



Executive Summary

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COUNTERING RADICALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT TO AL-QAEDA: FIGHTING THE WAR OF DEEDS

Paul Kamolnick

Disrupting, dismantling, and ultimately defeating al-Qaeda-based, affiliated, and inspired terrorism is the declared policy of the U.S. Government (USG). Despite noteworthy success in attacking the al-Qaeda (AQ) terrorist network and securing the homeland from terrorist attack, the United States has yet to execute an effective methodology for countering radicalization and recruitment to AQ. This monograph proposes a distinct War of Deeds methodology for accomplishing this.

Deeds are an especially persuasive form of communication: what we do matters far more than what we say, or what we say about what we do; policies and actions speak far louder than words; and actions not platitudes signify definitive proof of one's motives. The power of deeds as communication remains seriously underexploited, however, in USG information warfare designed to counter and delegitimize AQ's terrorist propaganda.

A War of Deeds is to be fought on two interrelated fronts: changing deeds and challenging deeds. Changing deeds requires a frank examination and possible reorienting of those present-day USG foreign, military, and diplomatic policies that diminish USG credibility and potentially enhance the resonance of AQ's terrorist propaganda in the Muslim world. It also requires a frank examination of existing USG information operations that in the opinion of the present writer fail to adequately address the present U.S. credibility deficit and whose proposals too often amount to unpersuasive marketing endeavors pitched to a highly selective Westernized audience.

Challenging deeds involves systematically, comprehensively, and forcefully countering AQ's terrorist propaganda, fabrications, and disinformation with verifiable facts. A careful analysis of the nature and function of propaganda in terrorist operations is first undertaken. I demonstrate the vital importance of AQ propaganda through the use of a proposed analytic construct—a "terrorist quadrangle"—linking political objectives, terrorist propaganda, terrorist acts, and strategic objectives; characterize the critical role and function of counterpropaganda in information warfare; and contrast counterpropaganda, as here defined, with current definitions of psychological operations (PSYOP) or military information support operations (MISO).

Next, I offer a comprehensive interpretation of influence operations, and a broadened conception of the nature of contemporary war and warfare. Here departing from the conventional seven instruments of national power captured by the Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence and Law Enforcement (DIMEFIL) or Military, Information/Intelligence, Diplomatic, Legal, Infrastructure, Finance, and Economic (MIDLIFE) acronyms, I advance a new acronym, DICEFILM (Diplomatic, Informational, Cyber, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, Legal, Military), which explicitly incorporates the cyber dimension of warfare, increasing to eight the instruments of national power. After providing this broadened conception of influence operations, contemporary warfare, and instruments of national power, I outline and illustrate the War of Deeds methodology

for countering AQ's messengers, media, and message; and demonstrate how this methodology may be used to counter the two "Great Lies" authorizing AQ's terrorist modus operandi, i.e., that the USG is an implacable foe and declared enemy of Islam and the greater Muslim world ("The Crusader"), and that al-Qaeda is fighting a purely defensive jihad on behalf of the oppressed worldwide Muslim faith community ("The Defender").

Following a brief conclusion, select strategic considerations are examined with focus especially on the potential suitability, acceptability, and risks accompanying a proposed War of Deeds.

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