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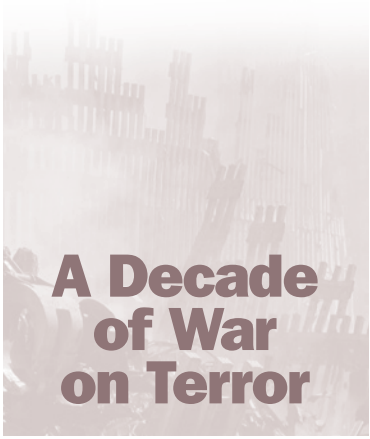

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A Free Pass, But At What Cost?

Elizabeth J.C. Cutler

Half a century ago, President Eisenhower predicted the future. Well, he didn't predict the future exactly, but his parting words upon leaving the White House now seem eerie in light of the nation's fiscal situation and many of the policies that got us here. In his farewell address in early 1961 Eisenhower warned,

> "... in the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted."[1]

This statement has become a bit of a harbinger of what was to come decades later. Indeed, one of the most lasting effects of the attacks of September 11, 2001 is the tremendous increase in defense spending and two ensuing challenges: its contribution to the national fiscal crisis as well as a problematic mission creep between defense and development.

Understandably, from a financial standpoint, much of the **[Cont'd, Page 17]**

Geopolitics after 9/11: Did Iran Benefit?

By Stephan de Vries *and* Paul Aarts

Introduction

"Did 9/11 really change the world?" (Phillips, 2011). This question has been posed many times since the attacks on US soil in 2001. Some believe that it was "the 21st century defining moment" (Henley, 2011) or "the watershed by which we would forever divide world history: before, and after, 9/11" (Ibid). Others oppose such "overrated looking" statements and provide a counterweight by claiming that the Al Qaeda attacks "did not change the world forever" (Ibid). Many of the events that are believed to be geopolitical consequences of 9/11, they say, may have happened regardless. As counterfactual history is impossible to prove, such perspectives provide us with little scientific guidance when aiming to analyze the plausible impact of historical events.[1] If instead we accept the notion that "the world" as such — meaning the macro-systemic features of world affairs — was not changed by 9/11, but nevertheless, that those events turned the world into "a different place" (Ibid), it becomes possible to analyze the impact of the attacks on different regions of the world separately. By making such an assumption, we enable ourselves to pose specific questions regarding the consequences of 9/11, and the — perhaps even **[Cont'd, Page 14]**

A Decade on: 'The War on Terror' and Indonesia's Militant Islamist Groups

By Paul J. Carnegie

Introduction

In the late 1990s, Indonesia — the world's most populous Muslim nation — began a transition to democracy. At the time, many commentators expressed concern about the risks of Islamist ascendancy in the wake of Suharto's downfall. Initially, the archipelago witnessed a proliferation of Islamist paramilitary groups, but many of the concerns have proved to be largely unfounded.[1] In fact, today Indonesia accommodates a diverse amount of Islamic political expression within the framework of its democratic electoral system. However, the scenario raises some questions. First, how did Indonesia contain its paramilitary threat? And second, what lessons, if any, can we draw from this? In order to attempt to answer these questions, the best approach is to take a more detailed look at the composition of these groups and the responses to them.

Historical legacies

The first thing to note is that Indonesia's paramilitary groups constitute a fairly numerous and mixed assortment, which is of no great surprise given the size, diversity and history of the archipelago. They include the likes of *Laskar Pembela Islam* (LPI - Defenders of Islam Army), which operates as the paramilitary wing of the hardline *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI - Islamic Defender Front). There is also *Laskar Jihad* (LJ - Army of Jihad), a militant offshoot of *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* (FKAWJ - Forum for Followers of the Sunna and the Community of the Prophet). Similarly, *Laskar Mujahidin Indonesia* (LMI - Indonesian Mujahidin Militia) equates to a paramilitary wing of *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI - Indonesian Mujahidin Assembly). Somewhat differently, both *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI - Islamic Congregation) and *Angkatan Mujahideen Islam Nusantara* (AMIN - Nusantara Islamic Jihad Forces) have roots in the extremist *Darul Islam* movement (DI - Abode of Islam). To get a fuller picture of this contemporary proliferation it is worth noting that the antecedents of many of these groups trace their lineage back to the Islamic militias that fought against Dutch colonial rule, namely DI and *Tentara Islam Indonesia* (TII - Indonesian Islamic Army).[2]

Contemporary Variants

Of course, a significant difference between now and then is the influx of *hadrami* (Indonesians of Middle Eastern descent), who provided influential tutelage to aspiring local militants. Some of these new arrivals fought with the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan in the late 1980s and brought with them years of combat experience. JI also has links to Al Qaeda networks across Southeast Asia and it now operates more like a regional franchise. JI's objectives center upon the institution of *darul Islam nusantara* (an archipelagic Islamic state). In fact, its capacity to conduct *jihadist* operations implicated it in the 2002 bombings in Bali and Sulawesi, the 2003 Jakarta Marriott Hotel bombing, and the 2004 suicide bombings at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.[3] Over the past decade, the fact that Indonesia's counter-terrorism squad, *Detasemen Khusus 88* (Special Detachment 88 — more commonly known as *Densus 88*), has been responsible for the incarceration or death of many of JI's leading figures reinforces this prognosis.[4] Most significantly, the ostensible spiritual head of JI, the radical cleric and MMI leader Abu Bakar Bashir is now serving jail time.[5]

By contrast, LPI and LJ both publicly deny any links with Al Qaeda. They claim instead to focus on domestic issues that go some way to explaining their involvement in internecine conflict. In particular, LJ views itself very much as the guardian and protector of Muslims in the Moluccas and as such remains an active presence there. Despite denials, suspicion persists that both LPI and LJ enjoy indirect support from orthodox Islamic organizations, namely *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII – Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication) and *Komite Indonesia Untuk Solidaritas dengan Dunia Islam* (KISDI - Indonesian Committee for Solidarity of the Islamic World).[6] The existence of sympathetic factions in the Armed Forces and high levels of corruption both play roles in allowing militant groups to maintain a toehold.[7] Localized sectarian conflicts also provide fertile recruiting grounds for organizations like JI.

Domestic attitudes

Nevertheless, and in spite of the extreme threat posed by militant Islamist groups, mainstream Indonesian society continues to marginalize them, especially if recent election results are anything to go by.[8] Similarly, renewed recruitment attempts in Aceh after the 2004 tsunami by hardline organizations like MMI, LMI, FPI and AMIN under the guise of providing humanitarian aid and religious outreach (*dakwah*) were met with little community support. The fact that the tsunami simply wiped out many of their previous support networks in the region further thwarted their efforts.

Still, given Indonesia's authoritarian past, dealing with its militant threat has been a sensitive political issue domestically. Raising the specter of overt military/police intrusion does not play out well amongst Indonesians. The notorious *UU Anti-Subversi 1963* (Anti-Subversion Laws) are still fresh

in the memories of many Indonesians, and impinging on the democratic freedoms fought for by a moderate Islamic majority runs the risk of antagonizing or polarizing segments of the population.[9] There is an understandable and palpable aversion towards the re-institution of such laws.

Conclusion

That said, in the wider context of the 'War on Terror' and growing international pressure for more definitive action against extremism, the Indonesian Parliament issued the anti-terrorism Decrees No.1 and No.2/2002 in October 2002. This move even received widespread domestic support and gave *Badan Intelijens Negara* (BIN—the National Intelligence Agency) greater powers to identify suspects. It certainly allowed *Densus 88* to make some major inroads, as mentioned. Economic aid incentives and logistical assistance from the US Department of State's Anti-Terrorist Assistance program and also from Australia have been instrumental in these inroads. The TNI (Indonesian Armed Forces) and Indonesian National Police Force especially *Densus 88* have been major beneficiaries, receiving large amounts of equipment, technical support and training to take on the terrorist threat. This even included the construction of multimillion-dollar training facility, which was partly funded by Australia.

The evolution of the 'War on Terror' is a testament to the power of marketing...embodying a slogan that provides the US government with unprecedented legitimacy in intervening around the world.

Since 2004 the Indonesian government under the willing guidance of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is now better positioned to coordinate its anti-terrorist efforts to a much greater extent with Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines (especially important in combatting the pan-regional threat posed by JI and securing the Malacca Straits) and Australia. A recent presidential directive in March 2010 also authorized a new National Agency for Handling Terrorism (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme*), which seems another step in the right direction for coordinating official efforts on a transnational and regional basis. In fact, the last decade has brought Indonesia and Australia (an important regional partner of the US) closer together on these matters.

While noting these developments, we must not be overly optimistic. The promotion of *salafi jihadi* ideology may be limited to the fringes but it continues to metastasize in new ways amongst disaffected factions of different radical groups and prey on impressionable youths. Lax money transfer regulation and porous borders that are difficult to patrol given the archipelago's geography also facilitate the movement of funds and people to vulnerable areas. There is no denying some notable success, but a substantial threat remains and vigilance is at a premium. The main thing the Indonesian experience seems to highlight is that there are no simple categorizations, but rather matters of degree. Continued commitment is required to yield meaningful containment over time.

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Endnotes

1 It is wholly inappropriate to confuse Islamism with Islam as a religion. The former refers to an ideological interaction between politics and religion specifically concerned with the modern politicization of Islamic cultural concepts and symbols in a highly orthodox manner for radical ends. Another important distinction to note here is that although often used inaccurately and interchangeably with Islamism, 'political Islam' encompasses a considerably more complex plurality of expression and representation, especially in Indonesia.

2 Both DI and TII formed out of Islamic militias who opposed the Dutch in Java as part of the long anti-colonial struggle for independence. In the aftermath of independence, Sukarno banned both DI and TII but their cadre continued to fight for an Islamic State (NII - Negara Islam Indonesia) under the leadership of S.M. Kartosuwiryo between 1948 and 1963. Numbers peaked in 1957 with an estimated 13,000, primarily in West Java, South Sulawesi and Aceh. They eventually suffered defeat after a concerted campaign by Indonesian armed forces. This ended in the capture and execution of Kartosuwiryo in 1962 but their memory lived on in the aforementioned regions.

3 The most recent bombings in Jakarta in 2009, however, are more likely the work of a JI splinter group.

4 As part of the Indonesian National Police Force, *Densus 88* formed in the aftermath of the 2002 Bali bombings and it is funded by the both the US and Australia.

5 Bashir received a 15-year jail sentence in 2011 for his support of a jihadi training camp in Aceh.

6 DDII and KISDI remain major promoters of orthodox Islamic values in Indonesia, receiving substantial funding from the Middle East especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of Saudi charity dollars sent to Indonesia are diverted to suspect groups. See Thayer, C. (2008) *Radical Islam and Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, in Terence Chong (ed.), *Globalization and Its Counter-Forces in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

7 See Hasan, N. (2006). Laskar Jihad: Islam, militancy, and the quest for identity in post-New Order Indonesia. *Studies on Southeast Asia*. No. 40. Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University and Roosa, J. (2003). Brawling, Bombing and Backing: The Security Forces as a source of insecurity. *Inside Indonesia*. 73, pp. 10-11.

8 The results of the 1999 election clearly indicated that Indonesians *en masse* were in favour of a democratic polity over an Islamic state. Moreover, the rise of the socially conservative Islamic *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party), in particular, coincided with the unraveling of

the Megawati presidency. Its vote may have increased significantly from 1.5 percent in 1999 to 7.4 percent in 2004 but a more realistic explanation of PKS's electoral appeal in is its newness and relatively untainted image. PKS comes across as a "clean" Islamic party. Indeed, much of its electoral success in 2004 was due to an anti-corruption rather than a pro-Shari'a platform. The fact that all the Islamic parties combined polled less than 42 percent of the vote in 1999 and there was no significant increase in 2004 seems to reinforce this view. This was further affirmed in a resounding electoral triumph by the secular *Partai Demokrat* (PD - Democratic Party) in 2009.

9 These former laws gave almost unlimited power to the armed forces to suppress dissent with little or no legal accountability.

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Orwellian Lexicons: The Uses and Abuses of the "War" on Terror

By Brenda Ong Bi Hui

People condemn the post-9/11 policies of authorities for a host of reasons, some which include the curtailing of civil liberties for national security, the financial toll of the war on the economy, and the overall inefficacy of it. Despite this, a successful strategy emerged in the marketing of the response to the attacks as a "war" on terror: the United States government and the security establishment used the rhetoric of war to justify responses that would otherwise be condemned in "peacetime" and enshrined them in legislation, thereby strengthening state power. It is worth probing why the war rhetoric holds such influence in America.

The evolution of the "War on Terror" is a testament to power of marketing, emerging from a domestic national security response to a global counterterrorism campaign, embodying a slogan that provides the US government with unprecedented legitimacy in intervening around the world. It is therefore important to examine the uses of the war rhetoric, its effects on the structure of the US government and its expanding scope, as well as *why* the rhetoric holds such power.

The focus of the American national security strategy still centers itself on countering terrorist threats, and counterterrorism efforts still rank high on the list of priorities in the latest National Security Strategy (2010).[1] As a consequence, the US government is bringing a myriad of traditionally separate agencies under the same umbrella of counterterrorism, advocating a "Whole of Government" approach in its counterterrorism strategy. The problem is that the impetus now falls on each agency to demonstrate that its function directly contributes to counterterrorism in order to secure funding, which leads to the diversion of most agency resources towards researching and investing in counterterrorism strategies. The government has also been able to extend its scope of influence both within and outside its borders by passing pieces of legislation such as the Patriot Act, and those that have supported "indefinite detention" in prisons like Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. Most likely, the government would not have passed these laws so expediently without the climate of fear that the attacks helped foster.

A Bigger Brother?

The dystopian scenario in Orwell's 1984 might seem extreme, but Orwell's message is worth repeating: govern-

ments that manage to engender a constant threat of external enemies and uncertainty about the future can succeed at getting their citizens to consensually cede their liberties, and justify escalating surveillance and repression. The lexicon of war employed in this rhetoric here is imperative, especially the use of the word "war". And this is because the associations of the term allow extraordinary measures to be carried out in its name.

Meanwhile, the government is able to distract the population from other issues that might be expensive to implement. These policies tend to center around education or healthcare reform, or economic improvements such as adjusting tax rates and addressing endemic poverty; these are issues that require a concerted, large-scale cross agency mobilization, but whose effects are not immediately discernable within the four-year electoral window. Thus being too focused on counterterrorism diverts precious resources from other internal social problems that need attention. The recent *2011 National Counterterrorism Strategy* reads much like it was written ten years ago, and despite other terrorist threats and a wane in Al-Qaeda's influence, the entire strategy—save for one small end paragraph—is directed towards tackling the threat of Al-Qaeda.[2] The national security problems the US faces, however, are not just terrorism-related, and in fact many commentators assert that the spillover effects of the Mexican drug wars pose a greater threat.[3]

Rise of the security-industrial complex

It is not simply that the government profits from the peddling of fear. Big Industry has also helped propagate and manipulate the general unease of the population to rake in profits. The 2003 Iraq invasion was partly aided by the Bush Administration's skillful efforts at aggrandizing the war as an attempt to remove an unstable despot for the good of the Iraqi people, and saw an influx of private military firms replace conventional military forces. Such a development is in part most likely due to democratic pressures, more specifically the concern that the American population would revolt when the blood count climbed. The expansion of the military-industrial complex has expanded to envelop the security-industrial complex, and a myriad of analysts, weapons suppliers, mercenaries and other conflict-related professions have sprung up to aid in war efforts (Hughes, 2007). The most profitable private security contractor in Iraq, Blackwater, had contracts estimated at $300 million;[4] the military-to-private contractor ratio currently stands at 1:1.25.[5] With regard to investments in conflict, Solomon Hughes (2007) also documents in *War on Terror, Inc.*, how investors were told that the war on terror "offer[ed] substantial promise for homeland security investment" by managers of a fund called Paladin Capital. The managers aimed at raising $300 million a year, and they projected that the US government would spend an additional $60 billion on anti-terrorism, mostly directed at ramping up security measures to counter aircraft hijacking (USCENTCOM, 1).[6]

Dangers incipient to democracy: Tocqueville and the liberty-equality conflict

As Alexis de Tocqueville notes in *Democracy in America* (1840, 2002 edition), American democracy is unique in its love for equality, which can lead to a 'disdain for forms' or rules, and a tendency for democratic peoples to accord little importance to individual rights in turn. "Forms excite their scorn and often their hatred"[7] (669), writes Tocqueville, because of the impatient nature of democratic individuals, who want instant gratification, and pursue their wants with great impulsiveness. They hold this temperament in their political engagement as well, and oppose the rules and regulations that impede the attainment of their goals. Consequently, if they neglect the establishment of more 'forms' as the sovereign's power grows, their ability to exercise their will lessens. Tocqueville also argues that citizens value and respect certain rights if they are important to them and they exercise these rights frequently. Yet, in democracies "the individual rights that are encountered… are ordinarily of little importance, very recent, and quite unstable" (Ibid, 2002: 670). This is because the constitution of democratic America might have elements that are legacies of their English colonists and hence irrelevant to their context, as well as constantly being subject to change. As a result, "this makes one sacrifice them often without difficulty and violate them almost always without remorse"(Ibid, 2002: 670). From this propensity to disregard rules and individual rights, the individual liberty of the citizen becomes increasingly diminished in relation to the extension of state power.

It is thus that Tocqueville warns against the exercise, and possibly, the rhetoric of war:

> "It is therefore principally in war that peoples feel the desire and often the need to increase the prerogatives of the central power. All geniuses of war love centralization, which increases their strength, and all centralizing geniuses love war, which obliges nations to draw tight all powers in the hands of the state. Thus the democratic tendency that brings men constantly to multiply the privileges of the state and to restrict the rights of particular persons is much more rapid and more continuous in democratic peoples subject by their position to great and frequent wars, and whose existence can often be put in peril, than in all others... A people is therefore never so disposed to increase the prerogatives of the central power as on emerging from a long and bloody revolution… The taste for public tranquility then becomes a blind passion, and citizens are subject to being overcome with a very disordered love for order" (670).

The language of war heightens the number of "great and frequent wars" and poses enough of a psychological threat to the extent that many Americans are willing to cede their most basic freedoms to the state in exchange for the promised "public tranquility" and protection from the enemy.

A War Culture

Another reason why the war rhetoric is especially salient in the US might be its war culture. The US media glorifies war and it tends to focus on individual heroics that detract from the bloodiness of the overall violence and cause; post-9/11 reports on the War on Terror focus heavily on statistics, casualties and terrorists caught.[8] Critics of US war films have also pointed out how films like *Top Gun* and *United 93* have helped perpetuate militarism in American culture—in suggesting that war can be used to further a glorious end. There is also the surreptitious depiction of foreign cultures as generally hostile to an American way of life, bringing to mind associations of an unenlightened "Other" (Doherty, 1993; Auster and Leonard Quart, 1988).[9] One criticism leveled at the award-winning film *The Hurt Locker* is that it caricatures Iraqis as either being helpless ignorant or complicit in violence, while creating sympathy for US soldiers who carry out bombings and attacks on the population.[10] It is not surprising that both films and statistics serve as a recruiting tool for the military and help drum up support for military excursions, and reinforce the influence of the war rhetoric.

Whither the "War" on Terrorism?

The Obama Administration actively discourages the use of the phrase 'War on Terror.' Part of the rationale behind this is to repair America's image in the Islamic world. However, the problem of curtailed liberties still exists, and they are difficult to reclaim once lost. Even so, while the Obama Administration's attempt to distance itself from labeling its counterterrorism efforts as a 'war' might seem like diplomatic vernacular, it nevertheless marks an important step in moving away from an atmosphere of fear to allow policymakers (and the population) to respond rationally to an endemic threat, and to allocate the appropriate amount of resources to it—and not to hype it up and draw key resources away from other neglected yet equally (if not more) pressing issues, such as the need to focus on education, healthcare reform, or a mounting deficit that might cause an implosion of the US economy.

In spite of this change, the American government still retains a lot of power, and arguably it is able to unilaterally carry out operations without having to consult its people. The drone strikes against Osama bin Laden, and more recently Anwar al-Awlaki and members of the Haqqani network, continue to cause contention over the legitimate use of covert assassination methods. Although the government was able to sufficiently placate some critics because the targets in question were individuals that were security threats, the unilateral nature of the attacks sets a dangerous precedent for interference in the matters of all future enemies of the state, however they will come to be defined. At such a point we must attempt to remember that the people still own the state in the democracy, and that they ultimately have the ability to demand accountability and resist attempts of manipulation by fear. George Orwell reminds his readers that the power to resist Big Brother lies in the "proles", and "until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious" (Orwell, 1949: 70).[11]

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Endnotes

1 White House, US National Security Strategy 2010 (May 2010). The Strategy mentions that "as we secure the world's most dangerous weapons, we will fight a war against a far-reaching network of hatred and violence. We will disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qa'ida and its affiliates through a comprehensive strategy that denies them safe haven, strengthens front-line partners, secures our homeland, pursues justice through durable legal approaches, and counters a bankrupt agenda of extremism and murder with an agenda of hope and opportunity" (4).

2 White House, *US National Counterterrorism Strategy 2011* (June 2011).

3 National Drug Intelligence Center, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2009* (December 2008). The US Department of Justice labels the cartels as "the greatest organized crime threat to the United States". Similarly, Head of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Janet Napolitano, has been stressing the acuteness of the issue in the past few years.

4 Saul Landau, "Blackwater in Iraq: Killing for Profit", Oct 11, 2007.

5 As of the second quarter of FY2011. According to USCENTCOM. Further comparisons available at: http://civiliancontractors.wordpress.com/2011/04/16/overseas-contractor-count-for-second-quarter-2011/

6 United States Central Command, p.1.

7 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Volume 1*, Part 2, Chapter 7, translated by Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. London: University of Chicago Press, 2002: 669.

8 David Campbell, "Representing Contemporary War", *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2. September 2003: 99-108. See also, Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *The US War Machine: US Militarism and Popular Culture.*

9 Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993; Albert Auster and Leonard Quart, *How the War was Remembered: Hollywood & Vietnam.* Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1988.

10 Tara McKelvey, "The Hurt Locker as Propaganda", *The American Prospect* July 17, 2009.

11 George Orwell, *1984*. New York: Signet Classics, 1961.

With Al-Qaeda's Decline and Ten Years after 9/11, are U.S-Latin America Relations at Bay?

By Robert Valencia

Two weeks after the Navy SEALS killed Osama bin Laden, President Barack Obama took the bold step of publicly proposing a solution to the current Israeli-Palestinian peace deliberations, reverting to the terms of Israel's pre-1967 borders. In the wake of the killing of Bin Laden and the American-born cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki, as well as the mounting Arab revolts against authoritarian rule throughout the region, developments in the Middle East have once again become the most pressing international issues that the Obama administration finds itself confronting. This in turn raises the longstanding question: Will Latin America ever have a shot at becoming a major priority for US foreign policy in a post-Bin Laden era?

Of course, Washington's lack of attention to the region is hardly a novelty. The war on terror arguably has become the country's main foreign policy focus for the past ten years, while Latin American affairs have been systematically overlooked.

Within this feeble context, immigration has been at the core of US-Latin American relations in the last two decades. Countries like El Salvador, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua have a history of requesting temporary protected status, also called TPS, for their citizens since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1990. Other similar laws include the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, or NACARA, which passed in 1997 and provides immigration benefits to Nicaraguans, Cubans, Salvadorians and Guatemalans, while Haitians enjoyed the benefits of the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 1998. In 2001, former Mexican President Vicente Fox and former American President George W. Bush finally met to tackle undocumented immigration and border security, as well as to discuss a path of legalization for undocumented Mexicans living in the USA.

But soon after the September 11 attacks in Washington, D.C. and New York City, a friendlier immigration approach turned into stricter regulations to grant nonimmigrant visas for students and businessmen, and anti-immigrant groups surged and grew after 9/11, such as the Minutemen Project and Numbers USA. A 700-mile fence across the U.S.-Mexico border was erected, sparking criticism from Latinos both in the United States and south of the Rio Grande. Finally, a new office was created: the Department of Homeland Security, which has long been considered by critics as a bureaucratic organism dedicated solely to prevent terrorist attacks, rather than help people get visas.

Although the economic downturn that started in December 2007 has substantially reduced the flow of undocumented immigrants to the United States , the anti-immigrant rhetoric—an emblem of post-9/11 domestic policies of self-protection—is far from over, and it is no longer in Washington's hands due to a lack of federal action. Arizona, for example, enacted the S.B. 1070 on April 2010 in an attempt to identify, prosecute, and deport undocumented immigrants (Archibold, 2010),[1] while 48 states are following suit with copycat laws. Recently, Alabama upheld the strictest anti-immigrant law in the United States, allowing law enforcement agents to arrest those who seem suspicious of being undocumented and urging educational authorities to report students who lack legal papers.[2]

Both laws raised concerns among Latin American leaders and pan-regional organizations. Mexican President Felipe Calderón stated that, while he is not in favor of crossing the border illegally, the US Congress should embrace a comprehensive immigration system so that laws like SB 1070 will not spread across the country.[3] Likewise, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—an independent body of the Organization of American States—expressed its concern that Alabama's draconian immmigration law will lead to discrimination and potential racial profiling,[4] particularly against Hispanics –who have begun to flee the state for fear of being persecuted.

A 180-Degree Change in the "Backyard"

Since President George W. Bush declared the "War on Terror" in 2001, American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have escalated into bloody wars, and its foreign policy seems to be solely concentrated on that part of the world. Consequently, the United States has gradually begun to lose some clout in the region as Latin American countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil have switched to leftist, or at least left-leaning, governments. In fact, leaders of most of these countries have at times deemed themselves as vociferous opponents of "Yankee Imperialism." Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez,[5] an unrelenting critic of Bush's policies, served as a main advocate for the opposition by strengthening bilateral relations between his administration and unsavory governments like those of Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad[6] and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.[7]

This leftist shift consolidated the rise of Brazil as the quintessential regional powerhouse under the wing of former president Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva, who immediately brokered some of the most critical post-9/11 diplomatic and humanitarian troubles in Latin America and the world. First, he harbored former Honduran president Manuel Zelaya at the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa after a coup in order

to contain a deeper deterioration of Honduras' stability. He also aided Iran by shipping some of its enriched uranium for storage in Turkey[8] (despite the White House's unwelcoming response to such a deal). And Brazil was at the helm of the 2010 Haiti earthquake relief through the U.N stabilization mission MINUSTAH.[9]

Finally, the subsequent creation of UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) and ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas) seemed to overshadow the Washington-backed Organization of American States' leverage in regional matters. Case in point: It was UNASUR that mediated Colombia's Alvaro Uribe and Chavez's diplomatic feud in the wake of the controversial proposal fof the use of Colombian air bases by the U.S. Military,[10] and the same entity helped Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa return to power after escaping a failed coup in October 2010.[11] Meanwhile, ALBA seeks to offer an alternative to the US-proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas by exchanging hydrocarbon assets and educational and medical resources between Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Venezuela, to name a few.[12]

Moreover, other international players like Russia and China wield increasing influence in Latin America by way of diplomacy and infrastructure development, such as the construction of a nuclear plant in Venezuela[13] with Russian assistance, as well as oil and mining projects between Chinese companies and local ones.[14]

In realizing America's slipping stronghold in Latin America, former President Bush finally took the time to visit several Latin American countries during the last year of his presidency, only to discover that it was too late to convince the region's leaders that they were not being forgotten.[15]

President Obama, however, attempted to warm relations with Latin America in the early months of his administration. Sixty days after being sworn in, he attended the fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago,[16] stating that the meeting offered "the opportunity of a new beginning" for the Americas and later expressing opposition to the military coup in Honduras.[17] Recently, Obama eased travel restrictions to Cuba and went to Latin America in March 2011,[18] traveling to Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador—even in the midst of the Libyan crisis—leading some to believe that he might continue forward with his regional initiatives.

Lost in Translation

While President Obama sought to strengthen US-Latin American bonds, the US agenda hasn't really changed much after 9/11, and very few relevant bilateral items stand out. This is not to say that Latin America has been completely phased out of US foreign policy agenda after 9/11. Arguably, the most urgent issue for the United States in Latin America, at least when it comes to Mexico, Central America, and Colombia, is the "War on Drugs".[19] In addition to the long-running Plan Colombia, the US has pledged the disbursement of the Merida Initiative budget, allocating $1.6 billion to Mexican and Central American authorities in an attempt to control drug smuggling into the United States. Nevertheless, US financial assistance hasn't proved successful: the US Government Accountability Office reported that of the allocated $1.6 billion for the Initiative, just $20 million was actually spent by last April.[20] Meanwhile, fueled by an illicit flow of guns from the United States, gang activities, and money laundering, Mexican and Central American security worsens day by day.

When it comes to understanding post-9/11 foreign policy making, the US seems to have a penchant for using terminology that is controversial—lest we forget the Bush administration's so-called "Axis of Evil" to defend his theory on the "War on Terror". This time around, the current administration resorted to an unnecessary comparison: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used the term "Colombianization"[21] to describe Mexico's ongoing security conundrum, in reference to that of Colombia in the 1980s. President Calderón considered the analogy "inaccurate" and in turn blamed the United States for its failed policies in controlling drug consumption. Certainly, Mexico's murder rate is lower than Colombia's, it hasn't witnessed the widespread use of explosives such as the ones the Medellin Cartel placed in Colombian conurbations in the late 1980s, nor does it have an active guerrilla conflict.

Addressing the War on Drugs proves to be a tough task across party lines. Most recently, presidential candidate and Republican Governor of Texas Rick Perry suggested deploying American troops in Mexico to fight drug cartels and restore border control, if the Mexican government agreed to do so. His comments turned out to be unpalatable to many Mexicans.[22] If Perry were to become president, experts believe his approach to foreign relations—particularly towards the "War on Drugs" and an unfriendly government like that of Venezuela's Chávez—might be hawkish.[23] However, one thing is certain: the War on Drugs cannot be won by military force only; it requires both Mexico and the United States to curb illicit drug trade at the border and to reduce drug consumption while fully funding enforcement through the Merida Initiative and fostering prevention and treatment programs on American soil.[24]

In addition, US trade deals with Colombia and Panama were approved by Congress and the Obama administration during the third quarter of 2011[25]. For many, the FTA enactment is the result of a long overdue endorsement that seal a pledge to Washington's most strategic allies in Latin America. Nevertheless, FTAs also have their share of detractors. Some of the US - Colombian FTA's staunch critics such as the AFL-CIO argue that the US should not move forward due to Bogotá's dubious human rights and lack of labor protections, and it also rejected other two free trade proposals with Panama and South Korea because they would be unlikely "to protect workers' rights and the environment."

Now that the FTAs are set in motion, the United States, Panama, and Colombia will have to address any loopholes in labor rights, fair trade, and intellectual property while

strengthening security ties. Also, Roberta S. Jacobson, appointed as the new U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, will have to make strides in addressing the challenges drug trafficking and violence brings throughout the Americas while fostering friendlier diplomatic ties with both left and right-leaning countries.

What's Next?

In this post-Bin Laden and 9/11 era, President Obama and future administrations must not only mend fences with the Middle East and catalyze global initiatives among current and emerging powers to address further security threats and economic woes, but they must also overcome their perceptions of Latin America as a long-broken fixture swinging in the United States' perennial "backyard."

Obama can begin by extending a trustworthy brand of prosperity and security just like John F. Kennedy did exactly 50 years ago with his "Alliance for Progress,"[26] but also bearing in mind that the US's pre-9/11 influence has dwindled as several countries now seek cooperation with other active world players. Otherwise, pan-regional maladies like the drug trade and economic inequity will continue to distress the United States with socioeconomic strife throughout the region.

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Review Essay: A Decade of War

By Andrew Gripp, Barak D. Hoffman, and Eli Lovely

The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda
by Peter Bergen
Free Press

The American Way of War: How Bush's Wars Became Obama's
by Tom Englehardt
Haymarket Books

Bin Laden's Legacy: Why We're Still Losing the War on Terror
by Daveed Gartenstein-Ross
Wiley

Dismantling the Empire
by Chalmers Johnson
Metropolitan Books

Ten Years at War

On October 21, 2011, President Obama announced that American troops would withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2011. October 7th, 2011 marked the ten-year anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan — a country still embroiled in war. After a decade of military conflict in what has been labeled the "Global War on Terror" in response to al Qaeda's attacks on September 11, 2001, now is an appropriate time to assess the outcomes and the costs of the last ten years of US military interventions. This article does so through a review of four recent books on this subject.

Al Qaeda's strategy is to bleed the US economy dry by broadening the conflict from country to country, region to region, compelling the US government to overspend until forced to withdraw. It has been a partial success as the US has engaged in costly military efforts across numerous fronts over the past decade and US public opinion about the utility of these efforts is waning. In part, this is because a detached sense of economic, political and military reality has driven the US's approach to fight al Qaeda. Its most evident characteristics have been an inability to confront the complexities of the wars the US has started and lack of a pragmatic assessment of the country's security needs. The result has been vast amounts of inefficient spending. While there is no doubt that the United States has severely weakened al Qaeda's operational capacities, the gains in security it has achieved are not nearly commensurate to the vast amounts of money the country has allocated towards this objective.

Al Qaeda: To Bleed the Empire Dry

David Gartenstein-Ross's *Bin Laden's Legacy* focuses a significant amount of attention on the war on terror from the point of view of al Qaeda. According to Gartenstein-Ross, the organization's objective was to draw the US into prolonged costly warfare in an effort to "bleed the empire dry." Having emerged on the battlefields of Afghanistan in the 1980s, and witnessing the fall of the Soviet Union due in part to massive military spending, al Qaeda hoped to draw the US into a similar quagmire, leading to a catastrophic economic collapse of the "far enemy." The US, then, would have no choice but to remove US forces from Muslim countries and to withdraw its support for the "near enemy," US allies in the region, such as Saudi Arabia. Only then could al Qaeda expect to succeed in achieving its goal of carving out and actualizing an Islamic state, governed by strict adherence to a radical rendering of Islamic law.

Gartenstein-Ross argues that al Qaeda pursued a two-pronged strategy: 1) force America's military engagement to be as broad as possible; and, consequently 2) bankrupt the superpower's economy. Bin Laden was convinced that America, like the Soviet Union, lacked the willpower to see its conflict through to victory. Having studied America's foreign policy in countries like Vietnam and Somalia, bin Laden suspected the country deep down was a "paper tiger" that appeared ferocious, but lacked the capacity and fortitude to achieve its ambitions.

Has America Fallen into the Trap?

Since 9/11, the United States has launched prolonged invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as counterterrorism operations in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. While its military might has weakened al Qaeda, has a broadening of the war with the organization stretched the US's economic and military capacity? Have the costs of the conflict contributed to the US's troubled economy? Is al Qaeda's strategy of "bleeding the empire dry" achieving its objective?

Squandered Military Victories in Afghanistan and Iraq

A common thematic strand in the four books is US effectiveness at launching war, but dire incompetence in subsequent state-building operations. Peter Bergen's comprehensive account, *The Longest War*, highlights pervasive US

negligence and lack of expertise that subsequently allowed for the prolonged existence and influence of the Taliban in Afghanistan after the US ousted it. Despite the hasty victory in Afghanistan, Bergen identifies several major errors that allowed the Taliban to reconstitute itself. One such miscalculation resulted from the "small footprint" approach to initial operations in Afghanistan. After the invasion, just six thousand American soldiers remained in-country. Their task was "to hunt the Taliban and al Qaeda." There was, as President George W. Bush had declared early on in his presidency, no need for the US to engage in state-building. The US invested just $1.75 billion per year in Afghanistan following the invasion, averaging $60 per person. Additional Western aid was meager to say the least, and often became entangled and co-opted by competing interests that had little to do with remedying fundamental issues. An Oxfam study from 2008 concluded that 40% of Western aid went toward salaries and benefits for Western donor personnel. Another study claimed donors only spent 20% of the aid money they raised for Afghanistan in the country. US neglect of Afghanistan's governance needs gave the Taliban time and space to rebuild, and in some parts of the country perhaps even created a demand for their return because of the organization's ability to provide security.

The US in Iraq, too, was massively underprepared to conduct state-building operations, and, as a result, "breathed new life into bin Laden's holy war." Before giving his account of the war, Bergen spills quite a lot of ink refuting each of the administration's pretexts for the invasion. Most damning, Bergen makes clear that the consensus opinion in the US intelligence community was that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction prior to the invasion of that country. He argues that there existed an air of inevitability about the war. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Bush, for example, met just two days after 9/11 to discuss a possible invasion of Iraq. Bergen also notes that not until after the invasion did the country become a hotbed of anti-American terrorist activity.

Much like the Afghan War, the Iraq War had a rather swift conclusion. But post-invasion planning, or, more appropriately, lack thereof, brought a hasty end to any positive sentiments accompanying the defeat of Saddam Hussein. Supporters of invading Iraq were full of hubris. They assumed that US forces would be greeted as liberators, and that the war, as Former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz asserted, would "pay for itself" in a short period of time. Many military commanders on the ground shared this perspective. For example, Lt. Col. Nathan Sassaman, a battalion commander in Iraq, believed that "with a heavy dose of fear and violence, and a lot of money for projects, I think we can convince these people that we are here to help them" (New York Times, 12/7/03).

Post-invasion US-supplied governance was as poor in Iraq as it was in Afghanistan. Bergen calls the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) "one of the most inept imperial administrations in modern history." Orders 1 and 2 of the CPA were to first purge 30,000 members of the Baath party from their positions, followed by the more intense de-Baathification, which dissolved the Iraqi army, intelligence service, Republican Guard, and other government agencies. In total, 400,000 Iraqis lost their jobs. The US military also failed to secure up to one million tons of weapons located in caches all over the country. In addition, US forces did not protect cultural sites, such as Iraqi museums containing some of the world's most precious ancient artifacts. The result was, according to Bergen, a "perfect storm of American errors."

The chaos that followed was fertile ground for international terrorists who flocked to the country to conduct martyrdom operations and instigate civil war between the disempowered Sunnis and the majority Shi'a in efforts to sabotage the democratic experiment. The US was able to roll back the Sunni insurgency when it recaptured Fallujah in November of 2004, but not without alienating much of the country's Sunni population.

Tom Englehardt's *The American Way of War* reveals the deleterious consequences of the US's interest in starting wars, but lack of commensurate subsequent concern for the importance of stabilization operations. Englehardt argues that the US military relishes a flashy, high-tech version of war, dramatically separating an antiseptic conception of conflict from a reality characterized by death, destruction, and instability. Remote-control warfare, argues Englehardt, may be an effective strategy for overthrowing a government — hence its attractiveness to military leaders — but is useless for state-building. Viewing war through such a lens is likely to see the US mired in future state-building imbroglios. This is because focusing narrowly on destruction from afar, but failing to adequately consider the costs and complexities of post-war state-building efforts makes war appear far cheaper and simpler than it is likely to be.

Given the plethora of poor policy decisions contributing to counter-productive outcomes, what, if anything has the US done right in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? According to Bergen while Iraq is a far more stable country today than it was five years ago, internal country dynamics, affected though not caused by US policy, account for this fortuitous outcome. The decision to send 20,000 additional troops into Iraq, announced in January of 2007, can take some credit for taming the civil war and the insurgency. However, Bergen primarily attributes the decrease in violence to the Sunni Awakening, which al Qaeda's ferocity provoked. The backlash al Qaeda suffered as a result of the instability it caused, much less than US military prowess, thwarted its efforts to entirely destabilize Iraq. The US can point to even fewer successes in Afghanistan. The country remains unstable and neither US nor Afghan military forces appear to be able to wrest control from the Taliban in large parts of it.

Expanding the War to Additional Fronts

While the Iraq War is approaching its conclusion, the US is still engaged in several counterterrorism efforts besides

Afghanistan, most notably in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Bergen regretfully reveals that little has changed in the conflict between the US and al Qaeda since 9/11. The war has no clear ending in sight despite the massive amount of resources allocated in service of putting an end to the terror network.[1]

Since 9/11, the US has given Pakistan $11 billion in mostly military aid to maintain an ally on the porous "Af-Pak" border. Despite this assistance, Pakistan's army has been ineffective in stopping the Taliban from engaging in cross-border attacks, and efforts to stop the spread of militancy from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to other parts of the country have proven futile. Bergen is quick to point out that Pakistan has taken heavy losses, some 3,000 military deaths since 9/11 in the fight against insurgents. All too often however, cordial relations between the Pakistani military and the Taliban undermine the efficacy of relying on the former as a proxy force for the US to fight the latter.

A facile sound bite logic — 'you can't put a price tag on security' — pervades the US approach to military and security spending since 9/11.

A full-scale war in Pakistan, however, is unthinkable, and, as a result, the US has resorted to the use of drones to eliminate Taliban insurgents and al Qaeda affiliates in Pakistan. Echoing Englehardt, Bergen observes that these remote-control attacks allow the US to ignore the consequences of them and permit it to deny any sense of responsibility to assist in re-building a country now destined to foster intense anti-American sentiment well into the future.

Counterterrorism operations in Somalia and Yemen demonstrate the US's proclivity to broaden the war on terror when prompted. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross contends that America's blessing of the Ethiopian-led invasion of Somalia in December 2006, a precursor to the current chaos there, derived from legitimate concerns about the earlier victory of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), whose leadership had trained in al Qaeda camps. The Ethiopian invasion of Somalia caused an Iraq-style insurgency, led in part by al Qaeda affiliate al Shabaab, to develop there, contributing to a broadening of the conflict across borders, and even continents.

"You Can't Put a Price Tag on Security"

To account for the overall costs of the war on terror, one must look at the damage the 9/11 attacks caused and the expenditures it took in response to them. Bin Laden calculated that US equity markets lost 16% following the 9/11 attacks. Since their value is approximately $4 trillion, he surmised that the attacks resulted in a $640 billion loss. Al Qaeda spent $500,000 on the attacks. Thus he concluded that each dollar al Qaeda spent resulted in about $1 million loss to the US economy. Expenditures in response to the attacks are staggering. Recent studies suggest that the direct costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are about $1.3 trillion. When factoring in the indirect costs, such as those on veterans, embassies, reconstruction, and foreign aid, estimates reach as high as $3 trillion. This vast amount excludes the rise in domestic security spending as well.

In his collection of essays entitled *Dismantling the Empire*, Chalmers Johnson argues that America's growing global military presence following 9/11 is bankrupting the country. In order to govern this expanding "empire," the US employs 500,000 servicemen and servicewomen. To support his point, Johnson uses the massive American embassy in Iraq as an example. The embassy, Johnson insists, was built to entrench a US presence in Iraq. It boasts "vacation facilities" for Americans serving there and is more of a hybrid fortress-resort than a structure designed principally to facilitate diplomatic ties between the US and Iraqi governments. The metaphor is clear: US imperial ambitions demand a massive global military apparatus. As a result, we can only expect pervasive anti-American sentiment around the world to rise. For Johnson, the obvious solution to reversing anti-American sentiment is to scale-down America's foreign footprint.

Johnson, unfortunately, stakes his principles on shaky grounds. He alleges that America is motivated by "hubris and arrogance" and that democracy promotion amounts to "racism" because it rests on the idea that others have not yet evolved to our sophisticated level of governance. The US has no right, he implies, to overthrow the Taliban simply because it dislikes the organization's values. He also claims the "futile and misbegotten" wars have nothing to do with national security. These "principled" statements undermine the more pragmatic opposition he has to American foreign policy, especially concerning military spending.

Johnson excoriates the size, waste, and lack of accountability in US military expenditures. In FY2008, for example, Johnson suggests that the cost of the empire totaled $1.1 trillion. These outlays contain vast amounts of useless spending, such as $44 billion for outdated B-2 bombers. Congress is unlikely to scrap the outdated B-2 bomber because of the benefits it creates for the constituents of numerous Members of Congress. The trend toward privatization of America's security and intelligence sectors is even more distressing for Johnson. In 2006 alone, for example, he cites that the government contracted out $42 billion of the $60 billion it spent on intelligence to private companies. Increasing reliance on private corporations to collect vital intelligence severely compromises the capacity of the government to hold these corporations accountable, he argues.

Here, Johnson is on firmer ground. However, he ultimately does not succeed in his attempt to link US military expenditures to America's current economic malaise. Instead, he reveals disturbing trends with figures that appear convincing on the surface, but do not stand up to scrutiny. To suggest that the US government spends a trillion dollars each

year — close to one-third of the entire federal government budget — to maintain an unnecessary empire is an exaggerated claim since he makes no recommendation as to what the country should spend on defense. Rather, he appears to count each dollar of defense expenditures as supporting an empire that causes more problems for the US than it solves. The trend toward unaccountability and privatization is a valid point, but he fails to address how this undermines the US capacity to defeat al Qaeda.

Gartenstein-Ross provides a more thoughtful and considered analysis about the costs of the war. To defend against another terrorist attack, he states that the US has engaged in frenzied, wasteful, and inefficient spending, playing deeper into al Qaeda's hands. Like Johnson and Englehardt, he asserts that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is horribly wasteful. The agency is a tempting target for opportunistic contractors who irresponsibly take advantage of "immense political pressure to do something as quickly as possible to make the homeland more secure." Within the DHS, he singles out the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) as the most ineffectual. For example, it planned to spend $104 million on airport screeners, but wound up paying $867 million. The TSA received extraordinary little value for money since these screeners fail to materially enhance airport security. He suggests instead that the US adopt more affordable and effective screening techniques, akin to those Israel employs.

Gartenstein-Ross also laments ever-rising spending on intelligence. The $75 billion the US government allotted for the intelligence budget for FY2009 is more than two and a half times higher than it was before 9/11. For him, the numbers indicate that even when terrorists fail to detonate their explosives, they nevertheless provoke a hasty and inefficient response. This knee-jerk reaction to ever greater spending, he maintains, validates al Qaeda's belief in its ability to bankrupt the country.

The four books render an unambiguous conclusion: a facile sound bite logic — "you can't put a price tag on security" — pervades the US approach to military and security spending since 9/11. It has led to the rise of a political-industrial machine that profits from the sense of vulnerability the attacks created. The books solidly demonstrate the troubling trend of massive and irresponsible overspending, and persuasively argue that the US could have gained far more security than it has achieved over the past decade with far less spending if the country had taken a more pragmatic approach to the issue.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that al Qaeda succeeded in dragging the US into expensive counterterrorism operations across several countries. Due to a failure to realistically assess post-invasion governance demands, the US military neglected essential state-building operations in the crucial months after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, causing the benefits accruing from early military successes to deteriorate once insurgencies capitalized on domestic resentment directed towards the occupations. While an adjustment in military strategy in Iraq preceded a major turnaround in the war, it was mostly the Sunni Awakening, not the increase in troop levels that led to it. In addition, although the war in Iraq is drawing to a close, the one in Afghanistan is still in the midst of a deadly insurgency, despite a more hands-on counterinsurgency approach.

Al Qaeda also drew the US into arms-length confrontations in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. Remote-control warfare has been effective at killing individual enemies in these countries. Drones however do not contribute to crucial state-building activities, even though greater political stability in these impoverished countries would enhance US security far more than dropping bombs on them. Unfortunately, the US military has a strong bias for starting wars, not conducting stabilization operations.

Finally, there is no doubt that al Qaeda drove the US into a wild spending spree, costing trillions. Reacting to a sense of vulnerability, the US government allocated vast sums of money to projects with little consideration for whether they make the country safer in a material way. Moreover, strategic mistakes, resulting from neglecting to assess realistically the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, necessitated further spending to remedy prior errors. While Johnson and Gartenstein-Ross convincingly make their case about excessive spending, their argument that the US has fallen into al Qaeda's trap — that the country is on the brink of an economic implosion as a result of the wars — is unpersuasive. At the same time, the consequences of ignoring the fiscal impact of defense spending, while not a cause of the US's current economic woes, nevertheless has exacerbated them. After a decade of war, the US is starting to learn the hard way that it has spent entirely too much money for entirely too little progress.

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Endnotes

1 Bergen completed his book prior to bin Laden's assassination by US forces.

de Vries and Aarts, *Continued from Page 1*

more determining — response of the United States government to it for particular countries. This article will take the first steps toward such an analysis, while aiming to provide answers to the question whether Iran[2] has (up till now) profited geopolitically from the events following 9/11.

The current situation and how we got there

The aggression that was aimed at the United States by Al Qaeda on September 11, 2001, provided the US with the awareness that an Islamic fundamentalist threat laid in "extremist elements in the Sunni world", rather than in Shia Iran (Parsi, 2007: 225). As such, the attacks — which were interpreted as an act of war — had a clear impact on the United States as well as US foreign policy more generally. Faced by a new threat environment, the United States was able to reorganize its international affairs around a more or less fixed point of reference. As such, 9/11 gave the United States an incentive to act in a far more assertive way abroad (Cox, 2008: 84). Targeting Al Qaeda and its supporters, the United States and its allies initiated the "War on Terror" — first by invading Afghanistan (October 2001) and later Iraq (March 2003).

For Iran, the unfolding of that war did not seem so bad, to say the least. Both Saddam Hussein and the Taliban regime were natural rivals, if not outright archenemies, of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, Iran's most powerful political and religious official, Supreme Leader Khamenei — supported by his cronies — was (initially) more than happy to show support for the United States' endeavor, not in the least place to demonstrate to Washington the strategic benefits of cooperation with Iran. The Iranians, in other words, were prepared to use their well-established and well-maintained network in Afghanistan in constructive ways in coordination with the United States (Porter, 2006). The Bush administration, on the other hand, needed Tehran's support to defeat the Taliban (Parsi, 2007: 226). Under the umbrella of a plan prepared by Colin Powell, Secretary of State in the Bush administration, high level contacts between the US and Iran were established in October 2001 and initially the talks advanced more steadily than expected. A major shortcoming of the agenda for discussions was, however, that it did not include any Iranian concerns, not even after Iran's cooperative attitude during the Bonn Conference of December 2001. If not for a strong neoconservative lobby to halt the US-Iranian collaboration, that issue could have been addressed, and it probably would have led to a broader pallet of negotiable issues.

It would have been addressed, because history turned another way and the mysterious Israeli interception of the ship Karine A — which was loaded with rockets, mortars, guns and ammunition and captained by a Palestinian navy member — proved to be a game changer. The Israelis, alarmed by the bridging going on between Washington and Tehran, argued that the ship was part of an Iranian attempt to arm Arafat's Palestinian Authority (Ibid, 2007: 228, 233-234). Almost a month later, in his first State of the Union address, George W. Bush depicted Iran as a threatening state that was part of the now infamous "Axis of Evil" and "condemned it as an enemy to be confronted by the United States" (Majd, 2010: 179). Right there, the improving relations between both nations died. Iranian hardliners, able to portray America as untrustworthy and president Khatami as weak, rejoiced (Ibid) and they proved able to win the 2005 presidential elections with Ahmadinejad as their main contender. Today, ten years onwards, relations — despite the promising first phase of Obama's presidency — are at a new low with accusations flying around on all sides.[3]

How Iran profited from 9/11 geopolitically

The ousting of Saddam Hussein and the weakening of the Taliban in Afghanistan, combined with US troops leaving Iraq at the end of 2011 (Leland, 2011; Jakes & Santana, 2011) and Obama's fastened troop reduction in Afghanistan (Landler & Cooper, 2011), has left a power vacuum in the region ready to be filled by Iran. This is a concern often displayed by America, their allies and Iran's natural rivals in the region, and the possibility of Iran doing so is a real one. Back in 2007, Ahmadinejad made the statement that Iran was willing to fill a future "huge power vacuum" (Tran, 2007) in the region. At first sight — considering the brutal Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988 — both countries make strange bedfellows.

In the new situation without Hussein's firm grip on power, however, the relations between the neighboring countries have been strengthened. Iran, nowadays, holds "a powerful hand in the Iraqi poker game" (Cole, 2005). The Islamic Republic's political influence in Iraq is the most obvious example thereof. After a deadlock of nine months, the Iraqi parliament approved Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his new government in December 2010 (Aljazeera, 2010); which was precisely the outcome Iran wanted. Tehran had been working very hard –largely behind the scenes — to repair the fractured coalition of Iraq's Shiite religious parties (Cole, 2010). The long alliance between Shiites and Kurds in Iraq — the Kurd Jalal Talibani occupies the Presidency since 2006 — lends Iran Kurdish support as well. These close relations with key players of the Iraqi power structure gives Iran the chance to exert political influence in the region, and the Islamic Republic's regime is more than willing to extend its authority using the soft powers of culture and commerce (Arango, 2011). The Iraqi Shiites — some 60-65% against 89% in Iran (Anderson & Anderson, 2009: 105, 109) –, who were backed by Iran during their guerrilla war against Sunnis after the US invasion, know all too well that they, to some extent, depend economically and geopolitically on the Islamic Republic. The same applies to Afghanistan. Since 2001, Iran's investments in Afghanistan are on the rise and

the Islamic Republic aims at reviving the Afghan economy, infrastructure, and education. As of March 2007, Iran had already spent $270 million of its share on mutually agreed projects (Yazdi, 2011: 7) and annual bilateral trade currently stands at approximately $1.5 billion (Sheikholeslami, 2010) — against approximately $8 billion between Iran and Iraq in 2010. Although Iran's motives contain ideological elements, especially in Iraq, their primary incentive seems to be geopolitical. Iran's measured support for the Taliban, in spite of the historical hostility that exists between the two entities (Nader & Laha, 2011: 6), is the most telling sign of that.

All in all, Iran has managed to gain ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, and therefore within the region as a whole, after the US invasions of those countries. The Islamic Republic uses its long hand to gain from the new situation ideologically and economically, but most of all geopolitically. With the US trapped in a complex and hardly controllable situation and ready to "leave" the scene, the people of Iraq and Afghanistan are quite aware of the fact that Iran will still be their neighbor long after the US turns its attention to some other global hot spot (Cole, 2005). Add to that the Iranian alliance with Syria[4], Hezbollah and Hamas it becomes all too easy to draw the conclusion that the unmistakable winner of the battle for influence in the Middle East after 9/11 is indeed Iran. Or does it?

And how it was hindered from doing so

Not entirely. Although the Islamic Republic has been able to take advantage of the geopolitical reconfiguration that was initiated by policy decisions made after the 9/11 attacks, many intervening factors have prevented Tehran from completely doing so. First of all, Iran's leaders have been preoccupied with their own shaky internal situation. The 2009 presidential election outcome was greeted by skepticism, disbelief and anger, resulting in the greatest protests since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Although the hardliners, using the force of the anti-riot police (Basijis) ultimately managed to suppress the uprising, they are not entirely safe from new eruptions of discontent. In September 2011, protests broke out as a reaction to the government mismanagement regarding the shrinking Lake Orumiyeh, Iran's second biggest lake (BBC, 2011). According to the RAND policy analyst Alireza Nader, the Iranian regime "faces a threat even more daunting than the 2009 Green Movement Protests, [in the shape of] a disparate yet potentially powerful civil disobedience movement motivated not just by politics, but by environmental, economic, and social issues" (Nader, 2011). With the conservative camp already forging a strategy to marginalize their principal opponents (Democracy Digest, 2011) and Khamenei warning of challenges during the March 2012 parliamentary elections (Uskowi, 2011c), the regime seems to be aware of such a potential threat.

Secondly, the Iranian regime — characterized by factionalism (Rakel, 2008) and substantial levels of public elite competition (Brownlee, 2007: 179) — has been distracted from their geopolitical interests by internal challenges. One of those challenges is the ignited power struggle and growing factional infighting between traditional conservatives supporting the supreme leader Khamenei and the so called "deviationists", composed of men affiliated to Esfandiar Rahim Masha'i, President Ahmadinejad's controversial advisor. Due to their particular view of the role of nationalism and religion in the Islamic Republic, the deviationists are accused of "working against the interests of the Islamic Republic and the Shia faith" (Uskowi, 2011a). The clash has even led to calls for the imprisonment of Ahmadinejad's aides.

Another component of the challenges faced by the regime is Iran's crippled economy. Although the IMF welcomes Iranian structural reform policies on domestic subsidies (The Economist, 2011), inflation is on the rise — reaching from 17%, according the minister of Finance and Economy, to even 27%, according to the Statistic Centre of Iran (Uskowi, 2011d). Add to that an unemployment rate of around 15% (The Economist, 2011) and the effects of imposed sanctions against Iran, and it becomes clear that the economy poses a slumbering threat for the future stability of the regime.

Thirdly, Iran, like any other country in the region, was surprised and distracted by the Arab spring. Starting in Tunisia and spreading quickly to countries like Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and — last but not least — Syria, the Arab spring had (and still has) an impact on the region possibly more ferocious than 9/11 ever had. Although the Islamic Republic itself has not (yet) been touched directly by the current wave of sweeping uprisings, one of its most important allies in the region — Syria — has. At first, the hardliners in Iran welcomed the protests shaking the Arab world, depicting them as an "Islamic Awakening" (Lutz, 2011) and a continuation of the Islamic Revolution. When the revolt reached Syria, however, it suddenly changed into a plot by the West "to undermine a government that supports resistance in the Middle East" (Uskowi, 2011b). Iran's reaction to Assad's problems is twofold. On the one hand, fearing the loss of a strategic friend in the region and a destabilization of the Middle East to the advantage of its rival Saudi Arabia, the regime supports the Alawite-Baathist regime of Assad by offering its expertise (Nasseri, 2011). On the other hand, in order to repair and maintain its image among the Arab street, the Islamic Republic needs to balance its support for Assad by showing concern for the protestors, demanding an end to violence and a reform of Syria's political process. Iran, in other words, is forced to struggle openly "with the problem of how to endorse the revolutionary spirit while simultaneously buttressing its crucial strategic Arab ally" (MacFarquhar, 2011). The situation in Syria may very well weaken Iran's domestic and geopolitical situation, being a major concern for the hardline clerics.

Fourth and lastly, Iran is not the only actor competing for influence in the region. Besides the United States and other western countries, strategic steps are being taken by Turkey, China, Lebanon, Kuwait and Qatar in order to strengthen

their regional position. Although it tries hard, Iran continues to struggle to translate its political influence into significant commercial and cultural leverage. The flooding of Southern Iraq's markets with exorbitant priced shoddy Iranian goods right after the US invasion, for example, sullied Iran's reputation (Arango, 2011). On the whole, the picture of Iran's influence in Iraq and Afghanistan is a nuanced one.

Conclusion

So, in the end, did Iran profit geopolitically from the events following 9/11? Just like the Chinese communist leader Zhou Enlai is said to have answered when he was asked in to give his assessment of the French Revolution: "it is too soon to tell".[5] It seems obvious, however, that Iran is not the "unmistakable winner" of the battle for regional geopolitical influence as some observers hold it to be. Certainly the Islamic Republic has profited from the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the initial weakening of the Taliban by extending its influence in the region. However, it was affected by intervening factors — such as a shaky internal situation, economic distress, an unpredictable wave of uprisings in the region, and the influence of competing countries — which prevented the regime from taking advantage of the new situation all the way down. Thus, the balance sheet of the geopolitical situation after 9/11 is a nuanced one and whether Iran may profit from future events or not depends on how the regional situation develops. That is not for us to predict, since, to conclude with the words of Iran-expert Kevan Harris, "anybody who is wise enough to know that they do not know everything about what is going to happen, will hesitate to predict how the region will look like in terms of geopolitics in one year, two years, five years, ten years" (Harris, 2011).

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Endnotes

1 That is not to say that the posing of 'what if' questions is a useless exercise. In fact, by doing so one might come up with some very insightful findings.

2 When posing the question whether or not Iran, or the Islamic Republic for that matter, has profited from the events following 9/11, it is important to explain who is meant by Iran explicitly. 'Iran' as such does not exist, since its political landscape consists of a patchwork of actors, who all have different ideas and interests. When we speak of 'Iran' in this article, we are referring to the current government — and more specifically the hardliners supporting the current supreme leader Khamenei.

3 Part of those accusations are Iran's stand on its nuclear program, the alleged mingling in each other's internal and external affairs, and the latest chapter wherein Iranians are charged in the US over a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador.

4 See for a piece on Iran's influence on the growing ties between Damascus and Baghdad D. Pollack and A. Ali, 'Asad's Iraqi Lifeline: Naming, Shaming, and Maiming it', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, September 8, 2011, via http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3396

5 This famous saying has recently been debunked, as Enlai probably did not understand the question posed to him. Rather than the French revolution of 1789, his interlocutor was speaking of the student riots of May 1968 and Enlai's answer related to that event.

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Cutler, *Continued from Page 1*

official American response to the attacks came through the Department of Defense as well as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, whose creation transformed U.S. homeland security spending. The FY 2002 budget included $19.5 billion in homeland security while the following year's budget, of course including the creation of DHS, jumped to $37.7 billion.[2] Moreover, ample concern abounded that the creation of the new department—one of the largest federal reorganizations in history—preceded the kind of comprehensive strategizing and planning that would have prevented wasteful spending.[3] It was a procedural knee-jerk reaction, the kind of dramatic post-9/11 defense spending spree that came to determine the uneven dynamic between defense and foreign aid spending.

As the Bush administration led the US into both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the post-9/11 culture of fear became an accepted rationale for ramping up defense spending to nearly unprecedented levels. In FY 2012 terms, the DOD budget has increased by approximately two-thirds going from roughly $400 billion in FY 2001 to almost $700 billion for FY 2011.[4] In the decade since 9/11 and the start of both wars, oversight over this enormous increase in spending has become increasingly difficult as numerous budget authorities, legislative maneuvers, and mission creep with State/USAID muddy the waters and make effective auditing extremely challenging. At the same time, the US faces a depressed economy and a growing national debt, warranting some 'better-late-than-never' increased oversight over one of the country's largest sources of spending. He may not have predicted it precisely, but President Eisenhower's concern in 1961 that taking our economic muscle for granted, combined with free-flowing military spending, would put the country in danger. We did take it for granted, defense spending is out of control, and as a result we are in danger. To be sure, it is a different kind of danger than we faced on 9/11 , so arguments that we are safer as a result of this spending are not without merit.

Nevertheless, the precedents set by DOD budget and civilian policy decisions as part of the post-9/11 reaction are difficult to undo, leaving the Obama administration and international arms of the government with a substantial, multi-faceted challenge. The division of labor between civilian and military players has been largely eroded by many of the same decisions, leaving the relationship between DOD and State/USAID uncomfortably undefined. This further complicates our capacity to redefine their roles and recalibrate the US approach to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the rest of our major foreign policy issues in an era that no longer demands the immediate post-9/11 mentality.

Proponents of scaling back defense spending are often met with questions of basic national security. It is important to note that most advocates for smarter defense budgeting

are not anti-defense and they do not argue that immediate spikes in spending and emergency response implementation after 9/11 were not completely justified. It is the steady, decade-long increase in spending that indicates a more endemic issue in Washington. The steady climb from just under $400 billion to $700 billion resulted from not only the tangible creation of additional DOD capabilities, such as the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP),[5] but also an implicit free pass that allowed DOD to obtain increasingly larger sums in baseline and supplemental funding. After 9/11, we were scared. Terrified, even. It is completely understandable to see why dramatically expanding DOD operations in many different capacities immediately after the attacks made sense. Unfortunately for budget transparency and smooth interagency coordination, however, this has turned into the rule rather than the exception. More spending does not make us safer—smarter spending does. The precedent that the post-9/11 era has established for unrestrained defense spending is dangerous not only because it has contributed to our national debt, but also because it sets the country up for nearly a quarter of its current spending to be considered nearly untouchable by those trying to scale back and pull the U.S. out of its current fiscal hole. Additionally, that a great deal of this increased defense spending has been achieved through supplemental legislation greatly reduces Congressional capacity for oversight (Belasco, 2010). This is simply not sustainable and sets a risky precedent for how major pieces of the annual budget are handled.

In addition to troubling budget implications, September 11 immutably changed the U.S. civil-military relationship. Responding to al-Qaeda's devastating attacks and pursuing two wars that are largely sociopolitical in nature required a very different approach than more physical wars of the 20th century (Foust, 2011). As the nature of the threats and our response changed, DOD took on more counter-insurgency (COIN) strategies rooted in the kind of preventative development work traditionally carried out by the State Department and USAID. Indeed, security assistance took center stage after September 11 because its basis in supporting the internal stabilization of fragile states fit the philosophical and tactical needs of U.S. national security policy at that time. This also meant, however, that the lines that previously delineated DOD, State, and USAID's respective mission areas began to blur. Turf wars between the three exacerbated; as Gordon Adams and Cindy Williams (2010) wrote,

> " (the) growing role of DOD in providing security and economic assistance has created institutional friction between State and DOD…Security assistance includes a long-standing portfolio of State Department accounts that support foreign militaries; help them purchase US defense equipment, services, and training; finance education for foreign officers in the United States; and provide training for peacekeeping operations. These traditional security assistance programs constitute roughly another 14 percent of US foreign assistance. Since 2001, the Defense Department has developed a sizeable portfolio of security assistance programs under its own authorities, which parallel some of the State Department accounts (66-67)."

To look at the issue from a purely numerical perspective, total funding for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars now tops $1.283 trillion (Belasco, 2011). Although DOD, State, and USAID have long stood as our nation's key foreign policy and national security agencies, 94% of this sum reflects DOD spending while only 5% reflects State and USAID budgets, while the other 1% represents funding for veterans' programs (Ibid, 2010). In this way, September 11 led to a militarization of foreign aid whose long-term implications have yet to fully emerge. Development has long been treated almost as a preventative approach to the global threats; the "vaccination" against burgeoning threats mentality has become almost ubiquitous with the international development field. The blurring of the lines between civil and military operations, however, may have forever changed that concept. The State Department's role is being elevated as President Obama moves forward with troop withdrawals in Iraq and Afghanistan, so time will have to tell how the civil-military dynamic truly has changed a full decade after September 11.

Diplomacy, defense, and development have long been considered the three "pillars" of U.S. foreign policy. The Obama administration has made great efforts to elevate the latter component with high-profile initiatives such as the President's Global Development Policy and the first-ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, a comprehensive study of the State Department that was modeled after the longstanding Quadrennial Defense Review at DOD. These are both significant moves towards elevating the significance of development in particular, as it has long played a supporting role to the leading one played by defense. The problem is that it will be very difficult for any administration, current or future, to succeed in elevating development to the level of defense if we simultaneously expand DOD's reach with little regard for oversight or reason. We are setting ourselves up for a constant budget race that we cannot win.

Ten years and two wars after September 11, we are still trying to figure out how to truly formulate a lasting strategic approach to the kinds of non-state, untraditional actors that attacked us on 9/11. This shift in the kind of geopolitical adversaries that we face—and, as a result, our tactic for fighting them—is one of the greatest consequences of September 11. The lack of clarity in our national security structure and its internal components is an equally significant result of the attacks. The inflated defense budget is both a symptom of this lack of clarity as well as a serious problem in its own right, making it another of the most significant and lasting repercussions of the terrorist attacks and the culture of fear that followed, permeating the way we do foreign policy. We gave ourselves a free pass, but it bought us more challenges than actual solutions, more trouble than good—because

even after over $1 trillion primarily spent by DOD, we have only just recently begun to seriously pull back from both reactionary wars. Paying the bills for our defense spending spree is only the beginning of the nation's economic recovery; this pattern of unrestrained defense spending has become accepted practice, making anything less seem like an unacceptable cut in comparison. Not surprisingly, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta is leading the resistance to even the most minor cuts in defense spending. It would behoove him, however, to use this time as an opportunity to revamp DOD as a champion of smarter spending, not its greatest foe. We are only heeding a fraction of President Eisenhower's forewarning now, after his fears largely came true. It took ten years to reach this point, however, so rebuilding the economy and revamping the way we budget and develop global strategy will take just as long to achieve, if not longer.

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