



DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEMS, inc.

D S S I

METATEMPO: SURVIVING GLOBALIZATION

AL-QAIDA'S ENDGAME?

A STRATEGIC SCENARIO ANALYSIS

2 NOVEMBER, 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DSSi's strategic scenario analysis regarding Al-Qaida's endgame leads to the following conclusions about the real current events:

- The 'network of networks' known as Al-Qaida has successfully laid a trap for the United States. Al-Qaida retains the initiative and the U.S. is operating 'inside the intentions and plans' of Al-Qaida
- Al-Qaida cannot destroy the U.S. forces inside the U.S., nor can it convince the U.S. to leave the Middle East using terror attacks. The intention of the terror attacks is a provocation to force the U.S. to engage and deploy forces to the Middle East, where such forces could be destroyed
- The intention and purpose of Al-Qaida's plans are either to make the Middle East 'ungovernable,' or to gain control of the petroleum production system in the region. Application of the 'oil weapon' could be used to attempt to force withdrawal of U.S. presence in the region; outright destruction of the petroleum production system would leave the U.S. with no or greatly reduced real interests in the region
- Control or destruction of the petroleum production system in the Middle East, and the potential for attacks on global petroleum production, would transform the political situation in the region, initiate a global depression by degrading or destroying critical industries of developing and advanced Nation-States, and drastically shift the geopolitical balance

ABOUT THIS ANALYSIS

The following analysis is the product of DSSi's strategic analysis team using scenario planning to make sense of the current situation and the 'war on terrorism.' During the course of exploring future scenarios, past events acquired meaning, and the direction of the conflict as desired by Al-Qaida began to make sense.

Because of national security implications for the U.S., this material is being made available to assist the public in understanding the significance of the unfolding events. While the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001 were horrific, the consequences of success for Al-Qaida in their probable objective have the potential to destroy much of what are considered the benefits and functions of industrialized Nation-States.

Taking Osama bin Laden at his word, that he wants the U.S. out of the Middle East, and his desire for the destruction of the West, the stakes are greater even than massive fatalities by terrorist attack. That such ambitions are achievable were part of the conclusions of DSSi scenarios.

WHAT IS AL-QAIDA?

"This world is the prison of the believers and the paradise of the unbelievers." –Islamic saying

It is critical to understand, and not to underestimate, the 'network of networks' that is the World Islamic Front, of which Al-Qaida is the most well-known component:

- The World Islamic Front is composed of Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida, Al Jihad, the Islamic Group, Jamaat ul Ulema e Pakistan, the Moslem Brotherhood, components of the 'black' (operational) network from the defunct Bank of Credit and Commerce Inc. (BCCI), and elements of Abu Nidal's terrorist organization
- The stated purpose, supported by their operations, is to remove the U.S. from Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, and if possible, the world arena
- The Arab 'core' of Al-Qaida follow a radical form of Wahhabism, which is already a highly puritanical form of Islam. This group believes in the 'war of civilizations'—Western culture is an 'attack' on Islamic law and morality, and Islam must be protected from the potential of corruption. The U.S. is the most successful of Western cultures, and is viewed as the Great Satan, the enemy of God and humanity
- The interpretation of the Qur'an (114:4-5) supporting much of this action is the need to defend against the "mischief of the slinking prompter, who whispers in the hearts of men." The 'House of Islam' (Dar al-Islam) is viewed to be in a struggle with the 'House of War' (Dar al-Harb), typified in the Egyptian radical Islamic thought as "al-kufri millatun wahida" or "unbelief is one nation." All of the West is a 'legitimate target' and there are no non-combatants (only Moslems as defined by the core group, and non-Moslems). Islamic Nation-States and Moslem citizens are not immune—those 'pure in faith' will be 'afflicted' or tempted by the freedoms the West has to offer, but the "thief does not bother entering a ruined house" (al-Jawahir al-Hisan). Individual Moslems and Islamic Nation-States that are 'corrupted' will have departed the faith into apostasy, and are thus in Dar al-Harb. This includes such Nation-States as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as any members of the U.S. coalition—both the U.S. and Al-Qaida have a 'black and white' view of the world as being 'with us or against us'
- Osama bin Laden has a number of viable 'role models' from the history of the Middle East, including Saladin and the Assassins. For example, Saladin (the enormously successful commander during the Crusades) wrote in a letter to the Caliph in Baghdad that "European merchants supply the best weaponry, contributing to their own defeat." This is similar to Lenin's famous comment that "the Capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them." Also from the Crusade era are the Ismaili sect known to history as the Assassins. The Egyptian Moslem Brotherhood has used the term "Fida'iyah-I Islam" or "Devotees of Islam," which was used by Ismaili emissaries during the Crusades. The Assassins were patient, and used 'sleeper' agents to infiltrate, become trusted, and undertake suicide strikes on command
- The methods of Al-Qaida 'operatives' or terrorists have been highly motivated, skilled, creative, resourceful, and courageous. Use of what the West considers to be its strengths (openness, freedom) against itself is a common feature of attacks. The scope and scale of attacks show the ambitious nature of the organization, and the approach of "by any means necessary". Operations are clearly planned out in detail—discussion of such operations is likely a primary feature of life among Al-Qaida, and the understanding that feeds such planning is focused and extremely complex (bin Laden is said to have a detailed map of the Middle East painted in his living quarters, with U.S. positions and installations marked; this is both a planning tool and a means to visualize what he's after, i.e. removal of those markings). Al-Qaida is a student of history, learns from its own actions (both successes and failures), and has at least two decades of dealing with the West in various ways

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

To understand the current and future events, it is necessary to realize that this 'game' has been going on already for a number of years. Only considering the events from 11 September 2001 does not provide adequate scope of how the conflict has evolved:

- 1993: World Trade Center bombed. Attacks on U.S. military mission in Somalia
- 1995: Open letter from bin Laden to Saudi Arabia's King Fahd
- 1996: Osama bin Laden declared jihad (struggle) against U.S.
- 1998: World Islamic Front established, uniting for a common purpose the survivors of decades of struggle. U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania bombed
- 2000: U.S.S. Cole bombed
- 2001: 9 September assassination of Ahmad Shah Masoud. 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Possible on-going use of anthrax

Al-Qaida's terrorist attacks are not 'thrill kills'—they have a purpose. Terrorist behavior, as with most individuals, is anticipatory—actions will be taken in anticipation of their results. If the results achieved are not what was desired, then different strategies and tactics are tried.

Prior to 2001, Al-Qaida attacked three different sorts of 'target profiles'—civilian, diplomatic, and military targets—all without 'success' in achieving their purpose. It could be argued that "the attacks were the message," and that mass casualties **was** the intention; shifting the target profile would then appear to be a demonstration of capabilities, range, and creativity. This does not fit well with the current 'controlled escalation' profile of Al-Qaida attacks, nor with their own stated purpose. The other primary reason, and the one assumed by DSSI to assess Al-Qaida strategically, coincides with their own statements that they are attempting to force the U.S. into engaging them on their terms (it should be reasonable to take bin Laden at his word—while he doesn't issue statements directly related to attacks, his comments at other times are related, and ambitious enough to be considered). 11 September 2001 saw massive casualties inflicted largely on the civilian population inside the U.S. homeland. Al-Qaida now has the U.S. attention, the U.S. has responded as they intended, and events are moving along the course they planned out.

Why the necessity of forcing U.S. engagement in the region? Al-Qaida can not 'win' in the U.S. Beating the U.S. on its home territory would require massive conventional attacks or use of weapons of mass destruction, which Al-Qaida may be unable or unwilling (because of the possibility for immediate U.S. reprisals with its own weapons of mass destruction) to utilize at this point. The U.S. is also incredibly resourceful, technologically adept, in possession of vast material resources, and resilient psychologically. It is also not possible to effect a mass transformation of U.S. public or political opinion through the use of terrorist attacks, quite the opposite in fact. Comparison to the Afghanistan-Soviet conflict does not 'mesh' well because of the terrorism angle—the success against Soviet forces occurred when they were drawn into Afghanistan, not fought on Soviet territory. The Chechnya model must be considered—terrorist attacks in Moscow led to reprisal military action. This leads to the clear argument that the terrorist attacks have all along been intended to force U.S. engagement in the region, where U.S. forces deployed could in fact be destroyed. The more forces deployed, the more that can be destroyed, the better the result from Al-Qaida's viewpoint. Future terrorist attacks on a massive scale would lead directly to such deployments of U.S. forces, particularly if the war can be widened—encouraging the U.S. to engage in massive military operations against regional Nation-States, such as has been discussed by U.S. strategic planners. Destruction of U.S. forces on this scale would have a dramatic adverse effect on overall U.S. national security as well as the geopolitical balance of power.

What is the evidence that the U.S. is acting as Al-Qaida predicted, and continues to function in ways for which Al-Qaida has planned? The most significant indicator is the 9 September 2001 assassination of Ahmad Shah Masoud, only two days before the attacks in the U.S. Given the level of planning that went into both operations, the assassination and the terror attacks, the timing cannot be viewed as a coincidence. Looking at the result of the Masoud assassination is helpful. Afghanistan, the known 'home' of Al-Qaida, is largely an Islamic warrior culture. U.S. operations in the past made the response to 11 September 2001's attacks predictable—Desert Shield/Storm, missile attacks on Afghanistan and the Sudan, the air war over Kosovo. Coalitions, alliances with indigenous forces on the ground, use of 'over the horizon' weapons, reluctance to commit troops and suffer casualties, etc. are hallmarks of U.S. military operations. The assassination of Masoud removed the most likely single strong individual capable of providing leadership and a post-Taliban government. Not being able to stabilize the situation, the U.S. would be forced to continue active engagement over a longer period than it would normally like, and which would have been achievable had Masoud been available. The U.S.'s 'proxy' on the ground, the Northern Alliance, and 'ally' Pakistan, particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, have also likely been penetrated by loyalists to the Taliban and Al-Qaida, as the execution of Abdul Haq on 26 October 2001 indicates. Haq's capture and execution, within roughly twelve hours of entering Taliban-controlled areas, could only have been accomplished through unbelievable luck or good intelligence. The ISI has had close ties to the Taliban and Al-Qaida, close ties in the past to the 'black' network of BCCI, and has recently had key individuals removed because of concerns regarding their relationships. A great deal of preparation has gone into overt and covert control of the region, clearly with the foreknowledge of U.S. operations. Since the U.S. has not deviated from its 'standard operating procedure,' then the events unfolding were, predicted, planned, and prepared for by Al-Qaida.

ANTHRAX ATTACKS

Still unknown is whether or not Al-Qaida is behind the anthrax attacks in the U.S. Some argument has been made that, given the target profile, it is more probable that U.S. domestic terrorists are the perpetrators. This is a questionable conclusion—the timing makes no sense, nor do the targets. If domestic terrorists had the sophistication and capabilities, why choose now to strike, when the U.S. is mobilized against such actions?

There is a motivation possible for Al-Qaida that makes sense within the assumptions discussed so far. During Desert Shield/Storm, there was a great reluctance to engage in military operations from the 'Left' in the U.S. One of the most certain ways to convert 'doves' to 'hawks' is to personally target them in attacks. If such an attack is successful, the 'dove' is dead and out of the political picture; if such an attack fails, their viewpoint has shifted dramatically. Attacks such as the one on U.S. Senate Majority Leader Daschle have galvanized the political left. The mass of political opinion is now momentum toward military action—pushing operations faster than appropriate, moving faster than intelligence can be supplied, and silencing voices that might urge a more cautious approach. Attacks on the media create 'feedback' in the media cycle—coverage all out of proportion with the events, and 'the story is the story.' Targeted media outlets are also directed at serving the U.S. 'grassroots' population (such as the tabloid publisher), which feeds the political cycle through polling.

The anthrax attacks have additional benefits from the perspective of an attacker such as Al-Qaida:

- They use a strength of the U.S. against itself, the postal delivery system
- They provide a distraction from other potential planned mass terror attacks, and deplete the resources used to prevent such attacks
- They provide a proof of a weapon of mass destruction capability
- They test the response and capabilities of the U.S., perhaps aiding in selection of future attacks for effectiveness

An anomaly in the use of anthrax by Al-Qaida can be seen if one understands the history of terrorist operations. 'No retreat' operations—hijackings, hostage situations—led to the development of improved security measures and crisis management forces (commando teams). 'No contact' operations evolved in response—explosive devices on airplanes, hand-grenades into crowds, etc. 'No survivor' operations have evolved because of improved security measures—suicide bombers, and the terrorists of 11 September 2001—where a human mind is necessary to accomplish the mission. Al-Qaida has preferred to use 'no survivor' operations, while the anthrax attacks are clearly 'no contact' in approach. Whether undertaken by Al-Qaida, sponsored by Al-Qaida, or conducted by an unknown third-party, they do contribute to the momentum of the U.S. toward massive military action in the Middle East. Analysis of the anthrax agent used is contributing to the view of the super-'hawks' that want to extend the conflict to include Iraq—Iraq is identified as one of the possible sources of the anthrax agent, many strategic planners in the U.S. feel Iraq is 'unfinished business,' and bin Laden's comments about the suffering of the Iraqi people have helped move events in such a direction.

UNGOVERNABILITY, CONTROL, AND DESTRUCTION

DSSi's strategic scenario analysis of possible directions of future events leads in three primary directions: ungovernability, control of the petroleum production system, and destruction of the petroleum production system. The three approaches are in fact serial, and can be viewed as successive 'fall-back' strategies.

- **Ungovernability.** A deadly variation on Gandhi's approach in convincing the British to leave India. Gandhi used "non-violent confrontational non-cooperation"—the people of India could not be governed without their consent. Gandhi himself became a symbol of what Indians aspired to be like, while at the same time maintaining a connection such that anything that happened to Gandhi happened to all Indians (because of his moral authority, his actions such as fasting or his imprisonment impacted directly on every Indian). U.S. military actions in Afghanistan and possibly in the Middle East could escalate into violence from 'grassroots Islam,' which already has much dislike or hatred for the U.S. Such violence could make it impossible for U.S. influence in the region, or interaction such as business, tourism, etc. The U.S. has created 'brand bin Laden' by its own statements and actions—bin Laden is now seen as having parity with the U.S. (requiring great effort just to locate and capture/kill him), representing much of the opinion of radical and grassroots Islam, and inspiring future generations of terrorists. While difficult and costly, ungovernability is a long-term strategy that still leaves room for the U.S. to absorb the costs and continually attempt re-entry into the region. Rumors, if true, regarding bin Laden's ill health (kidney difficulties) may put additional pressure on his planning and timeline—not 'good news,' since it means dramatic terrorist actions
- **Control.** As discussed, U.S. entry into Afghanistan will become a long-term presence; the potential for pursuit of other targets (such as Iraq), will also act to encourage the U.S. to move significant forces into the region. As in the 'ungovernable' scenario, any actions undertaken by the U.S. draw a reaction in the region further polarized opinion against the U.S. Sufficient provocation, such as additional massive terrorist attacks in the U.S., would lead to expanded operations in the Middle East, thus accelerate the destabilization of the region. This is being cast in the region as a 'war on Islam' and terror attacks just before or during Ramadan (Islam's holy month) would leave the U.S. with two equally bad choices—no reprisals which would look like weakness, or reprisal attacks which could be spun as evidence of the 'war on Islam.' Attacks in the U.S. are viewed favorably by much of grassroots Islam, while attacks in the region are viewed as evidence of U.S. imperialism. Key petroleum production Nation-States, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the collection of the United Arab Emirates, are already viewed as corrupt, weak, and un-Islamic. Every action by the U.S. in the region weakens the position of the ruling families, while also destabilizing Pakistan. Al-Qaida may already control Pakistan's nuclear

weapons (command and control for these weapons is human-centric, and thus susceptible to infiltration or subversion), or could acquire control through overthrowing the destabilized government. Collapse of such Nation-States would leave a 'power vacuum' for someone to fill; removal and replacement with Al-Qaida members or supporters in the weak or unstable Nation-States would leave Al-Qaida with control of much of the petroleum production of the region. At roughly the same time, some weapon of mass destruction could be used on U.S. deployed forces. Such a weapon could be nuclear (acquired from Pakistan, Russia, or possibly Iraq), biological, chemical, or radiological. The reason for provocation to encourage massed, clustered U.S. forces is because of the reality of use of weapons of mass destruction—they work best against concentrated groups (the U.S. has limited options for basing forces in the region due to the decay in relationships with various Nation-States), and they must be used wisely since they would have a limited number. Such weapons could be delivered by ground delivery or SCUD (use of anthrax in the U.S. may lead to inaccurate assessment of the SCUD threat—the current anthrax attacks are part of a deception campaign to make U.S. planners later assume the use of biological weapon warheads, when nuclear warheads may well be used against U.S. forces instead). The willingness of Al-Qaida operatives to commit suicide as part of an operation solves many of the limitations assumed in delivery mechanisms. Control of the petroleum production system in the Middle East would allow Al-Qaida to 'set terms,' which would clearly include withdrawal from the region. As in the 'ungovernable' scenario, such a situation could not be safely continued, since the U.S. would again seek a way to reestablish itself in the region. For this reason, DSSi views the 'control' scenario as temporary at best, a transition between making the region ungovernable and the 'necessity' for Al-Qaida to attempt to destroy petroleum production systems

- **Destruction.** An analysis of U.S. behavior of intervention and military operations leads one to believe that as long as the U.S. has real interests in a region they will find a way to be involved; conversely, if the U.S. has no real interests in a region (e.g. much of Africa), its involvement will be half-hearted at best. As long as 'control' of the petroleum production system remained possible to attempt to retake, the significance of oil to the global economy would continue to encourage the U.S. to so attempt. The only way to remove the U.S. from Saudi Arabia, from the Middle East, and from the world arena, as bin Laden has stated he would like to accomplish, would be through the destruction of the petroleum production system. Al-Qaida's support and relationships with guerrilla and terrorist organizations around the world may give them the 'reach' necessary to launch additional attacks on other petroleum production systems as well (U.S. domestic, Central and South America). This could be accomplished in a number of ways, but three are notable:
 - Conventional. Iraq, as part of their 'spoiler' strategy when forced out of Kuwait, managed to destroy many facilities and damage many wellheads. Given the number of individuals trained by Al-Qaida, the dispersed task of destruction of petroleum facilities is not out of the question; plans for such 'rolling destruction' date back to World War II, when many production systems were in fact destroyed
 - Nuclear. There are a limited number of strategic positions that a nuclear device could be detonated at as a demolition charge, having three effects: massive radiation exposure of the petroleum system; hydrostatic shockwaves destroying the in-place production systems; hydrostatic shockwaves shifting or destroying the accessibility of petroleum supplies. Again, such devices could be obtained from Pakistan, Russia (which has never adequately accounted for its 'backpack' nuclear weapons), or perhaps Iraq (less likely, given the impact on Iraq's petroleum supplies as well)

- Nuclear. Osama bin Laden's recent comments in support of the Palestinian cause may have been for more than generation of popular support, and linking his cause to theirs. It has 'engaged' Israel as well. Any conflict in the Middle East would likely draw in the Israelis—unlike in Desert Storm, Ariel Sharon has expressed that Israel will respond to any attacks made on it. Israel has nuclear-warhead equipped missiles, and would perhaps use them if provoked adequately. What form such provocation might take is unknown, but launching a weapon of mass destruction on a SCUD would invite retaliation, particularly if the launch platform and Al-Qaida leadership were located conveniently on critical petroleum system points. The politics of why this is not an 'unthinkable' scenario are beyond the scope of this document, but it can be stated that Israel has little to lose by destruction of their regional competition, particularly the source of their incomes

CONSEQUENCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Any loss of U.S. position in the Middle East would have considerable regional consequences:

- **Destabilization and 'coup' potential.** Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan will not emerge from the current circumstances unchanged. There is no evidence that the governments of the three Nation-States enjoy the popular support of their populations. The probability of a shift to a more radical Islamic government is considerable for all three; Saudi Arabia's change of power structure would have dramatic consequences because of the oil reserves as well as the two holy cities, while Pakistan's change of power structure might well lead to nuclear weapons being under control of radical Islamic militants
- **Chaos and 'economic starvation.'** Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt are in dire financial condition, and already close to financial collapse. Traditional trade in the area has been critical, as has been support from greater or more wealthy Nation-States (Soviets, U.S., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc.). Collapse of these economies would lead to massive starvation, as well as further radicalization of their populations
- **Isolation or endangerment.** India and Iran would both find themselves neighbor to dangerous regimes. India would need to close off a large section of its border, create military defenses, and direct its economic activity through its rail system away from the hostile regions. Iran faces an impact on its petroleum production system, as well as hostile and even more radical neighbors
- **Wildcards.** Israel has much to gain and much to lose if events move in the direction outlined; their current political structure makes them the next logical target in the region, as well as fairly easy to provoke (and thus lured into traps). Iraq may well be collaborating in an agreement of convenience with Al-Qaida (as is suggested by similarities in anthrax agents); this agreement would break down shortly after destabilization became reality. Iraq could rapidly restore its military power by capturing the Western-provided weapons systems in Saudi Arabia; retaking Kuwait would 'redress a historical wrong' in Iraqi opinion. The struggle for title of 'Caliph' would put Saddam Hussein in conflict with Al-Qaida; who would win is anyone's guess. If Iraq is not operating in agreement with Al-Qaida, their petroleum production is just as threatened, as is the Ba'ath political structure. Given the West's view of Iraq, it wouldn't take much to provoke an attack on Iraq, which may very well lead to Iraq's use of its own weapons of mass destruction

GLOBAL DEPRESSION AND SHIFTS IN GEOPOLITICAL BALANCE

Whichever of the three possible endgame scenarios Al-Qaida is playing for, the impact of their success on the global economy would be a lasting depression:

- Power generation is reliant on petroleum and petroleum derivatives
- Transportation is the primary consumer of petroleum—air, shipping, rail, automobile, trucking
- Pharmaceutical and medical device production requires petroleum derivatives
- Materials such as plastics and synthetic fabrics are petroleum derivatives
- Manufacturing systems require petroleum lubricants
- Agricultural and food production systems rely on tractors, transportation, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. that are petroleum-enabled or derivatives
- Components for high technology products are produced in petroleum-poor Nation-States (Japan, Taiwan) that would be dramatically impacted, and require transport even if still produced

As a consequence of such events unfolding in the Middle East, the geopolitical balance could shift away from the U.S. This almost certainly would leave Nation-States such as China and Russia in positions of advantage—able to secure their own petroleum supply, maintain military ‘force projection’ capabilities, and dictate terms inside their regional spheres because of the dependence upon petroleum products.

CONCLUSIONS

Again, DSSi’s strategic scenario analysis regarding Al-Qaida’s endgame leads to the following conclusions about the real current events:

- Al-Qaida has successfully laid a trap for the United States, retains the initiative, and the U.S. is operating ‘inside the intentions and plans’ of Al-Qaida
- The purpose of the terror attacks is a provocation to force the U.S. to engage and deploy forces to the Middle East, where such forces could be destroyed
- Al-Qaida’s aims are to make the Middle East ‘ungovernable,’ gain control of the petroleum production system in the region in the attempt to force withdrawal of U.S. presence in the region, or destroy the regional petroleum production system
- Control or destruction of the petroleum production system in the Middle East and elsewhere would transform the political situation in the region, initiate a global depression, and drastically shift the geopolitical balance

DSSi believes the materials presented in the above strategic scenario analysis substantiate these conclusions.

ADDENDUM—6 NOVEMBER, 2001

Similar to the conclusions presented in the above scenario analysis, President Bush today warned the public of Al-Qaida's global ambition and quest for nuclear weapons. Thus, this material is made available to assist the public in understanding the significance of unfolding events. In reviewing our assessment, please keep in mind the following:

- These are cautionary scenarios. We are not being critical about US response to the attacks; we are critical about playing into Al-Qaida's hands.
- The stakes in this conflict are incredibly high. While the terror attacks are horrible, they are **not** over. If Al-Qaida can't accomplish their goal of forcing the U.S. out of the Middle East, then they will likely conduct operations intended to cause catastrophic damage and loss of life. It remains an option for them to try to do as much damage as possible to plunge the U.S. economy into a deep depression, and subsequently force attention to return home.
- The U.S. public 'will' remains untested. Pearl Harbor was a 'one off—the conflict didn't strike deep into the U.S. What price are we willing to pay for our interests 'over there'?
- Focus is critical. Petroleum is essential to protect, and 'losing' the Middle East, even if not by the design of Al-Qaida, has serious consequences. The U.S. homeland is unprepared for domestic attacks. The 'top down' approach isn't going to work—the government can incentivize through tax exemptions, and respond to crises, but cannot always predict, protect, and prevent. That's up to individual Americans and U.S. companies to do.
- Rules of engagement. Right now, the U.S. has the 'moral authority' of having been the victim. The U.S. must maintain that moral authority, which is why control in the military response is a critical issue.
- Military response. The U.S. military is still making a number of key assumptions—the U.S. feels it has the initiative, and that events are unfolding by its plan. It seems clear from looking at the history, planning, and preparation by Al-Qaida that such assumptions are likely inaccurate. Rather than discussing things the U.S. should do, it's more clear what it should **not** do—put a lot of concentrated mass where it could be attacked, which means diversifying and dispersing bases and positions. The U.S. should stick to unconventional warfare—it affords more control and leaves fewer chances for mistakes, which is critical in maintaining the moral authority. The military response is not the primary 'big picture' approach, but the U.S. should be focusing on social, political, and economic issues in the region. Without paying attention to the non-military issues, the region will continue to generate such groups. All military action accomplishes—U.S., Israeli, Russian, etc.—is to kill the 'weak' and create smarter, more dangerous terrorists. That, in fact, is where Al-Qaida comes from, the survivors of decades of military and covert actions.