studying al Qaeda have spent much of the past two decades studying al Qaeda's rhetoric in relation to the Qu'ran, looking at the sources of Islamic jurisprudence that al Qaeda has claimed motivated the bloody terrorist attacks of the late 1990s and early 2000s. They have pored over the *hadith* reports, searching for the source of al Qaeda's philosophical and ideological power. And while there is no doubt that al Qaeda has effectively grounded its rhetorical power in a well-articulated, if extreme, version of Sunni jihadism, al Qaeda has historically predicated operational strength on any tenets of faith that it has propagated. While al Qaeda may be at the core of a Sunni jihad movement, it has prioritized the operational capacity of the organization above the ideological tenets of faith. In examining this balance, I will first

address its ideology, and then examine the ways in which it has diverged from that ideology in order to survive and adapt.

The Role of Ideology: Al Qaeda as a Rational Actor

Al Qaeda (which means 'the base' in Arabic) is an organization that draws ideological inspiration from a number of different Islamic traditions. It is grounded in Sunni Islam (one of the two main sects of Islam, distinguished from Shi'a Islam by its acceptance of the non-hereditary succession of the caliphs in the aftermath of Muhammed's death). However, al Qaeda ideology bears very little resemblance to the tenets of Sunni Islam interpreted by mainstream Muslims. Al Qaeda is grounded instead in a concept known as *jihadism*. Jihadism, a utopian notion, centers on the notion of struggle; namely, jihadis are Muslims that struggle in the name of Islam and against 'infidels,' with the ultimate goal of creating a worldwide Islamic caliphate (Aaron 2008). "Jihadis…insist[] that 'holy war' is the central tenet and obligation of Islam. Increasingly, jihadis are regarded by established Muslim clerics (the *ulama*) as a separate and deviant sect. They reject the authority of even the most distinguished *ulama* if they disagree with them (Aaron 2008)." Sometimes referred to as Salafis because of their interpretation of *hadith*, jihadis represent a very specific and particular movement not grounded in mainstream Islam.

Despite the significance of this ideology in attracting recruits, maintaining support and perhaps personally motivating individual members, al Qaeda as an organization has elevated strategic goals—survival and tactical gains—over strict adherence to jihad. Perhaps the clearest example of this predication of success over ideology is the movement's use of suicide bombers and martyrdom operations to achieve

goals. Suicide is expressly prohibited by the Qu'ran, and, indeed, generally less accepted in Muslim countries than in the West (Aaron 2008). Yet al Qaeda theologians, namely current al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, have co-opted suicide bombings as the most effective and ubiquitous tool of the Sunni anti-Western movement. Relying largely on *hadith* reports in order to make the argument in favor of martyrdom, Zawahiri has managed to philosophically circumvent these restrictions on suicide and subsume these operations under the banner of jihad. In doing so, al Qaeda has created an ideologically and militarily powerful weapon.

Robert Pape, a political theorist who has done extensively researched a recent rise in suicide attacks as a tactic, suggests that while it may be fair to classify the actual attackers as "irrational or fanatical, the leadership groups that recruit and direct them are not. Viewed from the perspective of the terrorist organization, suicide attacks are designed to achieve specific political purposes; to coerce a target government to change policy, to mobilize additional recruits and financial support, or both (Pape 2003, 344)."

Suicide bombing is an extremely effective tool in the type of asymmetrical warfare in which al Qaeda and the US are engaged. "Suicide bombers are the product of an asymmetric military balance of power in the context of an occupation (Atwan 2008)." Given that al Qaeda simply does not have access to vast amounts of sophisticated weaponry, well-trained manpower or unlimited funds in the way that the United States does, martyrdom operations provide a cost-effective framework in which to achieve results (Pape 2003, 344). "Al Qaeda consistently inflicts the maximum number of casualties with the minimum loss to itself. The attacks of 11 September 2001 had the highest bomber/casualty ratio, with nineteen suicide attackers claiming 2,955 lives—an

average 155.5 victims per attacker (Atwan 2008)." These martyrdom operations are far more effective at inflicting the mass amount of casualties—and therefore attracting domestic and international attention—than other types of attacks. Suicide bombing operations allow an operative to get much closer to the targets than do IED's or truck bombings, and usually cause far more casualties than do mass shootings.

In addition to being operationally extremely effective, suicide bombings carry with them a sort of stigma that is helpful to the movement. The idea that young men (and, increasingly, young women) are willing to lose their lives in support of al Qaeda's goals in a particular campaign lends legitimacy and weight to the movement in a way that little else does. "The suicide bomber, as well as deploying him or herself as a very efficient weapon, is also demonstrating willingness to die for a cause. The logic of social psychology infers that such a cause might, at the very least, be just (Atwan 2008)." In addition to furthering al Qaeda's goals (whether those goals be protest of a certain regime or policy, an attempt to make a particular region ungovernable or an attempt to either encourage or discourage the US from militarily engaging in a region), suicide bombing strengthens the perception that the movement is somehow justified. The sheer number of young men who willingly give up their lives for the movement suggests to outsiders that there is legitimacy in the campaign, that it is worthy enough to die for (Pape 2003, 345).

In addition to relying on suicide bombing as a tool, despite the injunction placed on it in the Qu'ran, al Qaeda has also partnered with groups with disparate ideology and ideological underpinnings. "What makes al Qaeda different to other Islamist organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood is the flexibility of its ideology and its wide range of aims…the organization's umbrella is sufficiently wide to encompass

various schools of thought and political leanings (Atwan 2008)." Though grounded in Sunni Wahhabism, al Qaeda has been more than willing to ally with Shi'a groups, for example, in order to advance its goals. "Although all al Qaeda members are Sunni Muslims, it cooperates with Shia Muslims, and occasionally with non-Muslim terrorists or organized criminals (Gunaratna 2010, 74)." Given the historical split between Sunni and Shi'a, and al Qaeda's very strict, supposedly fundamentalist interpretation of tenets of Salafism, it would follow that al Qaeda would ally exclusively with other Sunni movements. Yet this willingness to ally with groups based in the Shi'a tradition shows, yet again, al Qaeda's predication of operational capacity above ideology. "To enhance diversity—essential to its plans for a global jihad—al Qaeda campaigned on a common Sunni/Shi'a platform. This unprecedented position gave it a global reach and revealed that, although puritanical, it is a highly pragmatic organization, willing to adapt and refine its ideology in order to retain operational effectiveness (Gunaratna 2010, 100)." Both bin Laden and Zawahiri have supported this prioritization of operations and functionality over ideology.

Goals: Creation or Destruction?

In assessing the motivations of al Qaeda, the Bush administration painted a picture of an organization composed of individuals bent on total annihilation of the US. Yet a closer examination of al Qaeda as an organization suggests a far more complicated picture. Though jihad as an ideology outlines an expansive and utopian goal of 'remaking the world' by creating an Islamic caliphate governed by shariah, and killing or converting all those who reject Islam, al Qaeda has identified much more narrow, specific goals for the near future. It has used terrorism as a tool to advance these specific goals in an

attempt to diplomatically coerce the United States and Western world to capitulate to these goals over the course of the past two decades.

While al Qaeda may hope to eventually create an Islamic caliphate in the land that is now Iraq and part of Syria, its main goal in attacking the United States is to coerce the US to withdraw militarily from the Middle East (Aaron 2008). "The truth is we are not terrorists as [the West] understand it, but acting in self defense because we are being attacked in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Kashmir, the Philippines and everywhere else (Aaron 2008)," bin Laden explained in 2001. This is not to say that al Qaeda's long term goal does not include the creation of an Islamic caliphate governed by shariah, but to say that its specific goal in attacking the US is to compel the US to end military engagements in the Middle East and North Africa. "As they have evolved, jihadi ambitions have become both concrete and clear, even if their global goal is far-fetched. The first objective is to expel the United States from Iraq…the jihadis would then act to push the United States and the West out of all Muslim lands and undertake the overthrow of 'apostate rulers.' Along the way, Israel would be destroyed, as would, presumably, the Shi'a. Finally, after a period of global warfare, the Islamic caliphate would rule the world (Aaron 2008)."

Thus the overall goal of the jihadi ideology that al Qaeda co-opts is certainly the creation of a hegemonic Islamic caliphate; however, its immediate goal and the focus of its current campaign against the United States is specifically to induce the US to end military engagements in the Middle East. Thus al Qaeda's goal (and, in fact, bin Laden's stated personal motivations for developing al Qaeda) in the current phase of the war on terror is an end to US military engagement in historically Arab lands. "Bin Laden

reportedly was recruited into jihadism by others who played on his outrage over the presence of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia (Aaron 2008)." While al Qaeda's long-term goal may be hegemony of an Islamic caliphate, it would be incorrect to conflate its immediate goal of expelling the West from historically Muslim lands with a long-term ideal of creating a hegemonic Islamic state.

In an attempt to achieve this initial goal, al Qaeda has resorted to terrorism. It is the use of this tactic above all else that has created a perception in the United States and Western world that al Qaeda's goal is annihilation of Western societies; however, the use of terrorism is a tactic (albeit a horrible one) for the achievement of a clearly stated goal. "Under the strategic view, which this report adopts throughout, the logic of terrorism is relatively uncomplicated: one academic puts it neatly, arguing that terrorism is a coercive strategy which aims to generate 'a psychological effect – terror – with a view to creating a political effect that will be manifest in changes in the target's strategy. A population sufficiently frightened by the language of terrorist violence, so the argument goes, will prevent further bloodshed and panic by putting pressure on their governments to adjust their policy or strategy according to the demands of the terrorist organization (Wilkinson and Barclay 2011)." The resort to terrorism is a calculated strategy predicated on both the asymmetrical nature of the conflict between the US and al Qaeda, and al Qaeda's assumptions about the United States.

In analyzing three separate attacks on the US, I will more clearly outline al Qaeda's motivations in resorting to terrorism as a strategy. In 1998, al Qaeda coordinated and executed two simultaneous attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The attacks were organized at the behest of bin Laden, and executed by a local cell in each

country. The two bombings left 324 dead, including 12 Americans (CNN Library 2013).

Bin Laden's popularity across the Muslim world skyrocketed after these initial successful

attacks; the subsequent mishandling of the US retributive cruise missile attacks

contributed to the David-and-Goliath framing of the event (Wright 2009). These initial

attacks against US outposts in the Middle East and North Africa can be framed as a

strategy of attrition against the United States, and were predicated on al Qaeda's previous

experience with US response to terrorism during the 1993 US invasion of Somalia.

Following a particularly brutal battle in which the bodies of US servicemen were

desecrated and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in footage that was aired on

public television, the Clinton administration rapidly withdrew troops from Somalia.

Though it is unclear whether or not al Qaeda (which claimed credit for the attack)

actually participated in the incident, it certainly influenced bin Laden's perception of the

US as a 'paper tiger' that could be repulsed with the right kind of humiliating attack.

"Based on the reports we received from our brothers who participated in the jihad in

Somalia, we learned that they saw the weakness, frailty and cowardice of US troops.

Only eighteen US troops were killed. Nonetheless, they fled in the heart of darkness,

frustrated after they had caused great commotion about the New World Order (Wright

2006)."

The success of these first two attacks, and the attention that bin Laden and

Zawahiri were suddenly receiving across the Middle East, prompted the infamous attack

on the USS *Cole* in 2000. The *Cole*, a guided missile destroyer, was docked in the port of

Aden to refuel, when a small skiff piloted by al Qaeda operatives pulled up alongside and

detonated 500 pounds of explosives, blowing an enormous hole in the side of the

powerful warship and killing seventeen American soldiers (Corbin 2003). Once again, the US was unable to respond effectively to the strike, bolstering al Qaeda's reputation as a capable and effective actor on the international scene. The US response to both the embassy bombings and the Cole attack once again confirmed al Qaeda's perception of the US as a paper tiger; while it did not deal an effective blow to al Qaeda in retaliation, the US began scrambling to close its embassies in other vulnerable locales in the aftermath of the bombings (Senon 1998).

The next step in this violent escalation campaign against the United States would be the infamous 9/11 attacks. As there is fairly little insider information that exists among Western scholars as far as statements made by bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders outlining goals in the war on terror, we are left with statements bin Laden made to the press prior to 9/11 in attempting to understand the goals of this attack. While it is possible that the attack was another step in the escalating war of attrition that al Qaeda had been engaging in, it is more likely that the goal of this particular attack was provocation. "In provocation strategy, terrorists seek to goad the target government into a military response that harms civilians within the terrorist organization's home territory (Kydd and Walter 2008)."

This strategy of provocation on behalf of al Qaeda is grounded specifically in bin Laden's experience funding and fighting with the mujahideen (the predecessors of al Qaeda) in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The success of the mujahideen forces in forcing the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan left leaders of the mujahideen with the idea that bands of militants could beat even a traditional superpower on the battlefield of Afghanistan. "Within a few years, the entire Soviet empire fell to pieces—dead of the wound the

Muslims inflicted in Afghanistan, the jihadis believed (Wright 2006)." The Soviet loss in Afghanistan no doubt contributed to the collapse of the empire by 1991, giving the precursors of al Qaeda an inflated sense of their capabilities on the battlefield, and their ability to defeat a superpower by forcing them to engage in the rocky desert terrain of Afghanistan. Thus, it appeared reasonable that by forcing the United States to invade Afghanistan in retaliation for the 9/11 attacks, al Qaeda had the chance of defeating the superpower militarily, once and for all. "The United States in September 2001 was ripe for provocation, and al Qaeda appears to have understood this. The new administration of George W. Bush was known to be hawkish in its foreign policy and in its attitude toward the use of military power (Kydd and Walter 2008)."

Whether al Qaeda is pursuing a strategy of attrition or provocation, using terrorism as a strategy to further either of these goals, the basic point remains that al Qaeda is not engaged in an existential struggle with the United States bent on annihilation of our 'way of life.' Instead, al Qaeda is engaged in an asymmetrical campaign against a military superpower, and has employed terrorism as a salient strategy to achieve its goals regarding the foreign policy of the US. This classification, however, does not necessarily reduce the threat al Qaeda poses to the homeland or US interests in the Middle East when it comes to actual attacks, but merely serves to characterize the nature and parameters of the threat. Additionally, al Qaeda is not a fanatically driven actor dedicated above all else to jihadi ideology, but instead a strategically motivated actor that values power and survival above allegiance to extremist Salafi ideology.

Politburo or McDonald's: Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure

We have examined al Qaeda's motivations, ideology and goals and have determined that they were, in fact, very different than what the US perceived them to be. We will now examine the structure of al Qaeda in order to determine whether or not it was, in fact, a hierarchically structured organization dependent upon individual actors. As the HVT strategy is predicated upon this assumption, the goal here will be to examine whether or not HVT is an effective model to counter the al Qaeda threat. It is here that a brief narrative of the origins and development of the organization will be useful.

Founded in 1989, al Qaeda's roots can be traced back to an organization called the Makhtab al-Khadamat (Services Bureau), run by the radical and charismatic Palestinian cleric Abdullah Azzam (Wright 2006). Azzam had founded the organization (with the support of Pakistani security services) to support burgeoning Arab participation in the Afghan mujahideen (TRAC 2014). In 1984, Osama bin Laden (1957-2011), then a young Saudi billionaire in search of a cause, connected with Azzam in the town of Peshawar, on the Af-Pak border (TRAC 2014). By the late 1980s, the financial and ideological connections between Azzam and bin Laden were fraying. Though the USSR was losing (in a slow and costly campaign), the CIA/ISI jihadi leaders had begun to fight one another in the unforgiving Afghan terrain. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmed Shah Masoud, backed by Pakistan and the West respectively, emerged as frontrunners in this increasingly bloody struggle (Corbin 2003). Azzam threw his weight behind Masoud, while bin Laden increasingly leaned towards Hekmatyar (Corbin 2003). By 1988, bin Laden had established his own training camp in Pakistan separately of Azzam. It was also

here that bin Laden first connected with a man who would later replace him as the face of the organization, Egyptian-born Ayman al Zawahiri (Corbin 2003).

Born in 1952, Zawahiri was raised in suburb of Cairo by a middle class-family and trained to be a doctor. However, as a young man, he found himself at the epicenter of a powerful backlash against increasingly secular Middle Eastern regimes, radicalized by the loss of the Egypt-Israeli wars (Wright 2006). In the early 1980s, Zawahiri traveled to Afghanistan to witness the holy jihad being waged against the Soviet invasion; he also began to develop connections with other radical Egyptians, some of whom would later go on to assassinate Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981 (Wright 2006). Though there is no evidence directly linking him to that plot, he was picked up in the sweep conducted by the Egyptian security forces in the aftermath of the murder, and thrown into the notoriously harsh Tora prison system. "Egypt's prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution—they called it justice—was all-consuming (Wright 2006)." By 1986, Zawahiri had relocated to Pakistan; sometime between 1986 and 1988, he connected with bin Laden in Peshawar, at the hospital where he made rounds and bin Laden often lectured and visited (Wright 2006). In 1988, the two men officially joined forces. "Each man filled a need in the other. Zawahiri wanted money and contacts, which bin Laden had in abundance. Bin Laden, an idealist given to causes, sought direction; Zawahiri, a seasoned propagandist, supplied it (Wright 2006)." In 1988, when bin Laden officially convened a meeting of followers to declare the creation of al Qaeda (the base), he reiterated the importance of his Egyptian comrades in the jihad (Wright 2006).

1989 was also the year that the last Soviet troops pulled out of Afghanistan, leaving behind the perfect storm for civil war—wealthy and powerful warlords who were

backed by different foreign governments, a weak government with no popular support among the people, and a disparate nation made up of tribes loyal to one or another leader with no national agenda (Coll 2004). The two superpowers that had fought such a brutal proxy war in Afghanistan were focused, suddenly, on other theaters of the world, leaving behind billions of dollars of powerful weapons (such as the infamous Stinger missiles and RPGs) in the melee (Coll 2004).

As Afghanistan was slowly collapsing in on itself, bin Laden was becoming increasingly radicalized. Witnessing Soviet defeat had left him optimistic about the capabilities of the mujahideen, and when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, bin Laden offered the rag-tag fighting force to the Saudi government to fight Hussein's forces. The Saudi government turned him down in favor of US forces, enraging bin Laden and prompting the beginning of the Saudi-bin Laden split (Aaron 2008). "Bin Laden reportedly was recruited into jihadism by others who played on his outrage over the presence of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia (Aaron, 2008)." Bin Laden retreated to Sudan, where he reconnected with the mujahideen diaspora, men who had been unable to return home after participating in the violent campaign. By the end of 1990, bin Laden had brought many of them to Sudan, where he set about shaping an international terror organization along corporate lines, one which would have a truly global reach (Corbin 2003)." It was while in Sudan that he apparently worked to develop the structure of al Qaeda, and honed his organizational and networking skills in creating an international base of devoted jihadis motivated by various factors (personal displacement, anger at a local or national cause, frustration with the state of the Muslim world in relation to the hegemonic US) that existed at his disposal (Corbin 2003).

Bin Laden was exiled from Sudan in 1996 by the Saudi intelligence services at the behest of the US, which was concerned about bin Laden's rising star in the Islamic movement. (Corbin 2003). He returned to Afghanistan not specifically to ally with the Taliban, but because that chaotic post-civil-war country was the only place he could find sanctuary. By the time that he returned in 1996, the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan and was in the process of consolidating power. The ISI (Pakistani Intelligence Organization) backed Taliban government has ideological roots in the Deobandi fundamentalist tradition of Islam, and won the support of the populace in the aftermath of the civil war by implementing order (albeit at gunpoint) in the chaotic, violent mess of post-Soviet Afghanistan. It allied with some factions of the former mujahideen, and destroyed others, finally taking the capital of Kabul in 1996 (BBC News 2013). Taliban leader Mullah Omar agreed to host bin Laden and the top cadre of al Qaeda in Afghanistan based on a personal connection the two men had made when they met in Peshawar in the 1980s (Wright 2009). However, he insisted that bin Laden not execute terrorist attacks from Afghanistan, fearing international reprisal (BBC News 2013).

It was at this point that bin Laden and Zawahiri together turned their attention to the United States' role in shaping affairs in the Middle East. The rationale for this focus was that US support of corrupt regimes (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen) kept them in power against popular will; it was assumed that if US support were removed, the regimes would crumble. "Bin Laden and Zawahiri apparently believed that the only way to bring Islamic regimes to power was to oust them from the region the perceived backer of secular regional regimes, the United States (CRS 2011)." In 1993, bin Laden released his 'Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Lands of the Two Holy

Mosques,' in response to US using Saudi Arabia as a base to rout Iraqi forces from

Kuwait in the first Gulf War (Wright 2006). In February 1998, bin Laden worked

together with Zawahiri and other Egyptian jihadi leaders to publish another declaration

against the West, this time declaring that "obeying the order to kill the Americans and

their allies, both civilian and military, is the duty of every Muslim, providing that he is

capable of doing so, everywhere it is possible to do so…in order that their armies shall

depart from the land of Islam, crushed and unable to threaten any Muslim (Corbin

2003)."

By the time al Qaeda settled into Afghanistan in 1996, the organization was set up

under the ultimate control of bin Laden (the *emir*); under his command were the political,

military, religious, financial, security and media committees (Gunaratana and Oveg

2010). It fell somewhere between a bureaucracy and military with regards to the way

information was shared. Attacks were either proposed by subordinates (sometimes

members of the organization, sometimes freelancers) and ratified by bin Laden, or

loosely initiated by one of the top commanders. The strategy, known as "centralization of

decision and decentralization of execution," was set up in such a way that bin Laden

"decided on the targets, selected the leaders, and provided at least some of the funding.

After that, the planning of the operation and the method of attack were left to the men

who would have the responsibility of carrying it out (Wright 2006)." In the years leading

up to 9/11, there were nine attacks across the Middle East and North Africa, planned and

executed by al Qaeda central (CRS 2011).

Figure 1: al Qaeda's Structure Circa 1998 (Gunaratna 2010, 55)
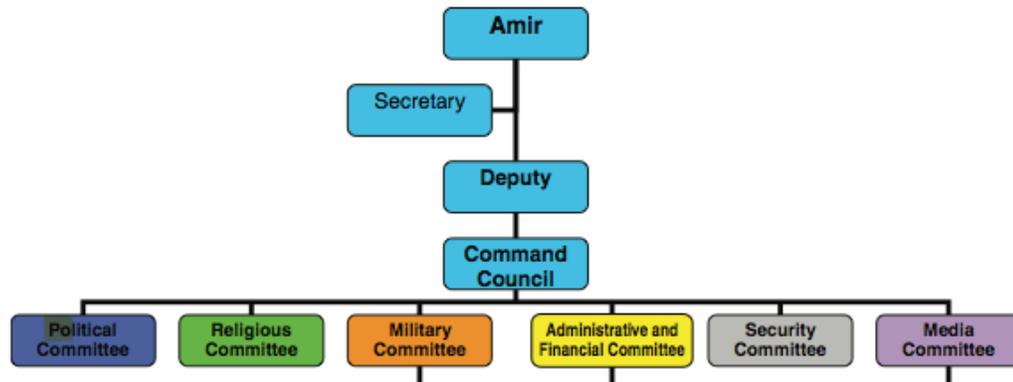
The result of these attacks was to boost the popularity of both bin Laden as a leader, but also to create a sort of cult following of al Qaeda. "Like many successful corporate chieftains, bin Laden took a keen interest in marketing and self-promotion. He granted an interview to CNN (after the producer and correspondent were blindfolded and carted to a hut about 6,000 feet up in the Afghanistan mountains) and starred in an al-Qaeda recruiting film (Page and Kiely 2011)." While bin Laden himself was personally popular, he was also careful to boost the 'brand name' of the organization above his own personal popularity, and avoided creating a 'personality cult' for fear that his own death would spell the demise of the organization. "There is no one else who could quite fill his shoes…But his removal would not demolish his own organization (Page and Kiely 2011)."

After 9/11, al Qaeda's structure changed radically. The US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 in response to the 9/11 attacks, and the toppling of the Taliban left al Qaeda without a home base. The top leadership slipped across the porous border to

Pakistan and regrouped in the semi-autonomous tribal regions; however, they were split from their base of support in Afghanistan. "[Al Qaeda] suffered losses to its physical structure, including training camps and leadership, and was hence forced to relocated from a relatively stable environment in Afghanistan to a rather fluid existence in FATA (Gunaratna and Oreg, 1043)." It is here that al Qaeda morphed from a predominantly centralized organization to the nebulous entity it is known as today. The foundations for this transition were already in place; before the attacks, there had been independent training camps in Saudi Arabia and Egypt throughout the 1990s that were only tenuously connected with al Qaeda central. But after 2001, what had once been semi-important loosely connected cells morphed into what can be classified as a global Salafi-jihadist movement; groups were springing up all over the globe that pledged allegiance to the al Qaeda 'brand' without being operationally or financially connected to the core. "Al Qaeda affiliates only began using the name al Qaeda as part of their labels in late 2003, but this soon became standard nomenclature as a way to project a powerful, homogenous movement (Corbin 2003)."

Al Qaeda today is "more like a nebula of independent entities (including loosely associated individuals) that share an ideology and cooperate with each other (Cronin 2006, 33)." Though many groups claim affiliation with al Qaeda, studies of the origins and goals of these smaller cells (al Shabaab in Somalia, for example) reveals that these local variations are often not actually connected with bin Laden's Afghani-based cell. "Although many groups boast of a connection to al Qaeda's ideology, there are often no logistical trails and thus no links for traditional intelligence methods to examine (Cronin 2006, 35)." Perhaps the best metaphor that comes to mind when attempting to articulate

the structure of the organization is that of a fast food corporation with a centralized command and funding structure, and regional outposts that cater cuisine to the local flavor, the way McDonald's might offer lobster roll to customers at its Maine branch.

Al Qaeda has outsourced the battle to a diverse group of affiliates, with varying levels of connection to al Qaeda's core ideology. "The unification of diverse groups was very much a part of al-Zawahiri's vision and the concept of globalizing jihad had moved to the forefront of the evolving al Qaeda ideology (Atwan 2008)." Some of these groups are focused on more local campaigns (i.e. a struggle against their home government), and have sought connections with al Qaeda in an attempt to gain either international attention, or funding for their cause, by allying with the transnational organization. Others are more dedicated to the view of global jihadism enumerated by Zawahiri and bin Laden, and have fit their local struggle into this expansive framework. Still others are operational terror cells, loosely connected with al Qaeda central, and focused on executing attacks. These particular cells are more like bubbles—connected at the source to al Qaeda central, existing for a certain period of time in order to execute an operation, and then disappearing. "Al Qaeda's training program is designed to create self-contained cells that operate independently of a central command (Gunaratna and Oveg, 2010)." Finally, there are 'homegrown' terrorists, motivated by al Qaeda ideology, but who possess no clear connection to al Qaeda's base, and have never received formal training.

These four different types of affiliates have different goals, different levels of connection with al Qaeda and pose different threats to Western interests in the region. Most dangerous to Western homelands are the independent cells, made up of operatives that have at least a tenuous connection to al Qaeda central (to al Zawahiri, for example)

and which have been trained in al Qaeda camps (scattered around Afghanistan, Pakistan and North Africa). An example of this first type of attack might be the Madrid bombing of 2004. "The plan for the Madrid bombing was arrived at through consultation and coordination. In keeping with the new shape of al Qaeda, the actual attacks were carried out by the local cells independently (Atwan 2008)." The attacks were facilitated and supervised by senior leadership, but carried out by lower level affiliates, namely members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (CTC Madrid Bombings 2006).

Another threat comes from the homegrown terrorists who plan and plot attacks inspired by, but not operationally or financially connected to, al Qaeda central. An example of a homegrown terrorist attack not linked with senior al Qaeda operatives would be that of the Fort Hood shootings in Texas in 2009. Major Nidal Hasan open-fired at a base, killing 13 and wounding 32. Hasan had exchanged emails with a member of al Qaeda, but there is no evidence to suggest that he had more than ideological ties with the organization (Fort Hood Shooting 2009).

The other two types of groups are more regionally focused, and pose more of a threat to Western interests and hegemonic expansion in the Middle East, North Africa, and increasingly, Asia. The Tehrik e Talibani Pakistan (TTP) and affiliated groups in Pakistan might be considered the most extreme example of the type of groups that fit a regional struggle into the al Qaeda framework, but remain more committed to al Qaeda's overall vision than the regional conflict. Al Shabaab in Somalia is an example of a regional group that has allied with al Qaeda in order to boost the amount of funding and international attention that it receives. While it has claimed it supports al Qaeda's vision of a global Islamic caliphate, al Shabaab has focused almost exclusively on targets inside

Somalia, and on changing the political framework of that country (with the notable exception of the Nairobi mall shooting in 2013). It has not been linked to any terrorist attacks outside of North Africa, and only tenuously to those outside of Somalia (Who Are al Shabaab 2013).

While Al Qaeda was indeed a hierarchically structured organization before 9/11, it was never exclusively a leadership-dependent organization. After 9/11, it became even more decentralized and more closely representative of a social movement, as new affiliates sprung up across the Middle East and North Africa. Though all these different affiliates pose varying levels of threats to US geopolitical interests and to the homeland, I have chosen to do an in-depth analysis of one particular affiliate in Pakistan in order to more closely examine the nature of al Qaeda since 2001. Again, the structure of al Qaeda will be analyzed not in and of itself, but in relation to the US perceptions of the organization; the purpose of this in depth analysis will be to set the stage for a quantitative analysis of HVT and its effectiveness on the nebulous and ideologically driven organization that al Qaeda has become.

I have chosen to focus on Pakistan for three reasons. Pakistan is where the remainder of the operatives that made up 'al Qaeda central' in the pre 9/11 years are living, giving me the chance to analyze both al Qaeda core and al Qaeda core in relation to the new affiliates. Additionally, it can be argued that the al Qaeda affiliates in Pakistan represent one of the most dangerous splinters of al Qaeda that exists today, because they have morphed into a counterinsurgency. Finally, Pakistan is the place where the US has pursued HVT most extensively, giving me the chance to analyze the effectiveness of the tactic most clearly.

Pakistan: The New Afghanistan?

While al Qaeda has succeeded in creating a number of dedicated affiliates, its expansion into Pakistan over the course of the past eight years has been particularly significant in its campaign both against the United States and in regard to its more long-term goal of gaining territory across the Middle East to create an Islamic caliphate.

Al Qaeda has always had ties to Pakistan, particularly the historically autonomous and ungovernable region of northern Pakistan (known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA). The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan was drawn arbitrarily when Pakistan won independence from Britain (and India) in 1947, and is both porous and relatively ungovernable. Al Qaeda had established bases of support in Pakistan prior to 9/11. Bin Laden had initially connected with Zawahiri in Peshawar; Pakistan had long been a haven for recruits, and the Pakistani government's support of the rise of the Taliban as a bulwark against India had put the Pakistani government and al Qaeda on the same side in the formative years of the anti-Soviet jihad. The Pakistani army's decision to side with the United States against the Taliban in 2001 motivated al Qaeda to make Pakistan a central component of its campaign, to "consider Pakistan as no less than an enemy than the Western allies of the United States (Shahzad 2011)."

As al Qaeda central moved into the largely ungovernable regions of northern Pakistan in early 2001, the Pakistani government pledged allegiance to the US in what was rapidly becoming a worldwide campaign against jihadism. It capitalized the economic deprivation that people in these areas faced by providing resources; digging wells, building schools, creating spaces for civil society (Kilcullen 2009). Already largely isolated in the semi-autonomous northern tribal regions that had never fully been

incorporated by the government after independence, this community proved a fertile recruiting ground for al Qaeda in its new homeland. Additionally, the Pakistani government's allegiance to the US, and subsequent attempts to 'clean up' these areas at the behest of the US, contributed to the radicalization. "A large number of pro-Pakistan Islamic militants who had been engaged in fighting against the Indian forces in Kashmir were put on the suspect list, and badly roughed up. This caused thousands of others to withdraw their first loyalty from Pakistan and join hands with al Qaeda (Shahzad 2011)." These militants became increasingly powerful as Pakistan became increasingly divided between those who supported this alliance with the US, and those that did not. "The tribal dissidents grew into a powerful militant group which became a permanent feature of the tribal landscape and reinforced the polarization (Shahzad 2011)." Additionally, al Qaeda began to send sheiks to Waziristan to connect with local clerics and convince them that "there was no difference between Pakistan's establishment and that of the United States. Rather, the Pakistan armed forces were worse, because although they had been born Muslims, they were supportive of the US and Israeli agenda (Shahzad 2011)." They relied on a quiet, nuanced strategy of coercion and powerful rhetoric to infiltrate the tribal structure of Northern Pakistan; and then they began to actively shape the regional dynamics.

Throughout the early 2000s, al Qaeda had focused on subsuming existing frustrations with Pakistan, and the Pakistani/US connection in regards to the war on terror, into its agenda. Now it moved to create a force dedicated to al Qaeda's broader goals, instead of merely allied with them. Al Qaeda's long-term goal in the region was to establish its own dedicated force "to bring about an Islamic revolution in Pakistan

through franchises (Shahzad 2011)." With the creation of the TTP al Qaeda created the beginning of a force completely loyal to al Qaeda, a wholly new generation of fighters who owed final allegiance to al Qaeda, not to the oppressive tribal structure or even to the Taliban. This new force was not subsumed under the existing al Qaeda structure, but conceived of and created as separate; a powerful insurgency, not an outgrowth of a nebulous terrorist organization.

Designated as neo-Taliban by Pakistani journalist Shahzad, this new force represents an aggressive extension of al Qaeda's ideals into the new theater of Pakistan. "The neo-Taliban, who evolved through the testing circumstances of the US invasion of Afghanistan, the US bombings, and state oppression of Jihadi organizations by the Pakistani government, extend from south-east Afghanistan to Karachi. They were the ones who set the stage for al Qaeda to develop its huge bases in Pakistani tribal areas to fuel the theater of war in Afghanistan (Shahzad 2011)." The TTP is at the core of this neo-Taliban (Shazad 2011), whose loyalty to al Qaeda's overall goals was absolute. "If in the future the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani military establishment were ever to plan reconciliation with the West, this body of the Neo-Taliban was there to oppose them and to remind their Afghan comrades that the Jihadi agenda did not end in Afghanistan, but was set to circle the world (Shahzad 2011)." Thus, al Qaeda's base in Pakistan was not a mere regional franchise, but a central component of al Qaeda's core strategy. Inherent in this strategy is support among the population—both in FATA and in Pakistan proper—for the TTP; as it morphed from terrorist affiliate to insurgency, support for its ultimate goals among ordinary Pakistanis became increasingly salient. While al Qaeda has always relied on the popularity of its brand name to attract new franchises and funding, this

particular affiliate is even more dependent on that local support because of the goals that it has identified—overthrow of the government and the creation of a state grounded in shariah.

Pakistan represents the only country in which al Qaeda has managed to create an insurgency. Though it has certainly managed to piggyback and contribute to insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it has managed to create a force in Pakistan that is unfailingly loyal to the goal of creation of an Islamic caliphate, while also hostile to Western interests in Pakistan and across the Middle East. The creation of not just an ideologically associated affiliate but instead an actual insurgency vying for territory represents the way the organization has shifted over the course of the past ten years, focusing specifically on conglomerating numerous local conflicts under its increasingly inclusive ideology, managing to manipulate and subsume entirely disparate groups and interests. It has morphed from a hierarchical organization to an inspirational, nebulous entity actively fomenting instability in different theaters in an attempt to overthrow secular regimes, force the US to withdraw militarily, and begin to control territory with the ultimate goal of creating a caliphate.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is a gap between US perceptions of al Qaeda as irrational, focused on annihilation of the Western-capitalist system and a hierarchically structured, individually dependent organization and what al Qaeda looks like today. Al Qaeda is a rational actor that predicates operational capacity above ideology, has clearly defined goals that are advanced by using terrorism as a tactic and that has morphed from a hierarchically structured organization into an amorphous social movement characterized

by different types of affiliates. I have focused specifically on the creation of an al-Qaeda loyal insurgency in Pakistan.

However, the claims posited here about the nature of al Qaeda and the nature of US counterterrorism policy are all based in qualitative assessments of the organization; I have not assessed the actual way in which the US strategy and al Qaeda's strategy interact with one another, on the battlefield. The fact that the US has not correctly defined al Qaeda's goals and motivations does not inherently mean that the US is 'losing' the war on terror any more than it means that al Qaeda is 'winning.' I will now attempt to test the actual effectiveness of the US' counterterror strategy, a strategy predicated on HVT, in curbing the threat posed by al Qaeda to geopolitical interests in the United States, and to the homeland specifically. Again here, I will focus the analysis on Pakistan, for the reasons laid out above.

Chapter 4: Data

Introduction

This paper has examined the assumptions the US held about the nature of al Qaeda; namely, that it was an irrational and undeterrable actor exclusively focused on annihilation of the West, and that it was organizationally structured so as to be dependent on individual actors. I have argued that the strategy of HVT developed directly out of these three assumptions. I have then examined al Qaeda, focusing specifically on its motivations, goals and organizational structure, and have argued that al Qaeda is in fact a rational actor with specific foreign policy goals, that it has chosen terrorism as a tactic to advance those goals, and that it is more of an idea-based movement than a hierarchically structured organization. I have asserted that because al Qaeda is a rational actor, brute

force is not *necessarily* the only (or most effective) strategy and that because it is not hierarchically structured or leadership dependent, HVT is not the correct counterterrorism strategy to pursue.

In this chapter, I will attempt to assess the validity of HVT using quantitative evidence. It is very possible that despite the fact that US assumptions about the nature of al Qaeda were incorrect, HVT is actually an effective strategy to pursue in responding to the threat posed by al Qaeda. While there is unfortunately not a lot of empirical evidence that exists regarding the effectiveness of HVT against terrorist organizations, there is some debate among scholars with regards to the validity of HVT in combating al Qaeda. Because the RDI program is no longer salient to US counterterrorism policy, I will focus exclusively on the drone program in my quantitative analysis.

Those advocating for HVT, namely Patrick Johnston and Anoop Sarbahi, argue that drone strikes are responsible for 'disruption' of al Qaeda and associated groups' operational capacity by reducing their ability to "operate in a cohesive, effective manner and erode their ability to exercise sovereign control over local areas (Johnston and Sarbahi 2013, 8)." Additionally, these authors posit, "drone strikes reduce terrorism by taking the group leaders and other 'high value individuals' off the battlefield, consequently hindering the terrorists ability to produce violence at a sustained rate (Johnston and Sarbahi 2013, 8)." Based on this argument, I will define success for HVT at reducing imminent attacks as reduced attacks in years following drone strikes in Pakistan, and failure as no decrease in number of al Qaeda and al Qaeda affiliate terrorist attacks.

Other scholars, namely Cronin, have asserted that HVT will be ineffective in the battle against al Qaeda, namely because "organizations that have been crippled by the killing of their leader[s] have been hierarchically structure, reflecting to some degree a cult of personality, and have lacked a viable successor. Al-Qaeda meets neither of these criteria: it has a mutable structure with a strong, even increasing, emphasis on individual cells and local initiative (Cronin 2006, 43)." Thus, there is a debate over whether or not HVT is an effective strategy against al Qaeda in the short term; the debate centers around the importance of individual actors in plotting and executing attacks, both in the short term and over the long term. Based on this argument, I will define success for the drone program at degrading al Qaeda over the long term as its ability to reduce affiliate creation, both in Pakistan but also across the Middle East and North Africa (because exporting the message to regional affiliates is at the core of al Qaeda's survival strategy), and failure as no reduction in rate of affiliate creation.

In attempting to test the effectiveness of the program in reducing imminent attacks and degrading al Qaeda over the long term (defined here as the 8 year period between 2004 and 2012), I will test two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Drones are associated with a reduction in imminent terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Hypothesis 2: Drone strikes are responsible for an overall reduction in affiliate creation between 2004 and 2012.

While there exists criticism of HVT on the grounds that it is an ineffective strategy at countering the al Qaeda threat, critics of the drone program have also asserted that the strategy is counterproductive to the overall US war effort. Critics assert that by

violating the sovereignty of other countries, drones reduce popular support of the US among key allies. "Many average Pakistanis see the drones as a humiliating insult to their sovereignty and worry about innocent civilians dying as 'collateral damage' in the strikes carried out by a distrusted foreign superpower. America's standing, which was already low in this country, has fallen further as a result of the assassination campaign (Glyn Williams 2011, 18)."

Additionally, these critics have asserted that by incurring civilian casualties, drones are radicalizing ordinary people away from the US and toward al Qaeda. Former President Jimmy Carter has enumerated this particular critique in a recent book, explaining that the drone program "creates more additional terrorists, with the fervor of killing Americans, than we would be if we were not using the drones to kill people (Gentilviso 2014)." It is important to note here that these critiques of the program do not center on its short-term effectiveness, but instead its long-term repercussions for the US in the war on terror.

In examining whether or not drones are a counterproductive strategy in the long-term, I will test two alternate hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3: Drones are associated with anti-American sentiment at the individual level.

Hypothesis 4: Anti-American sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment are related at the individual level.

In testing these hypotheses, I choose to focus exclusively on Pakistan, as I did in examining the qualitative evidence, for the same reasons as are outlined in Chapter 3. I use eight different variables to assess these hypotheses; **number of US drone strikes,**

number of Al Qaeda attacks, fatalities as a result of drone strikes, fatalities as a result of al Qaeda attacks, number of al Qaeda affiliates created annually, public perceptions of drones in Pakistan, public perceptions of the US in Pakistan and public perceptions of al Qaeda in Pakistan. I will use number of strikes and number of al Qaeda attacks (Strikes and AQ Attacks) to test Hypothesis 1. I will rely on number of drone strikes and number of affiliates created (Strikes and Affiliates) to test Hypothesis 2. I will rely on public perceptions of drones (Pro-Drone and Anti-Drone) and of the US in Pakistan (Pro-US, Anti-US) in testing Hypothesis 3. I will rely on public perceptions of the US and public perceptions of al Qaeda (Pro-AQ, Anti-AQ) in testing Hypothesis 4.The chapter proceeds is split into four sections, laying out the expected results and then the actual results for each hypothesis, and concluding with a discussion of the findings.

The results of this study suggest that drone strikes (at time t-1) are not responsible for a reduction in imminent terrorist attacks, but are instead positively associated at a statistically significant level with an increase in al Qaeda attacks (at time t). I also find that they are not associated with a decrease in the number of new al Qaeda affiliates created in this time period. I find that drones are associated at a statistically significant level with anti-American sentiment in 2010, and associated but not at a reliably significant level with anti-American sentiment in 2011 and 2012. I find that anti-American sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment are significantly associated in 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011 and 2012 but not in 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2009. I also found that while positive perceptions of the US drop significantly after 2003 (presumably in response to the Iraq invasion), positive perceptions of al Qaeda drop significantly in 2006.

Given the unexpected results of Hypotheses 1, I made the choice to conduct additional testing to determine whether the increased al Qaeda attacks (that we witnessed in Hypothesis 1) could be related to the decrease in al Qaeda's popularity in Pakistan. I found that the number of fatalities a result of al Qaeda attacks was associated at a statistically significant level with al Qaeda's decreasing popularity between 2004 and 2012. This suggests that the tit-for-tat drone-attack cycle is responsible for an increase in al Qaeda attacks, which is subsequently responsible for more civilian fatalities and a loss of popular support for al Qaeda and its affiliates in Pakistan between 2004 and 2012.

Data and Methodology

In order to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, I will rely on two different datasets; the first is data collected by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ). The non-profit organization based in London collects evidence of strikes, locations fatalities and civilian casualties based on reports of strikes by local news outlets and local contacts, and has been collecting data on strikes occurring in Pakistan since the year 2004 (Interview Jack Serle 2013). The second dataset, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), is based out of the University of Maryland's counterterrorism research center, which aggregates type, perpetrator and success or failure of global terrorist attacks since the 1980s (GTD 2014).

In testing Hypothesis 1, I will rely on data from TBIJ and the GTD to create two new variables; al Qaeda attacks and US drone strikes, both in Pakistan. I relied on GTD's definition of a successful al Qaeda attack, which defines an attack as an "intentional act of violence or threat of violence [] aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal, included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience other than the immediate victims and was outside the

precepts of International Humanitarian Law (GTD 2014)." I did not restrict my dataset to al Qaeda attacks that resulted in military or civilian casualties. I also relied on TBIJ's definition of a US drone strike, which included strikes that the Pakistani military claimed credit for, but independent sources had verified as a US drone strike (TBIJ 2014).

In testing Hypothesis 2, I will rely on this same variable to represent drone strikes, but created a new variable which I labeled 'Affiliates.' I created this variable using GTD's extensive qualitative evidence on al Qaeda affiliated organizations, but did extensive research into each organization to determine if it met my criteria for an al Qaeda affiliate. I defined an affiliate as a group that had either received operational or financial support from an existing al Qaeda cell, or had publicly declared allegiance to al Qaeda (by naming itself after al Qaeda or releasing a statement of unification via a jihadi website).

In testing Hypothesis 3, I will rely on survey data from the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. I use survey data from the years 2003-2012; depending on the year, there were either one or two surveys completed (spring or spring and fall). Surveys were conducted either face to face or via telephone among a nationwide, representative sample of adults over the age of 18 (Pew Global Research Center 2014). The variables used here are public perceptions of drones in Pakistan and public perceptions of the US in Pakistan. I examined this data at the level of the individual respondent in order to assess the relationship between the two.

In testing Hypothesis 4, I will also rely on this data, and will use the variables public perceptions of the US in Pakistan and public perceptions of al Qaeda in Pakistan. I

examine these two variables at the individual level, but also look at trends over the course of the 8-year-period based on the topline data.

In the additional findings section of my data, I rely on the two variables 'Killed' and 'Fatalities' to represent the number of people killed by US drone strikes and Al Qaeda attacks respectively; these data were culled from the TBIJ and GTD.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Drone strikes are associated with a reduction in imminent terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Expected Results: In testing this hypothesis, I have laid out our hypothesis and our null hypothesis below. In testing this hypothesis, I will run a bivariate multiple regression between drone strikes (lagged by a period of 1 year, or *t-1*) and al Qaeda attacks (at time, *t*). If the null hypothesis is true, I expect to see no statistically significant relationship between the two variables at the level of $p<.05$. In order to reject the null hypothesis, I would need to see a statistically significant relationship between the two; if a relationship exists, I expect to see a reduction in al Qaeda attacks in response to increased drone strikes, based on the theory I am testing. .

> *H0: There is no association between drone strikes and terrorist attacks in*
> *Pakistan.*
>
> *H1: There is a negative association between drone strikes and terrorist attacks in*
> *Pakistan.*

Variables: AQ_Attacks at *t*, Strikes at *t-1*

Results:

In order to test Hypothesis 1, I ran a bivariate multiple regression analysis on strikes in Pakistan with a lag time of one year and al Qaeda attacks in Pakistan. In this particular test, I defined 'imminent attack' as an attack within the period of one year after a strike.

Strikes_lag = β0 + β1AQ_Attacks + ε

Explanatory Variable: Strikes (t-1)

Response Variable: Al Qaeda Attacks (t)

Number of Observations Read	10
Number of Observations Used	9
Number of Observations with Missing Values	1

Variable	Label	DF	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	t Value	Pr > |t|
Intercept	Intercept	1	52.93028	27.23557	1.94	0.0931
Strikes_lag	Strikes	1	1.41708	0.50279	2.82	0.0258

When the model is run across the full time period of data, I find a significant and positive relationship between strikes at time (t-1) and al Qaeda attacks at time (t). The p value corresponding with the regression is .03, making the relationship a statistically significant one at $p<.05$. The results of the regression analysis suggest that increased drone strikes are associated with increased, as opposed to decreased, al Qaeda attacks in the following year. The fact that I have not accounted for the role of moderating and confounding

variables means that I cannot establish causation between the two variables; however, it is clear that drone strikes are not effectively preventing imminent al Qaeda attacks against US allies in the Middle East.

Hypothesis 2: Drone strikes are responsible for an overall reduction in affiliate creation between 2004 and 2012.

Expected Results: In testing this hypothesis, I would expect to see no association when running a chi-square test of independence between strikes and affiliate creation between 2004 and 2012 if the null hypothesis were correct; if the alternate hypothesis were true, I would expect to see a statistically significant negative association.

H0: There is no association between drone strikes and affiliate creation between 2004 and 2012

H1: There is a negative association between drone strikes and affiliate creation between 2004 and 2012.

Variables: Strikes, Affiliates

Results: In order to test Hypothesis 2, I ran a simple chi-square test of independence between the frequency of affiliate groups created per year and the number of drone strikes in Pakistan in that same year. The results of the chi-square test of independence support the null hypothesis, that there is no association between number of strikes and affiliate creation over the time period considered. Given this, I accept the null hypothesis and conclude that drones are not responsible for a reduction in affiliate creation in the time period between 2004 and 2012.

2 Variables:	Strikes and Affiliates

Simple Statistics							
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Label
Strikes	10	35.40000	42.40073	354.00000	0	128.00000	Strikes
Affiliates	10	3.40000	1.42984	34.00000	1.00000	6.00000	Affiliates

Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 10		
Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0		
	Strikes	Affiliates
Strikes Strikes	1.00000	-0.42263 0.2237
Affiliates Affiliates	-0.42263 0.2237	1.00000

There is not a statistically significant association between number of strikes and affiliate creation, suggesting that there is not a correlation between the two, and that strikes have not been responsible for a reduction in creation of Qaeda-linked affiliates.
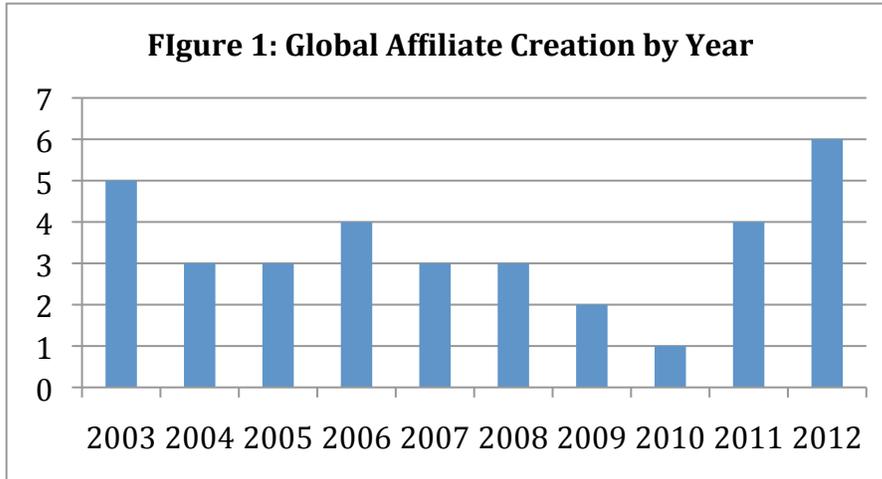
FIgure 1: Global Affiliate Creation by Year

A bar chart showing values by year: 2003: 5, 2004: 3, 2005: 3, 2006: 4, 2007: 3, 2008: 3, 2009: 2, 2010: 1, 2011: 4, 2012: 6. Y-axis ranges from 0 to 7.

Hypothesis 3: Drones are associated with anti-American sentiment at the individual level.

Expected Results: In testing this hypothesis, I would expect to see a positive association at the individual respondent level between negative sentiment regarding the US and negative sentiment regarding drones; in other words, I would expect respondents that responded negatively when asked their perception of the US to respond negatively when asked about their perceptions regarding drones.

H0: There is no association between anti-American sentiment and negative perception of drone strikes.

HA: There is a positive association between anti-American sentiment and negative perception of drone strikes at the individual level.

Variables: Drones, Anti_US

Results: Drones are associated with anti-American sentiment at the individual level.

In order to test hypothesis 3, I will rely on both descriptive and inferential statistics to explore the relationship between negative perceptions of drones and negative perceptions of the US. The questions asked to participants were stated as follows:

- Do you think these drone attacks are a very good thing, good thing, bad thing, or very bad thing? [Asked of those who had heard a lot or a little about drone attacks that target leaders of extremists groups.]

- Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States.

In each case, respondents were given the opportunity to respond on a scale, with 1 representing very good or very favorable, respectively, 2 representing good or favorable, 3 representing somewhat bad or unfavorable, and 4 representing very bad or very unfavorable. Respondents were also given the opportunity refuse to answer. In managing this data, I chose to collapse response categories for the purpose of viewing the larger trends; in doing so, I collapsed 'very good or very favorable' and 'good or favorable' into one category, and 'somewhat bad or unfavorable' and 'very bad or very unfavorable' into one category. The table below illustrates the relationship between anti-drone sentiment and anti-US sentiment for the three years in which the question was posed to respondents (2010, 2011 and 2012).

Table 1: Perceptions of Drones Among Respondents with Negative Perceptions of the US

Year	Anti-Drone	Pro-Drone	Significant
2010	95.5	4.5	Yes
2011	96	4	No
2012	95.4	4.6	No

Table 2: Perceptions of Drones Among Respondents with Positive Perceptions of the US

Year	Anti-Drone	Pro-Drone	Significant
2010	10.7	89.3	Yes
2011	94.2	5.8	No
2012	96.5	3.5	No

Relying on inferential statistics, I can only draw a conclusion from the year 2010, in which negative perceptions of drone strikes were associated with negative perceptions of the US at a statistically significant level, and positive perceptions of drones were associated with positive perceptions of the US. Relying on descriptive statistics, I can see that after 2010, the percentage of respondents that were pro-drone *whether or not* they were pro- or anti-US dropped dramatically. The results suggest that while perceptions of drones and perceptions of the US are associated, overall support of the use of drones in Pakistan is dropping, rendering the relationship between the two statistically

insignificant. Thus, drones are increasingly unpopular in Pakistan; the level to which this affects perceptions of the US becomes unclear after 2010, but data from that year suggest that there is a relationship between the two.

Hypothesis 4: Anti-American sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment are related at the individual level.

Expected Results: In testing this hypothesis, I would expect to see a positive association at the individual respondent level between negative sentiment regarding the US and positive sentiment regarding al Qaeda; in other words, I would expect respondents that responded negatively when asked their perception of the US to respond positively when asked about their perceptions regarding al Qaeda.

> *H0: There is no association between anti-American sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment at the individual level.*

> *HA: There is a statistically significant positive relationship at the individual level between anti-American sentiment and pro-al Qaeda sentiment.*

Variables: Anti_US, Pro_US

Results:

The questions asked to participants were stated as follows:

- Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States.

- Now I'm going to read a list of political leaders. For each, tell me how much confidence you have in each leader to do the right thing regarding world affairs - a lot of confidence, some confidence, not too much confidence, or no confidence at all?...Osama bin Laden. (This question

was used to represent al Qaeda sentiment until 2011, when bin Laden was killed. Respondents were then asked to rate their favorability regarding al Qaeda the organization).

Because the goal of this particular test was to determine whether anti-American sentiment is related to pro-al Qaeda sentiment (whether radicalization away from the US pushes ordinary Pakistani civilians into the arms of al Qaeda), I narrowed the focus to respondents that had negative perceptions of the US. While I found a significant association between the two variables (Anti-US and Pro-AQ) in six of the ten years I examined, I have chosen to rely here on descriptive rather than inferential statistics because they paint a clearer picture of the relationship between a positive association with the US and a negative association with al Qaeda.

Between the years 2003 and 2006, I see a majority of respondents who have negative perceptions of the US responding positively when asked about their perceptions of al Qaeda. However, after 2006, the relationship becomes less clear; in some years, a majority of respondents with negative perceptions of the US also have positive perceptions of al Qaeda, while in some years the majority also have negative perceptions of al Qaeda. In order to better understand this relationship, I turned to the topline data.

Table 3: Perceptions of Al Qaeda Among Respondents with Negative Perceptions of the US

Year	Pro-AQ	Anti-AQ	Significant	N Value
2003	64.1	35.9	Yes	933
2004	85.8	14.2	No	1021
2005	64.5	35.5	No	1040
2006	22.1	77.9	Yes	996
2007	50.1	49.4	Yes	1517
2008	51.2	48.8	No	1042
2009	25	75	No	1036
2010	21	79	Yes	1714
2011	11.9	88.1	Yes	1657
2012	17.3	82.3	Yes	1093

Figure 2: Perceptions of al Qaeda and the US by Year

83
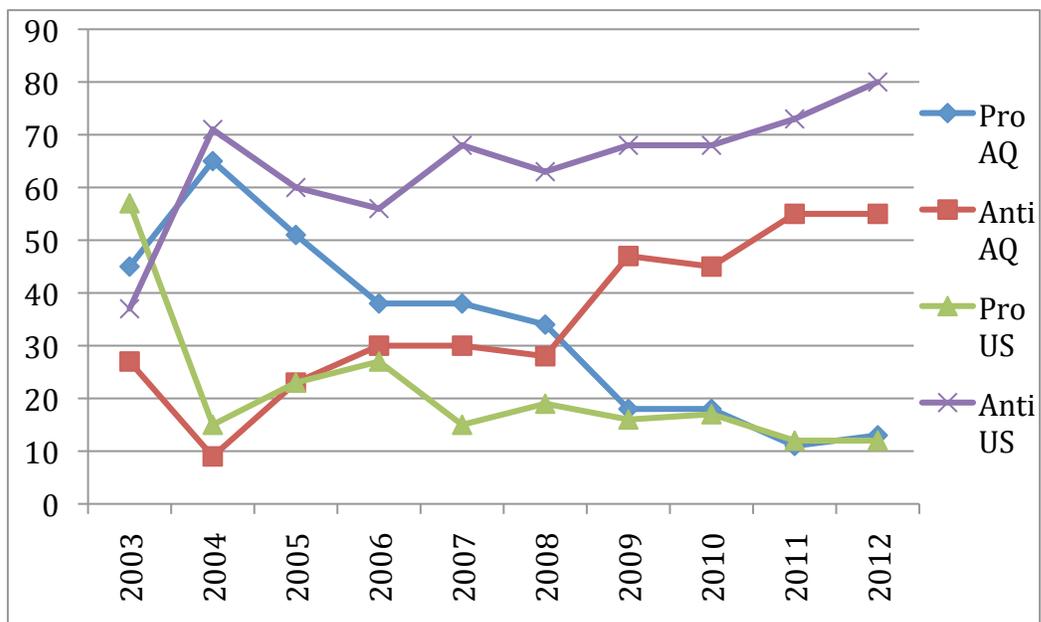
After 2006, pro-AQ sentiment begins to drop steadily; alternatively, anti-US sentiment begins to rise, and continues to rise steadily. 2006 also marks the escalation of both the drone campaign and al Qaeda attacks.

Figure 3: Al Qaeda Attacks and Strikes by Year
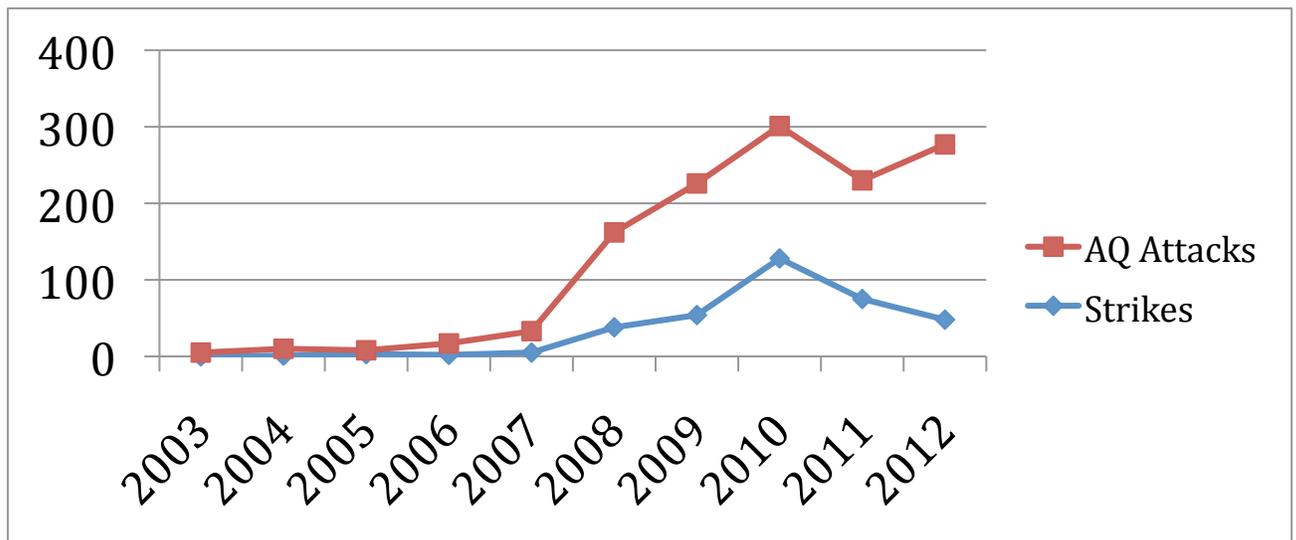
These results pose the question of what the relationship between increased attacks (partially as a result of increased strikes) is doing to perceptions of al Qaeda in Pakistan. In attempting to explain this relationship, I hypothesized that increased casualties as a result of increased al Qaeda attacks was reducing al Qaeda's support among ordinary Pakistanis.

Hypothesis 5: Increased Al Qaeda fatalities are associated with negative perceptions of al Qaeda in Pakistan.

H0: There is no relationship between fatalities due to al Qaeda attacks and negative perceptions of al Qaeda.

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between fatalities due to al Qaeda attacks and negative perceptions of al Qaeda.

Variables: Al Qaeda Attacks, Fatalities

In an attempt to further understand this relationship, I ran a bivariate multiple regression on the two variables. When the model is run across the full time period of data, I find a significant and positive relationship between Fatalities and al Qaeda attacks. The p value corresponding with the regression is .0001, making the relationship a statistically significant one at $p<.01$. The results of the regression analysis suggest that increased fatalities as a result of increased al Qaeda attacks are associated with decreased popular support for al Qaeda among ordinary Pakistanis.

2 Variables:	Anti_AQ Fatalities

Simple Statistics							
Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Label
Anti_AQ	10	34.90000	15.00704	349.00000	9.00000	55.00000	Anti AQ
Fatalities	10	438.60000	424.19838	4386	12.00000	1203	Fatalities

Pearson Correlation Coefficients, N = 10		
Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0		
	Anti_AQ	Fatalities
Anti_AQ Anti AQ	1.00000	0.88318 0.0007
Fatalities Fatalities	0.88318 0.0007	1.00000

Conclusion

I have established that drone strikes with a lag of (t-1) are associated with increased al Qaeda attacks at time (t). In the absence of confounding or mediating variables, this result suggests that drone strikes are ineffective at preventing imminent drone strikes against US allies in Pakistan. Given the limitations of the model I have relied upon, it is not possible to establish that drone strikes are causing increased al Qaeda attacks and prove that they are counterproductive to US efforts at curbing al Qaeda attacks in Pakistan; the next step in researching this relationship would be to do a study of multicollinearity in an attempt to more clearly establish causation. However, it is possible to clearly assert that drone strikes are an ineffective strategy in reducing imminent attacks.

Additionally, drone strikes are ineffective at degrading al Qaeda over the long-term by reducing the creation of new affiliates. The rate of affiliate creation is not related

to drone strikes at a statistically significant level, suggesting that drone strikes are not achieving the goal of reducing al Qaeda's operational capacity in the long-term (defined here as the nine year period between 2003 and 2012).

While I can only establish significance between perceptions of the US and perceptions of drone strikes in one year, it is clear from the descriptive statistics that drones are becoming increasingly unpopular in Pakistan. It is not clear, however, that negative perceptions of either the US or the drone campaign are related to positive perceptions of al Qaeda; the relationship between these variables is more complicated. It appears that instead of anti-US sentiment, and anti-drone sentiment radicalizing ordinary Pakistanis in the direction of al Qaeda, support for both the US and al Qaeda is falling. Based on the results from testing Hypothesis 1, and the results from testing Hypothesis 5, it is clear that the escalation of the drone campaign and subsequent escalation of al Qaeda attacks in Pakistan are undermining popular support for al Qaeda. Support for the US, however, drops significantly after 2003 (I can infer here that this is in response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq), and continues to remain low for the next 9 years. Thus, the escalating tit-for-tat campaign of attacks between the US and al Qaeda has little to no effect on perceptions of the US because they are already so low; it does, however, have a significant effect on perceptions of al Qaeda, which fall dramatically after 2006.

Chapter 5: A Way Forward?

"We have relearned since 9/11 the timeless lesson that we don't always get to fight the wars for which we're most prepared or most inclined."—**General David Petraeus, 2012**

Introduction

There was no study conducted, before a US drone fired a Hellfire missile onto Abu Ali al Harithi's truck in the Yemeni desert on the morning of November 3, 2002, leaving only scorched black earth and twisted metal remains in its place (US Kills al Qaeda Suspect in Yemen 2002). The Bush administration did not know whether this new type of strike would be effective in preventing the next terrorist attack. Drone technology had appeared on the scene at a time when the administration was grasping desperately for a way to counter a new kind of threat, acting within a paradigm that championed overreaction as policy. Once the strikes began, it was almost inevitable that they would continue. The more operatives that were killed, the more the administration became convinced that the policy was working (Shane Interview 2013). Given the potential consequences of failing to 'hit' a HVT that might execute an attack on the homeland, stopping the strikes was not an option (Schmidt 2011). The Obama administration came into office promising an overhaul of US counterterrorism strategy. Confronted with the rising and nebulous threat posed by al Qaeda central and its associated affiliates, however, its resolve crumbled (Shane Interview 2013). The Christmas Day bombing attempt of 2009 was partially responsible for creating this DefCon1 environment; cutting back on the centerpiece of the counterterror program was simply not an option (Shane Interview 2013).

Now, however, we are almost twelve years removed from that first strike in Yemen, and ten years past the beginning of the escalation campaign in Pakistan. We are not fighting the enemy we were fighting in 2001 (to some extent, we were never fighting the enemy we thought we were fighting in 2001); nor are we fighting the enemy we were fighting in 2004. Al Qaeda is an evolving force, and the war on terror is changing each day, guided both by US strategy and al Qaeda's strategy, characterized by the successes and failures that occur on both sides of this amorphous battle. It is time to pause and examine the program, to determine whether or not the use of drones as the foundation of US strategy against al Qaeda is in fact the best course of action.

In this paper, I have examined the assumptions that informed the creation of a counterterrorism strategy based on the use of brute force above coercive diplomacy. In Chapter 2, I explored the US characterization of al Qaeda as a fanatically motivated actor with the nihilistic goal of destroying the US because of its role as a democratic society predicated on the power of individual freedoms. I have explored the way the 9/11 attacks reshaped the way the US thought about the world, sending it into a tailspin guided by the idea of the one percent doctrine, convinced it was fighting an enemy almost inhuman in its single-minded dedication to annihilating 'our way of life.' Guided by a very particular perception of the enemy, the US chose to not only 'lay siege to the city,' so to speak, but also to burn the city, to attack al Qaeda as though it were an enemy inherently impossible of coercing diplomatically—both because of its aims and because of its mindset. I have also assessed the way the US conceived of al Qaeda as a hierarchically structured organization, leadership dependent organization that would be weakened both in the short term and over the long term by HVT.

I have examined the development of the two programs predicated on the presumed effectiveness of HVT; namely, the RDI Program and the drone program. I have asserted that common assumptions underlay the creation of both programs, and also that one program bled into the other when public backlash rendered it unsustainable. I have also examined the US justifications for the program; namely, that drone strikes prevent imminent attacks by removing operatives from the (worldwide) battlefield and also degrading the ability of al Qaeda to propagate its message over the long term. I have judged this particular capability as its power to create and sustain new affiliates, as this is the way the organization has managed to survive the US onslaught since 9/11.

I have also assessed the main critiques of the program: that drones are both immoral and illegal, but also that the program sets the US up for the proverbial 'winning the battle, losing the war scenario' in that while we may succeed in destroying al Qaeda's immediate operational capability, the fact that drones violate sovereignty runs the risk of alienating key allies in the war on terror. Additionally, these critics have asserted that the drones may be creating more terrorists than they are destroying, because the civilian casualties associated with strikes may radicalize ordinary citizens and make them more receptive to al Qaeda's message.

In Chapter 3, I examined al Qaeda as an entity, in relation to these perceptions. Though I have assessed its goals and motivations, as well as the way the organization has shifted and changed since inception in 1989, I have done so in relation to the US' framing of al Qaeda, and have necessarily not focused on al Qaeda in and of itself. I have established that Al Qaeda, though, is a more complicated, nuanced and nebulous actor than portrayed by the US in formulating a counterterror strategy. Al Qaeda co-opts the

use of powerful religious ideology through an excellent use of propaganda to promote its

cause of forcing the US out of the Middle East and establishing an Islamic caliphate, but

is willing to abandon any or all of this ideology in order to achieve tactical goals. Al

Qaeda opposes the US because of US involvement of the Middle East and the barriers it

throws up to al Qaeda's long-term goals, not because the US is a Christian, democratic or

capitalist society. And al Qaeda uses terrorism as a tactic in the asymmetrical conflict

with the end goal of either attrition or provocation, depending on the circumstance.

Additionally, al Qaeda's power comes not from the specific capabilities or power

of individual actors, but from its nuanced understanding of the Middle East, ability to co-

opt local and regional conflicts into its expansive ideology and ability to develop and

market 'brand' that capitalizes on frustrations of Muslims (specifically, young Muslim

men) with the current geopolitical status-quo that favors the West economically and

militarily. The universality of the message becomes clear when we examine the disparate

branches of al Qaeda; everyone from Nidal Hasan of the 2009 Fort Hood Shooting to

anti-government rebels in Somalia have claimed association to al Qaeda over the course

of the past decade. In this chapter, I also establish Pakistan as the main theater of al

Qaeda's power, both because it is the only country in which the leftover original cadre

exists, but also the only country in which al Qaeda has managed to create a

counterinsurgency force dedicated to its overall ideals.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I use quantitative evidence to assess the effectiveness of the

program as defined by the US, and the validity of the critiques leveled against the

program. I found a statistically significant positive correlation between US drone strikes

lagged by one year and al Qaeda attacks, suggesting that strikes are wholly ineffective in

preventing al Qaeda attacks. While further testing is needed to establish causation, the results suggest that in addition to being ineffective, strikes may in fact be counterproductive in that they are causing more al Qaeda attacks than they are preventing. The program has been similarly unsuccessful in reducing the long-term operational capacity of al Qaeda, defined here as the level of affiliate creation; there is no relationship between strikes and reduced affiliate creation between 2004 and 2009.

Additionally, the results indicated that drone strikes are unpopular in Pakistan, and are becoming increasingly unpopular over time; preliminary evidence suggests that negative perceptions of the strikes are associated with negative perceptions of the US. Interestingly, however, negative perceptions of the US are not necessarily associated with positive perceptions of al Qaeda, suggesting that the binary perception of citizens as either pro-US or pro-al Qaeda is overly simplistic. Instead, support for both the US *and* al Qaeda is very low in Pakistan; while the erosion of US support begins following the 2003 Iraq invasion, erosion of support for al Qaeda begins in 2006—the year that the escalation campaign between increased strikes and subsequent al Qaeda attacks begins. Further testing revealed a statistically significant relationship between fatalities from al Qaeda attacks and the declining popularity of al Qaeda. This suggests that while the drone campaign is ineffective at destroying al Qaeda's operational capacity, it is, in fact effective at destroying popular support for al Qaeda by participating in a tit-for-tat escalation campaign between strikes and attacks.

Limitations

The data used here gives us preliminary evidence to support the conclusion that drones are ineffective and possibly counterproductive, and that the cycle between US actions in

Pakistan and the al Qaeda response is undermining al Qaeda's popularity. This data does not sufficiently discount the counterfactual argument, which is to say that in the absence of drone strikes there would have been more al Qaeda attacks and creation of affiliates. While I have laid out the next steps in further clarifying the relationship between drones and al Qaeda attacks, there is no way to account for the possibility that in the absence of drone strikes, there would have been more al Qaeda attacks and a higher rate of affiliate creation. What is clear at this point is that drones are not responsible for a reduction in attacks or affiliate creation, and are possibly part of an escalation campaign that causes more al Qaeda attacks than it prevents.

Implications

US counterterrorism strategy in Pakistan since 2004 is not succeeding as defined by its own standards; we are not winning the battle, so to speak, against al Qaeda. However, given the low approval ratings of the US in Pakistan after the 2003 Iraq invasion (Pew Global Research Center 2014), the current policy also does not appear to be creating more enemies than it is destroying, at least not directly. While the strategy is certainly not winning the US any friends either in the Pakistani government or among the civilian population given the unpopularity of drones, we have yet to see direct repercussions of this unpopularity in relation to al Qaeda recruitment. Instead, the US has fallen into what can be characterized as a strategy of provocation, similar to al Qaeda's initial strategy against the US in the early 1990s discussed in Chapter 3. US attacks play into an escalation campaign of violence that leads to more fatalities as a result of al Qaeda attacks, which in turn radically reduces popular support for al Qaeda among ordinary Pakistanis.

Given that the US has up until this point failed to effectively counter al Qaeda's

masterful use of anti-Western propaganda or capitalize upon its failures to turn popular

opinion against the movement, it can be argued that any strategy that reduces al Qaeda's

support among its base in Pakistan is an effective long-term policy that should not be

abandoned. Given al Qaeda's dependence on the Pakistani population and government

for recruits and support in establishing an insurgency, the erosion of al Qaeda's support

base may be judged as a worthwhile tactic.

Yet it is here that the broader regional context of the war on terrorism and

Pakistan's role in that conflict must be considered. Pakistan, as it exists today, is a

country riddled with internal tensions over what the future should look like; rising

extremism and Salafi jihadism are clashing with those advocating increased

secularization and economic interdependence with the West (Global Edge 2014). The

threat of the neo-Taliban taking over control (either militarily or through elections) still

exists, though the government has entered into negotiations and enacted a ceasefire with

this group (Landay Interview 2013). The escalating campaign of violence between the

US and al Qaeda associated groups is likely to make the rift between those that support

the militants and those that support the US or central Pakistani government increasingly

extreme some experts fear a 'Balkanization' of the state into semi-autonomous provinces

governed by regional alliance. "Nascent democratic reforms will produce little change in

the face of opposition from an entrenched political elite and radical Islamic parties. In a

climate of continuing domestic turmoil, the Central government's control will probably

be reduced to the Punjabi heartland and the economic hub of Karachi (Chossudovsky

2012)." Additionally, Pakistan's economy has not yet recovered from the 2008 global

crash, increasing the potential for instability (Pew Global Research Center 2014). As seen by the examination of the history of al Qaeda, it is in these decentralized and locally governed areas that al Qaeda has historically been the most successful at attracting recruits and establishing a base of support. Thus, contributing to this increasingly destabilized climate by participating in a retaliatory campaign of violence is one of the most dangerous strategies the US could pursue at this point.

Instead of relying on drones as the centerpiece of the US battle against al Qaeda, the US needs to develop a new way to counter al Qaeda. We have identified al Qaeda as an inherently rational actor, one that predicates operational capacity above ideology and whose power lies in a skillful and extensive use of propaganda to spread its message, not in the strength of skillful individual operatives. Given this, there are two broad strategies that the US should pursue.

Coercive Diplomacy

Given that al Qaeda is a rational actor with specific goals, the US should abandon its policy of brute force in countering the broader al Qaeda threat. Instead of seeking to eliminate al Qaeda from the global battlefield, the US should instead focus on first identifying the parameters of the threat, distinguishing between al Qaeda core in Pakistan and the different types of associates that currently exist, as well as the different levels of threats that these associates pose (i.e., which pose a threat to the homeland and which pose a threat to US geostrategic interests). It should employ the help of key regional allies in distinguishing between branches (i.e. Jordan, Egypt, Yemen and Pakistan), and should also work to improve relations with European countries that have experience fighting

counterterrorism campaigns in the amorphous space between law enforcement and traditional war.

The second step in this campaign should be to identify which of these groups can be 'split' from the overall al Qaeda coalition by falling back on a traditional carrot-and-stick method of coercive diplomacy. The majority of al Qaeda affiliates have at least short-term local goals that have been subsumed under the utopian Salafi jihadi mentality; it is on the grounds of these more narrow goals that the US might be able to engage these groups diplomatically—either directly, or with the help of allies. "Western countries face an extremely diverse threat picture, with multiple adversaries who oppose each other's interests as well as those of the West. Lumping together all the terrorist or extremist groups and all insurgent or militia organizations under the undifferentiated concept of a War on Terrorism makes an already difficult challenge substantially harder than it needs to be (Kilcullen 2009)."

Rather than fighting al Qaeda as a monolith in every corner of the world where Sunni militants stand up with a black flag and declare allegiance to an Islamic caliphate, the US needs to specifically delineate which groups are focused on a more local conflict and associating with al Qaeda in hopes of attracting funding and attention versus those that are actually terrorist cells intent on attacking the US at home or abroad (Shahzad 2011). "There is more hope of ending such groups through traditional methods if they are dealt with using traditional tools, even including, on a case by case basis, concessions or negotiations with specific local elements that may have negotiable or justifiable terms (Kilcullen 2009." It is these groups that may be appeased by a combination of negotiations and threats of force—similar to the model of British negotiations with the

IRA (Coll 1994). Additionally, the US needs to be willing to make concessions; there is no reason that the US government needs to oppose the application of shariah to govern certain regions inherently; it should not be the goal of the US to counter the rise of a fundamentalist interpretation of the Qu'ran in every corner of the world. Rather, our objective should be to combat the rise of militant Salafi jihadism that relies on terrorism as a tactic to advance its goals.

The ultimate goal of this strategy would be to tease out these less dedicated affiliates from under the al Qaeda umbrella, and in doing so, reduce al Qaeda's capacity to execute attacks from different theaters around the world. Reducing the number of theaters in which al Qaeda is prevalent, and reducing its global reach would inherently reduce the threat that it poses to both geostrategic interests and to the homeland itself.

Al Qaeda as a Movement

In addition to countering the threat posed by existing affiliates, the US also needs to go on the offensive in countering the rise of new affiliates; implicit in this strategy is the notion that al Qaeda's power does not come from the skill-set and power of individual leaders, but from its masterful adaptation of Salafi jihadism into a narrative appealing to disparate groups around the Middle East. This strategy is predicated on an understanding of al Qaeda as a social and ideological movement, not as a leadership-dependent hierarchically structured organization.

The first step to degrade al Qaeda's global reach is by engaging it in the arena in which it has dominated the US since 1989: global propaganda. US efforts to counter al Qaeda's message have heretofore been unsuccessful for two main reasons. First, the US has attempted to counter al Qaeda's propaganda with pro-Western and pro-US rhetoric

(Schmidt 2011). The results of this study suggest that because there is not necessarily a causal relationship between being pro-al Qaeda and anti-US, or the alternative, the most effective way to combat al Qaeda's propaganda campaign is to focus exclusively on undermining al Qaeda, instead of focusing on increasing support for the US. "There is nothing so effective at engendering public revulsion as images of murdered and maimed victims…lying on the ground as the result of a terrorist attack…Currently, however, those images are dominated by would-be family members in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Abu Ghraib, and Guantanamo Bay (Cronin 2003, 28)." We can see the validity of this strategy when we examine the way that Zawahiri publicly distanced al Qaeda central from ISIS (a Syrian affiliate) in response to that group's flagrant use of brutality against civilians and other affiliates (Al Qaeda Splits from ISIS 2014). "ISIS has drawn the ire of many for imposing harsh Islamic strictures, including bans on music and smoking, detaining and torturing rebels and civilians, and seeking to consolidate its power in areas under its control…Al-Qaeda's statement criticized ISIS's tactics, saying jihadists should "be part of the nation" and avoid "any action that could lead to the oppression of jihadists, Muslims or non-Muslims (AFP 2013)." As we have established that ordinary Muslim publics respond negatively to high civilian casualty rates across the Middle East, it is time for the US to begin exploiting this via a strategically designed counter-propaganda campaign via the Internet, through respected Middle Eastern news and social media outlets.

While part of the problem is that countering al Qaeda's religiously infused ideology will require the aid of credible and respected Muslim *imams* across the Middle East, which the US does not have access to, another part of the problem is that the

government has not allocated time or funding for this particular piece of the war on terror. "Fledgling efforts at strategically important US embassies in the Muslim world also faced an uphill fight to change the financing priorities for public diplomacy that in many ways still seem locked in the Cold War (Schmidt 2011)." The US government, in short, has not proven adept at undermining the media strategy of al Qaeda.

In order to do so, the US needs to reallocate responsibility for the propaganda campaign away from the public sector and into the private sector. "Countering [al Qaeda's] message in serious ways, not through outdated and stilted vehicles of government websites and official statements but through sophisticated alternative sites and images attractive to a new generation, is an urgent priority (Cronin 2003, 44)." The traditionally organized State Department bureaucracy is not set up in a way to effectively counter al Qaeda's aggressive use of social media. However, there are numerous private sector organizations that are much more adept at marketing and advertising through social media. The fact that many of these organizations are located in the Arab world makes cooperating with regional allies that much more important to this part of the strategy. Instead of focusing on a propaganda effort to try to boost US support across the Middle East through the neo-conservative democracy promotion narrative, which may be a losing battle in the current climate, the US needs to address the areas where al Qaeda is losing the battle for hearts and minds because of its policies that kill Muslim civilians.

Room for HVT?

Finally, the US needs to acknowledge that while al Qaeda is a rational actor with clearly defined goals, al Qaeda core in Pakistan is comprised of a group of hardened ideologues who are dedicated to the goal of the creation of a hegemonic Islamic caliphate

that would rival the West. While rational and strategically motivated, these actors are dedicated to the creation of a caliphate; given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, they will likely continue to resort to terror in both attrition and provocation campaigns against the US and associated governments. There may be room here for the use of drones to target specific individuals who have either executed successful terrorist attacks in the past or are in the process of planning new attacks; however, the standard of 'imminence' here needs to be much more strictly defined. The US government should not be pursuing unilateral strikes against anyone it judges as posing a threat to US interests.

It is here that there are two things the US can do, if it chooses to rely on drones as a tactic. First, it can work hand-in-glove with the governments of the states in which these individuals reside, in order to reduce the perception of the US as aggressively violating sovereignty. Second, it should develop a 'drone court' which could function along the lines of a FISA court. The goal of this court would be to define and then enforce a stricter definition of 'imminent attack.' The use of drones in this case should not be brute force, but instead should focus on deterrence of other actors in allying with hard line al Qaeda operatives. In order to employ deterrence, the drone court should release justification for each of these high level strikes justifications that would be accessible both to US citizens and to the publics of the countries in which drones are being used.

Implicit in this strategy is the notion that the US should abandon drones as a counterinsurgency strategy; though there has not been clear blowback among Pakistani civilians in response to this campaign, the results are murky given existing negative

perceptions of the US in Pakistan. It would be a mistake to pursue this strategy in a country where the US maintains favorable ratings (i.e. India).

Test Case

As I have relied on Pakistan to examine the US' ineffective counterterrorism strategy, I will use Pakistan as an example to illustrate the strategy I have laid out above. In Pakistan, the US first needs to work with the Pakistani government in order to identify the threads of al Qaeda and the neo-Taliban, and assess the motivations and goals of each of these actors separately. The Pakistani government has already begun to pursue this strategy, opening negotiations with the TTP in 2013; a ceasefire was at the foundation of these negotiations, which are still in flux (Landay Interview 2013). Second, the US needs to capitalize upon al Qaeda's rapidly declining popularity by working with private and public social media outlets to broadcast the civilian casualties of al Qaeda attacks, and de-legitimize the organization in the hopes of preventing the creation of new affiliates in Pakistan. Finally, the US needs to immediately cease using drones as a counterinsurgency strategy, and restrict their use to targeting top-level commanders (i.e. Ayman al Zawahiri); when it does so, it should publicly acknowledge the strike (or allow the Pakistani government to do so) and release a public justification of the attack. Additionally, it needs to take *absolutely every* precaution possible to prevent civilians from becoming collateral damage, even if that means spending weeks or months tracking a high level target in an attempt to attack when the target is in isolation.

Conclusion

The morning of 9/11 inaugurated a new era for the United States, and posed a challenge to its domestic security not seen before or since. It prompted the US to engage

in lengthy, costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and led to the ad hoc creation of two programs that violate international norms of human rights and, arguably, both domestic and international law. While the conflict has been painted by many on both sides as an epic clash of two inherently different cultures—one defined by Christianity and democracy and the other by Islam and autocracy—the narrative of this particular campaign is in fact far more nuanced. We are witnessing an inherently asymmetrical battle between a world hegemon and military monolith and a nebulous transnational independent actor. While both sides have sought to capitalize on ideology for the purposes of mobilizing a support base (i.e. a fight for the survival of the liberal democratic model or a fight to protect Islam from 'infidels'), it is at the core a battle for power, territory and resources in one of the world's most complex and contradictory regions, influenced both by the deleterious effects of colonialism and the sweeping changes that rapid globalization has brought.

Thus, it is an asymmetric conflict; but not necessarily in the traditional notion of asymmetrical as a campaign defined by the diametric lack of military power of one side in comparison with the other. Instead, it is inherently asymmetric in the way that the two different sides have chosen to engage one another; there is no agreed upon battlefield, much less a definition of wins and losses, successes or failures. It is a conflict defined at the core by different notions of what the future should look like; unless some sort of concessions are made on both sides, this is destined to be a long and costly war for both sides.

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