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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE  
WASHINGTON, DC

20 December 2024

Reference: ODNI Cases DF-2022-00310, DF-2022-00311, & DF-2022-00314

This letter provides an interim response to three of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) requesting specific theses written by students at the National Intelligence University. As previously noted by DIA, DIA transferred these cases to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) in 2022.

ODNI is processing these requests under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended.

This interim response addresses eight of the theses. ODNI determined that one thesis, *Why the United States Needs a Domestic Intelligence Service and How to Make it Work*, falls under the purview of another government agency. It has been referred to them for review and direct response to you. *Non-Lethal Weapons of Mass Disruption* is provided in response to case DF-2022-00311 and *Hollywood Soldier Intelligence Support for SOFTWARE Operations* is for case DF-2022-00314. The other five these were requested under case DF-2022-00310.

During the review process of the seven documents being released directly to you, we considered the foreseeable harm standard and determined that certain information must be withheld pursuant to the following FOIA exemptions:

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  - Section 102A(i)(1), 50 U.S.C. § 3024(i)(1), which protects information pertaining to intelligence sources and methods; and
  - Section 102A(m), as amended, 50 U.S.C. § 3024(m), which protects the names and identifying information of ODNI personnel.
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Morrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Erin Morrison  
Chief, Information Review and Release Group  
Information Management Office

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**ABSTRACT**

**TITLE OF THESIS:** **Strategic Influence and Persuasion: Semantic Infiltration and the Latest “War of Ideas”**

**STUDENT:** (b) (6), MSSSI, 2008

**CLASS NUMBER:** MSI 703 **DATE:** July 2008

**THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR:** Prof. (b) (6)

**COMMITTEE MEMBER:** Prof. (b) (6)

This thesis sought to answer the following research question: To what degree can semantic infiltration of a target demographic affect the progress and outcome of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)? The relevance of this question directly corresponds to U.S. efforts to identify effective means to dissuade the ideological support for Islamic extremism in the GWOT. The use of semantic infiltration as a strategy against U.S. adversaries would provide the U.S. government with the ability to educate the public at home and abroad on the most accurate terms to define or describe terrorists, acts of terrorism, and their ideology. This can be achieved by using words as weapons. The U.S. can reduce the rhetoric initiated by Islamic extremists by replacing terms such as *jihad* (holy war) and *mujahiddin* (holy warrior) with *hirabah* (sinful warfare), *mufsiduun* (evil-doers/mortal sinners), or *muharibuun* (evil warriors/barbarians), and their English equivalents. The hypothesis of this study is: Semantic infiltration by the U.S. of the Al Qaeda center of gravity/target demographic can positively influence the progress and outcome of the GWOT.

To determine how semantic infiltration can be used against target demographics in the GWOT, a comparative analysis was conducted using past conflicts of a similar

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nature. This analysis was also utilized to determine how the U.S. can counter the adversary's use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics. This entailed using the qualitative triangulation method to analyze two case studies that involved the use of semantic infiltration, the Soviet Union (Cold War) and Al Qaeda GWOT), to derive significant themes and patterns related to the research question. The findings and conclusions supported the hypothesis.

This thesis concludes that semantic infiltration by the U.S. of the Al Qaeda center of gravity/target demographic can positively affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT. The data collected for the literature review and comparative analysis of the two case studies also suggests that semantic infiltration could support U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in the GWOT. Semantic infiltration operations are most effective when the objectives, message, and delivery are adjusted to the needs of the target audience, feedback is utilized to modify the message or approach, and expectations are modified according to the contextual factors.

The research conducted also revealed several factors that suggested the variables through which semantic infiltration affected the progress and outcome of the GWOT. These included the operating environment, individual perception, and the level of exposure to outside influences. Several recommendations were made to address these issues. These include Arabic language training/education, the development of an Islamic/Arabic database for media reference operated independently from the government, establishment of methods and measures of the effectiveness of semantic infiltration operations. If implemented, these recommendations have the potential to improve the U.S.' ability to mitigate the effects of Islamic extremist's propaganda.

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**STRATEGIC INFLUENCE AND PERSUASION: SEMANTIC  
INFILTRATION AND THE LATEST “WAR OF IDEAS”**

by

(b) (6)  
Defense Intelligence Agency  
MSSI Class 2008

Unclassified thesis submitted to the faculty  
of the National Defense Intelligence College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence

July 2008

This thesis has been accepted by the faculty and administration of the National Intelligence University to satisfy a requirement for a Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence or Master of Science and Technology Intelligence degree. The student is responsible for its content. The views expressed do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Intelligence University, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Intelligence Community, or the U.S. Government. Acceptance of the thesis as meeting an academic requirement does not reflect an endorsement of the opinions, ideas, or information put forth. The thesis is not finished intelligence or finished policy. The validity, reliability, and relevance of the information contained have not been reviewed through intelligence or policy procedures and processes. The thesis has been classified in accordance with community standards. The thesis, in whole or in part, is not cleared for public release.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my biggest fans – my husband, (b) (6), and son, (b) (6)

(b) (6)- Without your love, support, and encouragement, this great feat would not have been possible.

(b) (6) Our late nights, in your early days truly prepared me for the endurance required to complete this thesis!

This thesis is also dedicated to Professor (b) (6). I cannot thank you enough for your patience, understanding, and confidence in my ability to achieve success. I also extend my appreciation and gratitude to Professor (b) (6) as well. Thank you for stepping up to the challenge and pushing me through to the end. You are both great assets to the students of the NDIC.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

"If you want to take the fight to the terrorists you've got to defeat their propaganda and their ideas as well as their methods."

-Tony Blair, *New UK Group to Hit Back At Al Qaeda Propaganda*

The battlespace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not defined so much by terrain as it is by the culture, underlying values, attitudes and beliefs of the contestants. Mastery of such terrain is essential for a successful prosecution of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). To win the GWOT, the U.S. must understand the cognitive processes of the enemy and communicate strategically in a way that is understood in their context.<sup>1</sup> Recognition, understanding, and counter-attacks against the tactics of semantic infiltration will help determine whether or not the U.S. can defeat Islamic extremist propaganda. In the GWOT, this means circumscribing the violent *salafist* and his message, identifying his means for communicating that message, and targeting that means doggedly until the message is rendered unacceptable by its target audience.

This thesis examines the potential uses and limitations of semantic infiltration as an influence and persuasion campaign aimed at discouraging sympathizer support for Islamic extremists and minimizing the number of potential new recruits for terrorists

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<sup>1</sup> Riverside Research Institute, *Ideology and the Asymmetrical Threat of Terrorism*, White Paper, 1 February 2005, 4. Cited hereinafter as "RRI."

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groups in the Muslim world, particularly al Qaeda. The objective of this research is to determine to what degree can semantic infiltration of a target demographic affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT. The intent of this thesis is not to present semantic infiltration as the sole solution to mitigate terrorist threats against the U.S., but to explore how the U.S. can counter the adversary's use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics and encourage its utilization in future national counter-terrorism strategies. This can be determined by answering the following key questions:

- How has the strategy and related tactics of semantic infiltration have been used in past conflicts of a similar nature?
- How is semantic infiltration being used by Islamic extremists against target demographics in the GWOT?
- How can U.S. use of semantic infiltration dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism?

The hypothesis investigated is: semantic infiltration by the U.S. of the Al Qaeda center of gravity/target demographic can positively influence the progress and outcome of the GWOT.

## NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

According to RAND Researcher, Brian Michael Jenkins, "We have not dented the determination of terrorists, prevented their communications, or blunted their message. We have not diminished their capacity to incite, halted the process of radicalization or

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impeded the recruitment that supports the *jihadist* enterprise.”<sup>2</sup> Because of this, Islamic extremists like Al Qaeda exploit the ignorance of religious Islamic terminology to influence and rally support in quest of an Islamic theocracy in the name of “*ihad.*” By capitalizing on this lack of knowledge, extremists have been able to successfully conduct psychological warfare against the U.S., potential recruits, and Islamic sympathizers. In relation to semantic infiltration, Joseph Myers believes the extremist’s philosophy of an effective strategy is as follows:

“What better way to prosecute a war against your adversary than convincing those with whom you are at war that you are *not* at war with them; to convince them not to use the language and the logic of the war.”<sup>3</sup>

As the President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, M. Zhudi Jasser points out, “This war is about listening to the words of our enemies. It is about the ideas of our enemies which make them repel from freedom [sic].”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Myers comments that, “Words matter, and in the GWOT we are losing the battle of words in a self inflicted defeat.”<sup>5</sup> Although the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff realized that its information operations neglectfully failed to fully consider the cognitive dimensions of warfare, the U.S. continues to utilize traditional warfare strategies to combat terrorism in

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, *Combating Radicalization*, RAND Corporation, August 23, 2007 Conunentary <http://www.rand.org/conunentary/2007/08/23/UPI.html> (accessed April 14, 2008): 2. Cited hereinafter as “Jenkins, Radicalization.”

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Myers, “Strategic Collapse in the War on Terror,” American Thinker, [http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage/?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic\\_collapse\\_in\\_the\\_war.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage/?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic_collapse_in_the_war.html) (accessed May 5, 2008): 5. Cited hereinafter as “Myers, Strategic Collapse.”

<sup>4</sup> M. Zhudi Jasser, “In the War Against Islam We Must Listen to the Words of Our Enemy,” Family Security Matters, <http://www.fsarchives.org/article.php?id=1386463> (accessed May 14, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Myers, Strategic Collapse, 1.

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an age of unconventional warfare.<sup>6</sup> “By not understanding the psycho-political nature of the battle, and by not appreciating the meanings of words, we reward the enemy and demoralize our friends and potential allies.”<sup>7</sup>

History suggests that influence and persuasion campaigns are necessary in protracted conflicts such as the Cold War and more recent conflict involving Al Qaeda. In response, the U.S. military established doctrines for conventional warfare, counter-terrorism, and counter-insurgency. Doctrines to counter ideological political wars however, have not yet been established.<sup>8</sup> “The lack of an effective strategic response capability places the U.S. in an unpleasant position of having to respond to an idea without an equivalent strategic lever of power.”<sup>9</sup>

Previous strategies designed to capture or eliminate the top echelon of al Qaeda leaders in the hopes of restricting the terrorist’s message have been unsuccessful. For example, in Iraq the process of simply removing al Qaeda from the public eye has not and will not impede all terrorist efforts. This method is ineffective in the face of other extremists to fill the vacancies of dead or captured high ranking operatives. “In pursuing a strategy that emphasizes eliminating the direct terrorist threat rather than influencing the communities that continue to replenish the ranks, coffers and safe havens of our

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<sup>6</sup> RRI, 4.

<sup>7</sup> J. Michael Waller, *Fighting the War of Ideas Like A Real War*, (Washington DC: Institute of World Politics Press, 2007), 54. Cited hereinafter as “Waller, A Real War.”

<sup>8</sup> John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “The Real Analogy for Iraq,” RAND Corporation, August 24, 2007 Commentary, <http://www.rand.org/commentary/2007/08/24/UPI.html> (accessed 14 April): 1. Cited hereinafter as “Arquilla and Ronfeldt.”

<sup>9</sup> William Gawthrop, “The Sources and Patterns of Terrorism in Islamic Law,” *The Vanguard* (Fall 2006): 9-14. Cited hereinafter as “Gawthrop.”

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enemies, the U.S. has taken unnecessary casualties, undermined its own cause and alienated existing and potential allies.”<sup>10</sup>

In exercising caution as to how the U.S. refers to extremists to avoid offending Muslim-Americans, the U.S. has underestimated the sphere of influence Al Qaeda has managed to gain over the years. Al Qaeda has moved beyond the realms of a small interest group advocating its rights in a civil manner, to become a global movement of loyal followers willing to engage in violence. Thus, a strategy that will reduce America’s vulnerability to future attacks will require a cohesive ideological picture. Semantic infiltration can be utilized as a strategic weapon of influence and persuasion to help the U.S. counter Islamic extremist propaganda. However we must first recognize and counter its use against the U.S.

An effective semantic infiltration campaign will identify and analyze the target audience, establish objectives and apply methods that will induce the desired behavior. Some sympathizers’ support of Al Qaeda only stems from shared hostilities toward Western influence. In this example, semantic infiltration can be used to exploit the differences of opinion or interests between extremists, radical organizations, and sympathizers to minimize the threat of terrorism. By reducing the support to Al Qaeda’s operations, semantic infiltration indirectly encourages other followers to react similarly.

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<sup>10</sup> Waller, A Real War, 18.

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## UNIQUE NATURE OF STUDY AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

This thesis examines the potential use and limitations of semantic infiltration as an influence campaign aimed at discouraging sympathizer support for Islamic extremists and to minimize the number of potential new recruits for terrorists groups in the Muslim world, particularly al Qaeda. It also provides policy makers, analysts and interested readers with a suggested vocabulary to describe Islamic extremist propaganda to simplify the discourse on how best to counteract its influence.

Strategic influence and persuasion campaigns during war and peace have been studied for many years.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it should be noted that the idea of using semantic infiltration as a strategic influence and persuasion campaign as presented in this thesis is not new. However, this thesis examines lessons of semantic infiltration operations utilized during the Cold War and presently by Al Qaeda.

The use of semantic infiltration as an influence and persuasion campaign against Islamic extremist propaganda, particularly that of Al Qaeda, has resurfaced amongst American and Muslim-American scholars, academic, and Islamic experts. Advocates in support of semantic infiltration propose the use of terms that accurately depict the actions of extremists. For example, use the term “*hiraba*” (war against society) to describe the

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<sup>11</sup> George Creel, *How We Advertised America*, (New York: Arno Press, 1972), quoted in Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, “Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism,” RAND Corporation [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG184.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG184.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2008): 13. Cited hereinafter a “Creel.”

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actions of terrorists instead of “*jihad*” (holy war).<sup>12</sup> It is argued that replacing terms originally introduced by al Qaeda with more accurately descriptive terms will prevent legitimization of Al Qaeda apostasy.<sup>13</sup>

Although supporters of semantic infiltration believe it is important that we use the right words to describe the ideological aspects of the GWOT, others caution against the use of semantic infiltration as a counter-strategy, and are opposed to the use of semantic infiltration for a variety of reasons. However, this thesis will only discuss the three main objections. The first reason stems from the belief that the problem is the result of not having completed a thorough threat assessment or a sufficient threat model.<sup>14</sup> Second, other opponents of semantic infiltration believe the enemy’s terminology in some instances is more accurate and polemic than that proposed in a semantic infiltration strategy.<sup>15</sup> Third, there is the belief that the ability to influence the decision-making process of new recruits and sympathizers are highly dependent upon an individual’s perception of their obligation to fulfill the duties and commitment to the Islamic faith as prescribed by the Qu’ran.<sup>16</sup> To reach our target we must broaden our scope to include those who are most susceptible to the *jihadist-salafist* message – new recruits and Islamic sympathizers.

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<sup>12</sup> Jim Guirard, “Read Ahead: Document for Lectures,” TrueSpeak Institute <http://www.Truespeak.org/content.php?id=reaheaddocument> (accessed April 11, 2008), 1. Cited hereinafter as “Guirard, Read ahead.”

<sup>13</sup> Guirard, Read Ahead, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Myers, Strategic Collapse, 2.

<sup>15</sup> William McCants, “Problems with the Arabic Name Game,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (May 22, 2006) <http://www.teachingterror.net/Msgs/Problems%20with%20the%20Arabic%20Name%20Game.pdf> (accessed May 21, 2008); 2. Cited hereinafter as “McCants, 2006.”

<sup>16</sup> Jamaal al-Din M., *How to Approach and Understand the Quran*, (Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, Boulder, Colorado: 1999), 27. Cited hereinafter as “J. Zarabozo, Understanding the Qu’ran.”

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The susceptibility of weak states to terrorist threats, U.S. foreign policy with regard to the Middle East, and the root causes of terrorism are outside the scope of this thesis. This analysis does not lend itself to an investigation of the philosophical traditions of Islam but instead focuses on the nature, content, and effect of semantic infiltration.

### DEFINITIONS

Islamic extremists have so successfully altered the meaning of Islamic terminology so that it has influenced new recruits and sympathizers to join or support their quest for an Islamic theocracy. Just as extremists have their own perceptions of the meaning of Islamic terminology, so does the rest of the world. For this thesis the following terms are defined as follows:

**Semantic infiltration:** “The systematic distortion of the meaning of certain words to confuse or mislead,” leading to “the process whereby we come to adopt the language of our adversaries in describing political reality.”<sup>17</sup>

**Propaganda:** Refers to a use of language designed to evoke a particular kind of response.<sup>18</sup>

**Disinformation:** Deliberately misleading information announced publicly or leaked by a government or especially by an intelligence agency in order to influence public opinion or the government in another nation. 2. Dissemination of such misleading information.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Fred Charles Iklé, cited in Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Further Thoughts on Words and Foreign Policy,” *Policy Review*, Spring 1979. Cited hereinafter as “Moynihan, Further Thoughts.”

<sup>18</sup> Charles A. Fleming, “Understanding Propaganda From A General Semantics Perspective,” Institute of General Semantics <http://www.generalsemantics.org/etc/articles/52-1-fleming.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Martin Manning, “Disinformation,” Intelligence Encyclopedia, <http://www.espionageinfo.com/De-Eb/Disinformation.html> (accessed June 7, 2008).

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**Influence Campaign:** “An influence campaign uses planned operations – covert and/or overt – to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences. Such campaigns attempt to influence the perceptions, cognitions, and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign behavior favorable to the originator’s overall political and strategic objectives.”<sup>20</sup>

**Strategic Influence Operations:** Alters the target audiences’ attitudes, opinions, reasoning, and emotions to produce a desired behavior.<sup>21</sup>

**Rhetoric:** Combines expression with language to persuade. This theory incorporates Aristotle’s “Three Proofs of Persuasion Theory” - *logos* (words), *ethos* (character of the speaker), and *pathos* (the psychological element) to move popular passion, explain complex ideas in common terms, induce emotions and reverse hatred or fear.<sup>22</sup>

**Terrorism:** “Designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victims or object of the terrorist attack. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate a wider target audience that might include a rival ethnic or religious group, an entire country, a national government, political party, or public opinion in general... Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale.”<sup>23</sup>

**Caliphate** (*khilafa*) - Means successor and came to refer to the successors of the Prophet Muhammad as the political leaders of the Muslim community. Sunni Muslims traditionally regard the era of the first four *caliphs* (632-661) as an era of just rule.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations*, Joint Publication 3-53, (1996).

<sup>21</sup> Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, “Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism,” RAND Corporation [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG184.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG184.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2008): ix. Cited hereinafter as Cragin and Gerwehr, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, translated by George A. Kennedy (Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia Press, 1988), 44. Cited hereinafter as “Hoffman, Terrorism.”

<sup>24</sup> Doug Streusand and LTC Harry Tunnell, “Choosing Words Carefully: Language to Help Fight Islamic Terrorism,” *National Defense University Center for Strategic Communications*, (May 23, 2006), <http://www.ndu.edu/csc/docs/Choosing%20Words%20Carefully--Language%20to%20Help%20Fight%20Islamic%20Terrorism%2024%20May%2006.pdf> (accessed May 29, 2008): 3. Cited hereinafter as “Streusand and Tunnell, 2006.”

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**Jihad** - “Literally means striving and generally occurs as part of the expression *jihad fi sabil illah*, striving in the path of God. Striving in the path of God is a duty of all Muslims.”<sup>25</sup>

**Mujahid** (plural *mujahidin* or *mujahideen*) - “One who participates in *jihad*, and frequently translated in the American media as “holy warrior.””<sup>26</sup>

**Hirabah** - “Is derived from the Arabic root which refers to war or combat, means sinful warfare, warfare contrary to Islamic law.”<sup>27</sup>

**Mufsid** (*moofsid*) - “Refers to an evil or corrupt person; the plural is *mufsidun*.”<sup>28</sup>

**Fitna/fattan** - “*Fitna* literally means temptation or trial, but has come to refer to discord and strife among Muslims; a *fattan* is a tempter or subversive.”<sup>29</sup>

THESIS OVERVIEW

Al Qaeda has successfully used religious Islamic terminology to recruit new followers, replace captured or martyred members, and to obtain support from its sympathizers. Previous U.S. counter-strategies have generally failed to consider this cognitive dimension of unconventional warfare. However, simply removing al Qaeda from the public eye will not cease all terrorist efforts. This method, as evidenced in the eagerness of other extremists to fulfill the vacancy, has not nor will it ever be an effective strategy. As Hoffman stated “to a significant degree, our ability to effectively carry out

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<sup>25</sup> Streusand and Tunnell, 2006, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6.

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successful missions will depend on the ability of the American strategy to adjust and adapt to changes we see in the nature and character of our adversaries.”<sup>30</sup>

The structure of this thesis is formatted in accordance with the five chapter format as outlined in the Joint Military Intelligence College instructions published in *Style: Usage, Composition, and Form*.<sup>31</sup> This format includes an overview, a literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions. A description of the content provided in each chapter is provided below.

**Chapter One** - provides a general overview of the thesis, key assumptions, relevant definitions, the research question and the proposed hypothesis.

**Chapter Two** - examines the literature collected to support or refute the hypothesis. It also includes discussions of how semantic infiltration is being used by Islamic extremists against target demographics in the GWOT, how the U.S. can counter the adversary’s use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics, how can the U.S. can use semantic infiltration to dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism, and how the strategy and related tactics of semantic infiltration have been used in past conflicts of a similar nature.

**Chapter Three** - explains the design of the research, data collection processes, and describes the analytic methodology used for this thesis. Two conflicts involving the use of semantic information were utilized as case studies (Cold War

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<sup>30</sup> Hoffman, Bruce. “Combating Al Qaeda and the Militant Islamic Threat.” RAND Corporation. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND\\_CT255.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND_CT255.pdf) (accessed May 10, 2008): 13. Cited hereinafter as “Hoffman, Combating Al Qaeda.”

<sup>31</sup> Joint Military Intelligence College, *Style: Usage, Composition, and Form*, 2ed. (Washington, DC: Joint Military Intelligence College Writing Center, 2004), 96-97.

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- Soviet Union, and Al Qaeda). A comparative analysis of the two case studies was conducted to create the findings and develop the conclusions in Chapter Four.

**Chapter Four** - presents the findings and conclusions drawn from the analysis described in Chapter Three. Additionally, it also discusses the findings in view of supporting the hypothesis.

**Chapter Five** - provides the final conclusions drawn regarding this thesis, recommendations, implications for policy, and suggests areas for future research.

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## CHAPTER 2

### SEMANTIC INFILTRATION - STRATEGY

“Words define ideas, and ideas govern how people think. The enemy has succeeded in redefining certain key words, and consequently changed much of the world’s perceptions by warping the language of the Qu’ran and of historical Islam. The results have provided the principal justifications for terrorists to murder the innocent.”

-J. Michael Waller, *Making Jihad Work for America*

This chapter will review the available literature germane to the research question. Subsequent sections of this chapter will provide a brief discussion on how the U.S. can counter the adversary’s use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics. Next, there will be a review of recently implemented U.S. semantic infiltration operations. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the opposition to the implementation of semantic infiltration.

#### Words as Weapons

Semantic infiltration occurs when the opposition unwittingly through repetition or persuasion uses the semanticist’s words and by extension, the ideas, perceptions and policies associated with them. Fred Iklé coined the term in the 1970’s RAND study on “Difficulties the United States Faced in Negotiating with Communist Regimes.” During the Cold War, Iklé considered the carelessness of the U.S. in adopting the language of the opponents and their definitions of conflict as a major disadvantage. He blamed this

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phenomenon on government official's repetitive use of the enemy's terms in quotes and later without.<sup>32</sup> Building on Klé's concept of semantic infiltration, Senator Moynihan believed it to mean "the systematic distortion of the meaning of certain words to confuse or mislead,"<sup>33</sup> leading to:

"The process whereby we come to adopt the language of our adversaries in describing political reality."<sup>34</sup>

From his observations, Moynihan also recognized the advantages of "the most brutal totalitarian regimes that call themselves 'liberation movements.'"<sup>35</sup> He believed this would increase the probability that words would be misused to conceal the true nature of intent. Given that point he questioned whether we were supporting their efforts by repeating those words and if our own perceptions are thereby influenced.<sup>36</sup>

A leading advocate in support of U.S. use of "semantic infiltration" is Jim Guirard, founder of the TrueSpeak Institute. In his argument, he accuses Al Qaeda of desecrating the Qu'ran in the name of "*jihadi* martyrdom" by deliberately misreading, ignoring, and perverting its passages, and those of the *Hadith* and the *Figh* (Islamic Jurisprudence). From this perspective, the problems we are experiencing today mirror

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<sup>32</sup> Moynihan, *Words*, 70-71.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Moynihan, "Further Thoughts on Words and Foreign Policy, *Policy Review* (Spring 1979). Cited in Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., Chairman, United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. *The Role of USIA and Public Diplomacy* (January 1984).

<sup>34</sup> Moynihan, *Further Thoughts*, 53.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

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the Cold War problems identified as “semantic infiltration” in the 1970s and 80s by Dr. Fred Charles Iklé and the late Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Guirard’s concept, and the basis of his argument, is that semantic infiltration will increase the difficulty of Al Qaeda to inspire and sustain the suicidal zealotry of young Muslims or the approval of any devout and faithful Muslim. The use of Islam’s own religious terminology to expose the illegality of Al Qaeda’s apostasy is the best method to dissuade young, impressionable, and religiously-motivated Muslims that seek to join the *jihad*, from becoming mujahiddin and martyrs to gain entry into paradise. Semantic infiltration can be used to explain that such actions are against Allah and guarantees condemnation to *jahannam* (eternal hellfire).<sup>37</sup>

Guirard argues that a thorough review of Islamic jurisprudence is proof that Al Qaeda’s apostasy goes against the Islamic way of life as prescribed by the basis of Islamic law (the Qu’ran, *Hadiths*, *Sunnah*, the Six Pillars, and the Just War Principles).<sup>38</sup> He points out that the Qu’ran clearly states that there shall be “no compulsion in religion (*Surah* 2:256).” However, Al Qaeda has forced extremist and absolutist versions of Islam on Muslims, and distorted the term infidels to include Christians, Jews, and Muslims in disagreement with their tactics. Al Qaeda’s list of actions includes but is not limited to:

- Issuing and inspiring unauthorized *fatwas*
- Committing and enticing others to commit suicide for reasons of intimidation
- Fomenting hatred among communities, nations, religions, and civilizations

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<sup>37</sup> Jim Guirard, “Al Qaeda’s Satanic War Against Society – Hirabah Is Its Name,” The American Muslim.org, January 17, 2006 [http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/al\\_qaedas\\_satanic\\_war\\_against\\_society\\_hirabahh\\_is\\_its\\_name/](http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/al_qaedas_satanic_war_against_society_hirabahh_is_its_name/) (accessed April 2, 2008): 1-5. Cited hereinafter as “Guirard, Satanic War.”

<sup>38</sup> Jim Guirard, “A Ticket to Hellfire, Not to Paradise,” TrueSpeak Institute <http://www.truespeak.org/content.php?id=alqaedassatanicwar> (accessed April 30, 2008): 1.

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- Killing the innocent, non-combatants, and Muslims
- Warring against nations in which Islam is freely practiced<sup>39</sup>

The practice of any of these tactics are considered the act of destroying or spreading ruin on this earth which is identified in the Qu’ran as the gravest sins one can commit.<sup>40</sup>

Guirard reiterates that our continued use of Islamic terminology introduced to us by Al Qaeda that portrays “*jihad* by *mujahiddin* on their way to paradise... is as self-destructive as it was when we mindlessly parroted such preposterous Soviet, Maoist and Castroite labels as “people’s democracies” and “progressive fronts” and so called “wars of national liberation.”<sup>41</sup> In his opinion, “there is no so-called “*jihad*,” because there is neither any holiness nor any “peaceful, compassionate, merciful and just” will of Allah of the Qu’ran involved, just as there were no such “wars of national liberation,” because no liberty was ever involved.”<sup>42</sup>

Frustrated with the misuse of Islamic religious terms, Guirard began an effort to educate all about Islamic terminology, the power of words and the vital importance of truth in language, and religious relevance.<sup>43</sup> In pursuit of this mission he drafted a “Work-A-Day Glossary of Arabic and Islamic Words,” composed a “Statement for Anti-Terrorist Muslim–American Organizations,” and collected numerous statements in

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<sup>39</sup> Guirard, *Satanic War*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Jim Guirard, “The Power of Words and the Vital Importance of Truth-In-Language,” TrueSpeak Institute, (no date available) <http://truespeak.org/content.php?id=historicalfigures> (accessed April 17, 2008): 1.

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support of defining, educating, and the use of semantic infiltration to dissuade the affects of Islamic extremist propaganda.

The “Work-A-Day Glossary of Arabic and Islamic Words” is segmented into various versions of “works in progress” to define terms we already know and use out of context. It also serves as an English-Islamic/Arabic equivalency book of terms used to decipher Islamic militants from legitimate Islamic police forces.<sup>44</sup>

Guirard composed the “Statement for Anti-Terrorist Muslim–American Organizations” as a means to denounce Al Qaeda’s illegal attacks against the innocent. This statement is used to illustrate the credibility and support of Muslim–American Islamist, scholars, jurists, and language experts in condemnation of Al Qaeda’s illicit activities. The statement also demands an apology for Al Qaeda’s actions and informs Al Qaeda of its intent to utilize semantic infiltration to accurately convey and define its actions according to its own religious sources – Islamic jurisprudence.

Guirard elicited and compiled support for the use of the term *hirabah* from scholars of the Islamic and Arabian culture from around the world. Although some of the quotations are merely depictions of the differences in opinion on the exact meaning of *jihad*, all of the authors he cites are in agreement that *jihad* does not mean what extremists have proclaimed. They also agree that *hirabah* is the more accurate term. He argued, “now that our scholarly experts, our public diplomacy spokespersons and our national leaders know the word *hirabah* and the name *mufisdoon*... we should be using

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<sup>44</sup> Jim Guirard, “Work-A-Day Glossary of Arabic and Islamic Words,” TrueSpeak Institute, February 2, 2007 <http://truespeak.org/content.php?id=threeminiglossariesupdated> (accessed April 17, 2008). Cited hereinafter as “Guirard, Glossary.”

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these truthful Islamic words aggressively and without fail.”<sup>45</sup> Although the recommendations of the 1984 U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy were overlooked not once but twice after its initial recommendation, Guirard believes the concerns itemized within are relevant to the problems the U.S. is experiencing presently.<sup>46</sup> He concluded strongly urging that this strategy be revisited and the recommendations reconsidered for implementation.

The U.S. experience with semantic infiltration involving Islamic terminology is fairly recent. Arabic terms such as *mujahidin* and holy warriors were initially introduced to the current generation of Americans in 1979 during the Soviet takeover of Afghanistan. U.S. support of Muslims in their battle with the Soviet Union led most to perceive the *mujahidin* as heroes and brothers in arms. Americans understand “*jihad*” to mean “holy war,” and Islamic extremists consider the 9/11 attacks to be the result of a “holy war.”<sup>47</sup> Webster’s dictionary originally defined *jihad* as, “a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty” and “a bitter strife or crusade undertaken in the spirit of a holy war.”<sup>48</sup> This definition was later revised and defined as “a crusade for a principle or belief.”<sup>49</sup> The most recent definition is stated as “a personal struggle in

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<sup>45</sup> Guirard, *Satanic War*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Lt. Gen. Thomas G. McInerney and Maj. Gen. Paul E. Valley, “Winning With Words in the Global War on terrorism,” *The Lebanese Foundation for Peace* (June 20, 2005) <http://www.free-lebanon.com/LFPNews/2005/June/June20/june20.html> (accessed May 30, 2008): 2. Cited hereinafter as “McInerney and Valley 2008.”

<sup>47</sup> ‘Jihadist’ Booted from Government Lexicon, *MSNBC World News – Terrorism* (April 14, 2008) <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24297050/> (accessed May 6, 2008): 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, s.v. “Jihad.”

<sup>49</sup> *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “Jihad.”

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devotion to Islam especially involving scriptural discipline.”<sup>50</sup> Although each definition was reflective of how the U.S. public perceived *jihad* at that particular time, the reality was that the American and Islamic perceptions of the meaning of *jihad* were at odds. Opposing views were also heavily contested within the Islamic world. For example, the Qu’ran provides justification in support of both view points. According to Islamic law *jihad* means to wage war against non-Muslims. The origin and development of the word stems from *mujahada* and signifies the use of warfare to establish religion. “In Islamic legal theory, the *jihad* was a permanent obligation upon believers to be carried out by continuous process of warfare, psychological, political, if not strictly militarily.”<sup>51</sup> Since 9/11, the term holy war has become synonymous with terrorism.<sup>52</sup> About the same time the term *jihad* became the new buzzword but with a much different connotation. Academic scholars and various interest groups have mulled over the idea that *jihad* developed into two distinct forms: good *jihad* and bad *jihad* (bad *jihad*).<sup>53</sup> *Jihad* (holy war) is only recognized as legitimate if the right religious and political authorities declare it against the enemy at the right time. *Hirabah* (bad *jihad*) is not a legitimate holy war if it is declared by irresponsible and unauthorized individuals or the *ummah* (the entire body of Muslim believers worldwide) against the wrong enemy.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Mirriam-Webster Online*, s.v. “Jihad,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jihad> (accessed April 24, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1966), 16. Cited hereinafter as “Khadduri, 1966.”

<sup>52</sup> Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, (Baltimore John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 56.

<sup>53</sup> Walid Phares, “Preventing the West from Understanding Jihad,” *American Thinker*, July 17, 2007 [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/07/preventing\\_the\\_west\\_from\\_under.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/07/preventing_the_west_from_under.html) (accessed May 25, 2008): 2. Cited hereinafter as “Phares, Preventing the West.”

<sup>54</sup> Phares, *Preventing the West*, 2.”

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The 2005 Spanish *fatwa* issued against Al Qaeda for the attacks in Spain National Security Council is the most recent example of bad *jihad*. Public statements made against terrorist organizations who claimed jihad as their moral cover have already been made from within the *umma*.<sup>55</sup> In these statements approximately, “40 Muslim clerics in Spain condemned bin Laden as an “*apostate*,” and “*infidel*,” as operating “outside the religion” and as guilty of “*istihlal*” which is the arrogant sin of inventing ones own perversion of *Sharia* (Islamic Law).”<sup>56</sup> The *fatwa* demonstrated that Al Qaeda’s declaration of jihad against the U.S. and the West was actually *hirabah* launched by a group of warriors against the enemy without orders from the real commander. <sup>57</sup> As Reiher stated, “This *fatwa* is an example that the U.S. government can use as a ready-made weapon in the cognitive-domain battleground. By moving to the ideological offensive, the Department of State and Defense communications can reclaim the operations tempo in this war of ideas.” <sup>58</sup>

The idea of abolishing the U.S. use of the term *jihad* and replacing it with *hirabah* has penetrated large segments of the defense sector and is a high point of interest in academia.<sup>59</sup> Replacing *jihad* with *hirabah* redirects attention to the criminal nature of

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<sup>55</sup> Dan Reiher, review of *Fighting the War of Ideas Like A Real War*, by J. Michael Waller, *United States Naval Institute – Proceedings*, Vol. 133, Iss. 8 (August 2007): 83-84. Cited hereinafter as “Reiher.”

<sup>56</sup> McInerney and Valley 2008, 3.

<sup>57</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Reiher, 83-84.

<sup>59</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

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Islamic terrorists.<sup>60</sup> Professor J. Michael Waller of the Institute of World Politics and many other intelligence analysts, Islamist intellectuals and activists are all rallying in support of using semantic infiltration. Various military and intellectual circles also advocate prohibiting the use of the term *jihad* to describe what we are fighting against because the term is encumbered with Islamic religious significance.<sup>61</sup>

To date, “we have not dented the determination of terrorists, prevented their communications or blunted their message. We have not diminished their capacity to incite, halted the process of radicalization or impeded the recruitment that supports the *jihadist* enterprise.”<sup>62</sup> The U.S. military has doctrines for conventional warfare, terrorism, and insurgency. However, doctrines that involve ideological propagandistic wars have not yet been established.<sup>63</sup>

### **Semantic Infiltration As A U.S. Counter-Strategy in the GWOT**

The concept of the semantic infiltration strategy proposes the use of new words and the rejection of old words to prevent legitimization of Al Qaeda and its followers and simultaneously extend respect to the remaining Muslims. “The advocates of this ruse recommend that the U.S. and its allies stop calling the *jihadists* by that name and

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<sup>60</sup> Patrick Poole, “What’s in a Name? ‘Jihad’ vs. ‘Hirabah,’” *American Thinker* (September 18, 2007) [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/09/whats\\_in\\_a\\_name\\_jihad\\_vs\\_hirab.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/09/whats_in_a_name_jihad_vs_hirab.html) (accessed May 5, 2008): 1. Cited hereinafter as “Poole, What’s in a Name.”

<sup>61</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Jenkins, *Radicalization*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1.

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identifying the concept of *Jihadism* as the problem.”<sup>64</sup> From this perspective Phares argues that, “*jihad* is good, but *Mufsidoon* (extremists/terrorists) have spoiled the original legitimate sense of *jihad*.”<sup>65</sup>

It should be noted that the idea of using semantic infiltration as a strategic influence and persuasion campaign presented in this chapter is not new. The intent here is not to present strategic influence as the sole solution to mitigate terrorist threats against the U.S., but to encourage the exploration of semantic infiltration for utilization in conjunction with current or future GWOT strategies.

What is new, however, is the global span of communications which has dramatically increased the extremists’ recruiting pool. Former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, acknowledged this concern:

“Our enemies have skillfully adapted to fighting wars in today’s media age, but for the most part we – our – country has not. They plan and design their headlines-grabbing attacks using every means of communications to intimidate and break the collective will of free people.”<sup>66</sup>

In many cases local and international terrorists establish a cooperative relationship with one another to assist with the identification of other radical organizations that sympathize with Al Qaeda’s pan-Islamic agenda. They also utilize this relationship network as a resource pool in which it can obtain recruits and a safe haven for training and operations. Extremist propaganda can be countered, incitement minimized, and their recruitment efforts significantly reduced if the sources of the incitement to violence, their

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<sup>64</sup> Phares, *Preventing the West*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Harold Pratt House, “Strategic Conununications,” Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense transcript remarks delivered to the Council on Foreign Relations New York, February 17, 2006, [Http://www.DoD.mil/speeches/2006/sp20060217-12574.html](http://www.DoD.mil/speeches/2006/sp20060217-12574.html) (accessed May 28, 2008).

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message, the radicalization and *jihadization* are known.<sup>67</sup> Directing a persuasion campaign using semantic infiltration toward these groups could reduce their support to Al Qaeda, and dissuade future attack against the U.S. Some sympathizers' support of Al Qaeda only stems from shared hostilities toward Western influence. In this instance, semantic infiltration can be used to exploit the differences of opinion or interests between extremists, radical organizations, and sympathizers to minimize the threat of terrorism.

American leaders misuse language to such a degree that they intentionally wind up promoting the ideology of the groups the United States is fighting against.<sup>68</sup> Doug Streusand and LTC Harry Tunnell offer that simple comprehension of the meaning of the various words used to describe the enemy is necessary to persuade potential recruits and sympathizers not to support the *jihadist* movement.<sup>69</sup> “Because the Global War on Terrorism—or more precisely the war against Islamic totalitarian terrorism—includes a war of ideas, leaders, journalists, authors and speakers must use the most accurate terms to describe those ideas.”<sup>70</sup> From this perspective, the two stated that the U.S. cannot win wide-spread support throughout the Muslim world if terms used to define them, portrays the behavior of our enemies as moral.<sup>71</sup>

In order for the U.S. and its allies to have a true understanding of the nature of the enemy we are fighting, it is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that the words chosen are used for exactly what they mean. Streusand and Tunnell argued that “Correcting this

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<sup>67</sup> Jenkins, *Radicalization*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 377.

<sup>69</sup> Streusand and Tunnell, 2006, 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

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vocabulary is a necessary step to educate the wide-ranging groups who are affected by the war; to discredit those who either passively or actively, or wittingly or unwittingly support Islamic totalitarian terrorism; and to reveal the truly insidious nature of our enemy.”<sup>72</sup> For example, Streusand and Tunnell explain that “Calling our enemies *jihadis* and their movement a global *jihad* thus indicates that we recognize their doctrines and actions as being in the path of God and, for Muslims, legitimate.” Recognizing the potential for diverse interpretations of the meanings of words and the two, caution the use of the term *mujahidin* to describe those who participate in what they perceived to be *jihad*. They state that, “it was quite proper for us to describe the warriors who resisted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as *mujahidin*, many of whom are now our allies in Afghanistan. To extend the term to our current enemies dishonors our allies and authenticates our opponents as warriors for Islam.”<sup>73</sup> Instead, like Guirard, Streusand and Tunnell propose replacing the previous terms with *hirabah*, *mufsidun*, and *fitna/fattan*. By describing the Islamic totalitarian movement as the global *hirabah*, not the global *jihad* makes its legally justified and leaves no moral ambiguity in its connotation.<sup>74</sup> The use of *mufsidun* denotes corruption and is viewed very negatively in most of the Islamic world and also leaves no moral ambiguity.<sup>75</sup> Describing the enemy and their actions as *fitna/fattan*, portrays their activities as divisive and harmful.<sup>76</sup>

Streusand and Tunnell conclude that, “the terms proposed herein should become an indispensable part of the vocabulary of America’s leaders, reporters and friends immediately.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

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The wrong terms promote the idea that terrorist elements represent legitimate Islamic concepts, which in turn might aid in the enemy recruitment of disenfranchised Muslims because we have identified to them a seemingly “traditional” outlet through which they can voice their dissatisfaction.”<sup>77</sup>

In his book, “Fighting the War of Ideas Like a Real War,” Dr. J. Michael Waller steadfastly proclaimed that “the United States is under the psychological siege of Islamic radicals.”<sup>78</sup> In his opinion, the U.S. is losing the war of propaganda due to the continuous misuse of Islamic language by our terrorist adversaries. Waller argued that in using terms labeled by the adversary, the United States cedes the field of battle in the war of ideas. Because the term *hirabah* provides a more accurate depiction of the actual activities of Islamic radicals, he also proposes the replacement of the term *jihad* with the word *hirabah* to counter the false use of *jihad*.

Waller argues that “failure to understand the type of battle in which we are engaged, and the lack of appreciation for the meaning of words, we are rewarding the enemy and demoralizing our friends and allies. Basing his argument on the misuse of the Arabic term ‘*jihad*’ used by terrorists, he also proposes making terrorist use of terminology work to the benefit of the U.S. He suggested that by having a true and accurate understanding of Islamic language, and by conveying the true meaning of the words behind the message to the American public and its allies, we can “make *Jihad* work for America.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Streusand and Tunnell, 2006, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Waller, A Real War, 30.

<sup>79</sup> J. Michael Waller, “Making Jihad Work for America,” *Journal of International Security Affairs*, (Spring 2005), <http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2006/10/waller.php> (accessed April 14, 2008): 9. Cited hereinafter as “Waller, Jihad.”

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Andrew Silke, author of “Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences,” believes, “one single pathway to terrorism does not exist.”<sup>80</sup> Understanding Al-Qaeda has the ability to adapt and adjust its message and methods of recruitment to various recruiting environments and recommends that the rest of the world acknowledge this fact. He offers evidence of how an individual’s behavior is influenced or determined by a group or organization.

David Kilcullen also acknowledged Al Qaeda’s ability to transform the diverse actions of individuals and groups to support propaganda used to manipulate the perceptions of its intended audience. Kilcullen agreed that terminology utilized by the U.S. to describe terrorist and terrorists actions draw on the negative formulations of terrorists.<sup>81</sup> He also proposed that the implementation of a semantic infiltration campaign of Arabic/Islamic words will create difficulties in the recruitment efforts of Al Qaeda.<sup>82</sup> If the U.S. can portray *irhabis* (terrorists) as *mufsidum* engaged in *hirabah* in an *murtad* (apostasy) against the Qu’ran it can persuade the *umma* that such actions warrants an afterlife in *jahannam* (eternal hellfire).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Andrew Silke, ed., *Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2003), 29.

<sup>81</sup> David Kilcullen, “New Paradigms for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Small Wars Journal*. SWJ Blog June 23, 2007, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/06/new-paradigms-for-21st-century/> (accessed April 12, 2008: 1. Cited hereinafter as “Kilcullen, 2007.”

<sup>82</sup> Kilcullen, 2007, 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

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### **Public Discourse & the Common Misuse of Words**

As noted by Waller, the current administration was so overly concerned with preventing manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiments and reassuring the world that the GWOT is not a religious war, that it missed the opportunity to correct the accepted terrorist definition of *jihad*.<sup>84</sup> This distraction led to other notable public figures to use words presented in the context in which the adversary delivered them. The missed opportunity increased the rhetoric use of these words by the general population and the media. For example, in a November 2003 interview, Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, made a statement that provides two examples of the influence of semantic infiltration:

“Iraq is the central front now in this war on terrorism because with a stable and secure Iraq, *a very hard blow will be dealt to the international jihad*, the international terrorist movement that caused September 11<sup>th</sup> and intends to continue to pursue us.”<sup>85</sup>

“We have a very good strategy for dealing with this upsurge of violence in Iraq. We know that we’re dealing with the regime remnants. *We’re dealing with some foreign terrorist, who are coming from outside the country to fight what they believe is and extremely important jihad.*”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Waller, *A Real War*, 61.

<sup>85</sup> The White House, “Interview of the National Security Advisor,” KHOU-TV Houston, Texas, November 10, 2003.

<sup>86</sup> The White House, “Interview of the National Security Advisor,” KXAS-TV Dallas, Texas, November 10, 2003.

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In another example, bin Laden labels Americans “crusaders” and America as “the great Satan.”<sup>87</sup> He implied that these words have value. This allowed bin Laden to create his own version of “us” versus “them.” President Bush’s expressions like ‘eradicating evil,’ an “infinite justice” or bin Laden’s “Zionist-crusader Alliance,” only confuse the issue, particularly when President Bush calls an American mission a “crusade.”<sup>88</sup> For those who follow the likes of bin Laden, this was interpreted as simply “expelling crusaders and Jews,” of which bin Laden has emphasized often. Bush may have bolstered the American audience in using those expressions, but he strengthened bin Laden’s argument. Zagacki, states that harsh rhetoric of in this context, “can easily persuade those who live in his world that retaliatory acts, internationally sanctioned legal proceedings, or even humanitarian relief efforts led by the U.S. are “evil,” against Islam,” or a “war against the Muslim world.”

On the third anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Vice President Cheney repeated the *jihād* rhetoric in interviews, meetings, and such. Most of his statements appeared to be an attempt to educate the domestic populace on the nature of the threat:

“With respect to the al Qaeda organization, or to a *terrorist who is committed to jihād, who is out to kill infidels* and is prepared to sacrifice their life in the process, the whole notion of deterrence is meaningless.”<sup>89</sup>

“They are *absolutely committed to jihād, to killing infidels*. We’re at the top of the list.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Waller, *A Real War*, 61.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> The White House, “Vice President’s Remarks and Q&A at a Town Hall Meeting in Ottumwa, Iowa,” September 17, 2004. Cited hereinafter as “White House 2004.”

<sup>90</sup> White House 2004.

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Other examples abound:

“A handful of the people, *motivated by and intense desire to commit jihad, to kill the infidel* – and we’re the infidel.”<sup>91</sup>

“These are people who are people who are *absolutely committed to jihad and that want to kill infidels* and we’re the infidels.”<sup>92</sup>

‘As I say, it’s a tough, long, hard slog... There’s nothing you can hold at risk that will deter them from attacking us. *They’re committed to jihad. They want to kill infidels. That’s us...*’<sup>93</sup>

Although Vice president Cheney’s statement may have made sense to the American audience, he did not explain to the Muslim audience that the U.S. by definition is not the infidel or that the *jihad* was not justified. It is important to also note that the administration was not the only entities perpetuating the words and meanings of Islamic extremist. Politicians of both parties, law enforcement, intelligence, diplomacy, and armed forces officers and media outlets all used, unintentionally, similar rhetoric.<sup>94</sup>

### **Dissenting Views**

According to Joseph Myers, simply implementing a semantic infiltration operation is not sufficient in comparison to the NSC-68 threat model developed during the Cold War. This particular model outlined fundamental variables absent from the

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<sup>91</sup> The White House, “Vice President and Mrs. Cheney’s Q&A in Jamestown, Pennsylvania,” October 18, 2004.

<sup>92</sup> The White House, “Vice President and Mrs. Cheney’s Q&A in Cincinnati, Ohio,” October 19, 2004.

<sup>93</sup> The White House, “Vice President and Mrs. Cheney’s Q&A in Cedar Rapids, Iowa,” October 23, 2004.

<sup>94</sup> Waller, *A Real War*, 64.

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proposed strategy of Cold War semantic infiltration. It identified the underlying conflict in the realm of ideas and values between the U.S. purpose and the Kremlin design.

Myers stands firm on his belief that “no weapon, theory, words, phrases that will disarm the enemy or shape the cultural attitudes of *ihadists*.” In his argument he emphasizes that the outcome can only be determined by the way the Islamic world perceives Al Qaeda’s claim of legitimacy. Conversely, however, he does believe it is important that we use the right words to educate the American people so they understand the challenges the U.S. is confronting in this conflict.

He argues that the government’s implementation of a policy to semantically infiltrate Al Qaeda would be a strategic failure. From his perspective, “It does nothing to improve our strategic comprehension of the threat or improve our foreign strategic communications; in fact it reinforces existing conceptual problems and risks confusing our messaging with our own actual knowledge of the *ihadist* threat.” He reiterates that understanding the enemy, his threat doctrine, authoritative statements, sources and the basis in which he rest his philosophy and doctrine is the first and most vital step in developing a successful threat model.<sup>95</sup>

*Jihad* is based on exegesis of the Quran and Islamic law. Until the U.S. understands the manifestations that Al Qaeda proposes legitimizes their effort to return to the *caliphate*, the U.S. will continue to be oblivious to indications and warnings of future terrorist attacks. Referencing Khadduri, Myers believes the reasons other Muslims choose not to engage in violent *ihad* is irrelevant and does not contribute to the model nor help us understand the enemy. Khadduri states, “Peace does not supersede the state

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<sup>95</sup> Myers, Strategic Collapse, 1-9.

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of war because *jihad* is a legal duty prescribed by Islamic law...Muslim authorities only entered into peace treaties with non-believers when it was advantageous for Islam.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, policies like the one issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have no influence on self proclaimed *jihadists*.

The DHS policy stated:

“U.S. officials may be unintentionally portraying terrorists, who lack moral and religious legitimacy, as brave fighters, legitimate soldiers or spokesmen for ordinary Muslims.”<sup>97</sup>

Myers argues that a Department of Homeland Security initiative to prohibit the use of the terms such as *jihad* and mujahadeen to describe or identify terrorists can not be justified on the grounds that they lack “moral and religious legitimacy.” To do so assumes that Islam is not a valid religion.

In support of Myer’s position, Shmuel Bar states, “This is a one sided battle; the radicals are on the offensive. *Fatwas* commanding terror can only be countered by a clear and opposing consensus (*ijma*) of mainstream ‘*ulama*. Such a consensus does not exist. This is due to ... the deference that mainstream ‘*ulama* feel towards the radicals as the quintessential believers, and the sense that they are competing with the radicals of the same constituency. The declarations of heresy (*takfir*) and the fear of igniting internal

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<sup>96</sup> Khadduri, 54.

<sup>97</sup> Department of Homeland Security, “Terminology to Define the Terrorist: Recommendations from American Muslims,” SCRIBD <http://www.scribd.com/doc/2903194/Terminology-to-define-the-terroristsHomeland-Security> (accessed May 16, 2008).

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conflict (*fitnah*) created silence. The silence becomes the consent and legitimacy and as long as this remains as such the battle cannot be won.”<sup>98</sup>

In an attempt to prevent further legitimization, the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC) issued the following guidelines in support of implementing a semantic infiltration operation:

“We suggest you avoid the term ‘Al Qaeda movement,’ which implies a degree of political legitimacy (e.g. ‘labor movement,’ ‘civil rights movements,’ ‘women’s movements:’ ...). There is no legitimacy to Al Qaeda’s activities.”

“Not to use ‘*ummah*’ to mean ‘the Muslim world.’ It is not a sociological term, rather, it is a theological construct not used in everyday life.”

“Avoid the term ‘*caliphate*,’ which has positive connotations for Muslims, to describe the goal of Al Qaeda and associated groups. The best description of what they really want to do is a ‘global totalitarian state.’”<sup>99</sup>

Myer’s disagreed with the NCTC’s claim that Al Qaeda movement has no legitimacy. He stated that the roots of Al Qaeda stem from the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood, thus the Al Qaeda ideology and the Muslim Brotherhood constitute a movement.<sup>100</sup> He argued that to use semantic infiltration to change the meanings of words that are synonymous with the original word only creates additional confusion. The NCTC stated, “In Arabic, *jihad* means ‘striving in the path of God’ and is used in many

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<sup>98</sup> Shmuel Bar, Jihadist Ideology in Light of Current Fatwas,” The Hudson Institute series no.1, paper no. 1 (2006), [http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/docLib/20060906\\_SBarJihad.pdf](http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/docLib/20060906_SBarJihad.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Counter Terrorism Communications Center, “Words that work and Words that Don’t: A Guide for Counterterrorism Communication,” UPI.com, National Counter Terrorism Center vol. 2, iss. 10 (March 14, 2008) <http://r.m.upi.com/other/12101619901529.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2008). Cited hereinafter as “NCTC.”

<sup>100</sup> Myers, Strategic Collapse, 7.

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contexts beyond warfare.”<sup>101</sup> Myer’s argues that “Calling our enemies *jihadist* and their movement a global *jihad* unintentionally legitimizes their actions.”<sup>102</sup>

According to Myers, this concept has no foundation. “It presumes a cause and effect is based on word choice. Al Qaeda is legitimate or illegitimate based on what the Muslim *ulema* says about Al Qaeda not us; pointing out that in any language and in Islamic law *jihad* means “warfare to establish faith.”<sup>103</sup> Citing Dr. Khadduri, Myers reminds us that in Islam the ummah is the immediate point of reference for every believer. The *ummah* is also a political community composed of all those who profess the Islamic faith.

In conclusion, Myers questioned if the U.S. strategy to win the war of ideas is to declare that there is no ideological movement, and that we will succeed with a change in lexicon. The adoption of semantic infiltration is simply an admission that a strategic assessment of our enemy similar to that prepared for the Soviet doctrine in the early years of the Cold War will not be accomplished.<sup>104</sup>

Patrick Poole, author of “Flying Blind in the War on Terror,” takes a similar stance. He, too, agreed that a comprehensive doctrinal assessment of Islamic extremist is necessary to defeat the enemy. “The failure of political leadership to assess exactly who the enemy is and how they propose to attack and defeat us is a complete abdication of

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<sup>101</sup> NCTC.

<sup>102</sup> Myers, Strategic Collapse, 8.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Patrick Poole, “Flying Blind in the War on Terror,” American Thinker [http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/04/flying\\_blind\\_in\\_the\\_war\\_on\\_ter.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/04/flying_blind_in_the_war_on_ter.html) (accessed May 5, 2008): 1.

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responsibility.”<sup>105</sup> From this perspective, Poole believes that establishing a new “lexicon” is an admission that a strategic threat assessment will never be conducted. Hence, the U.S has elected to fly blind in the Global War on Terror. He argued that the government has not given weight to the ramifications of using semantic infiltration and what Islamic extremists may gain from this effort. It could potentially broaden anti-American sentiments to new areas, making future influence and persuasion campaigns more complex.

In his argument, Poole stated that “to fully understand the gravity of the problem posed by semantic infiltration we must consider the role that religion might play in the rise of Islamic terrorism.”<sup>106</sup> Poole made note of false assumptions underlying the proposal of a semantic infiltration campaign. First, it limits the enemy in the GWOT to only Al Qaeda. <sup>107</sup> Secondly, “it also fails to account for the radicalization process that is essential for the growth of Islamic terrorism.”<sup>108</sup> Lastly, it provides false hope that engagement and appeasement can covert supporters of Islamic extremism into “Pro-American” extremist. <sup>109</sup> He concluded by emphasizing that the importance for the U.S. not exclude other terrorist organizations that have allied with Al Qaeda or those that have already committed terrorist attacks against the U.S. and its interest. <sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Poole, *Flying Blind*, 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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In his article, “What’s in a Name? ‘*Jihad* vs. ‘*Hirabah*,” Poole shares his opposition to Guirard’s misuse of other’s work in support of his own idea. Poole used the work of Dr. Sherman Jackson, of the University of Michigan Faculty to support his opposition.<sup>111</sup> Jackson proposed utilizing the term *hirabah* instead of *jihad* and defined it as:

“...these jurists confirm that *hirabah* is distinguished by its connection to spreading of fear (*ikhafah*) and helplessness (*adam al-ghawth*) and the fact that no effective security measures can be taken against it (*ta’addhur al-ihiraz*).<sup>112</sup>

However, Jackson restricts the exchange of terminology to domestic terrorism and explains that application of Islamic law outside Islamic land differs among Islamic jurists and thereby increases the level of complexity exponentially.<sup>113</sup> Despite this fact, Poole says that Guirard’s argument attempts to extend this Jackson’s concept to international terrorism.

Poole identifies three fallacies which negates the use of *hirabah* with reference to Al Qaeda. First, “the pursuit of political aims tends to heighten or perhaps establish the correspondence between publicly directed violence and terrorism in American law. In Islamic law it tends to have the opposite effect. In other words, to the extent that a group declares itself or is deemed by the government to be acting in pursuit of political objectives (and the assumption here is that these are grounded in some interpretation of religion), their activity is actually less likely to fall under the law of *hirabah*.” Second,

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<sup>111</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 2.

<sup>112</sup> Sherman Jackson, “Domestic Terrorism in the Islamic Legal Tradition,” *Muslim World* 91, vol. 3-4 (Fall 2001), 296. Cited in Patrick Poole, “What’s in a Name? ‘Jihad’ vs. ‘Hirabah,’” *American Thinker* (September 18, 2007) [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/09/whats\\_in\\_a\\_name\\_jihad\\_vs\\_hirab.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/09/whats_in_a_name_jihad_vs_hirab.html) (accessed May 5, 2008): 1-5. Cited hereinafter as “Poole, What’s in a Name, 1-5.”

<sup>113</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 1-5., 293-310.

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under Islamic law, the greater the number of individuals involved in a *prima facie* act of terrorism, the less likely to fall under the laws of *hirabah*. Third, *hirabah*, at least in its fully developed form, appears to be potentially a much broader category than terrorism proper, covering as it does a spectrum of crimes ranging from breaking and entering to "hate crimes" to rape to terrorism proper."<sup>114</sup>

Further analysis of Jackson's theory outlines the problems with the application and usage of the term *hirabah*. For instance, if Al Qaeda's goal to re-establish an Islamic *caliphate* is perceived as a legitimate political aim, then using the term *hirabah* to replace terrorism becomes irrelevant.<sup>115</sup> Extremists view their actions as reasonable interpretations of Islamic law and as a result *fatwas* directed by Islamic scholars permit attacks against the U.S.<sup>116</sup>

The second problem stems from perception. An increase in Al Qaeda membership legitimizes their claims and further reduces the applicability of *hirabah*.<sup>117</sup> Third, *hirabah* does not align well with contemporary terrorism the U.S. is experiencing today. In the medieval Islamic tradition *hirabah* was understood as brigandage or armed highway robbery and in the first century it also included rebellious activities against the state.<sup>118</sup> In the eyes of Islamic extremists, domestic terrorism does not constitute *hirabah* if both coordination and sufficient force are used.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, if Jackson's concept

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<sup>114</sup> Poole, What's in a Name, 1-5., 293-294.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 302-303.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. .

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> McCants, 2006, 1.

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is applied to each of these circumstances *hirabah* would not apply. These characteristics constitute legitimate acts of rebellion. If this concept holds true, all acts of terrorism would not be *hirabah* because they are all planned, coordinated, and followed by some form of force. <sup>120</sup>

Another problem Jackson identified with using *hirabah* in place of terrorism is “there is no justification in Islamic jurisprudence for applying the term and/or punishment of *hirabah* when the violence is directed at non-Muslims governments, societies or individuals.”<sup>121</sup> The difficulty in applying *hirabah* in this context can be attributed to several Qu’ranic *surahs* (verses) that call for instilling terror and fear into the heart of the enemy (*Surah* 8:60). Asking Muslims to believe that the *jihadis* are fighting against God and Muhammad will result in derision from devout Muslims. <sup>122</sup>

Poole argues that the scholars Guirard used to support his position are primarily American Muslims. <sup>123</sup> He disagrees with Guirard’s selections because “Western Muslim advocates of this approach are directly tied to known Muslim Brotherhood front groups operating in the U.S.”<sup>124</sup> According to Poole, Guirard’s push for a semantic infiltration

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<sup>119</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 1-5., 302-303.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>121</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 1-5., 305.

<sup>122</sup> McCants, 2006, 1.

<sup>123</sup> Poole, What’s in a Name, 4.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 5.

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operation lacks support of some scholars within the Muslim world. As a result, Poole believes a “semantic infiltration” operation is without merit.<sup>125</sup>

However, authors Walid Phares and Stephen Coughlin identified Sherman Jackson as a trustee to the North American Islamic Trust and warned that:

“Thus the promoters of this theory of *Hirabah* and *Mufsidoon* are representing the views of classical Wahabis and the Muslim Brotherhood in their criticism of the "great leap forward" made by bin Laden. But by convincing Westerners that Al Qaeda and its allies are not the real *ihadists* but some renegades, the advocates of this school would be causing the vision of Western defense to become blurred again so that more time could be gained by a larger, more powerful wave of *Jihadism* that is biding its time to strike when it chooses, under a coherent international leadership.”<sup>126</sup>

In support of Poole, Phares argues that the theory *hirabah* as just bad *ihad* implies that the war against the enemy is legitimate and that Al Qaeda (*mufsidoon*) has simply acted without the orders, damaging the long-term plans of the caliph. According to this theory “good *ihad*” then becomes an oxymoron, simply because the *mufsidoon* attacked prematurely.<sup>127</sup> He infers that it “might apply to “sudden *ihad* syndrome” of Muslims living in the West omitting spontaneous, limited and “leaderless” acts of terror, applying the label of *hirabah* to international terrorist activities becomes problematic from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence.”<sup>128</sup>

Given these facts, Poole questions whether supporters of the semantic infiltration have a true understanding of the sources in which they have based their arguments. He concludes that semantic infiltration is not a new tool to engage terrorists groups like Al-

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>127</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

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Qaeda, but rather as Phares states, an obstacle "preventing the West from understanding *jihad*." <sup>129</sup>

William McCants also identified problems with using such semantic infiltration. <sup>130</sup> The effort to discourage the use of the term *jihadi*, a term militant *salafis* sometimes call themselves with *irhabi* (terrorist) or *mufsid* (corruptor) can result in a positive implication in the eyes of other Muslims. Use of the term *mufsid* is debatable. Muslims may interpret the U.S. to be the corruptors. <sup>131</sup> "By not understanding the psycho-political nature of the battle, and by not appreciating the meanings of words, we reward the enemy and demoralize our friends and potential allies." <sup>132</sup>

Although, the term *hirabah* evokes the Quran and condemns *jihadis* on their own terms, William McCants argues that the use of alternative words could prove to be counterproductive. He believes that in some instances the terms the enemies have selected may more accurately describe their actions than the proposed alternatives. For example verse 5:33 of the Quran, known as the *hirabah* verse, "denounces those who fight (*yurharibum*) God and His messenger and strive to spread corruption in the land... The punishment for the guilty is execution, crucifixion, amputation of the hands and feet on opposite sides or exile (*Surah* 5:33), unless they repent (*Surah* 5:34)." <sup>133</sup> Since it is not clear what the Qur'an constitutes as fighting God and his messenger and spreading corruption, it will be difficult to convince Muslims that *jihadis* are fighting

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<sup>129</sup> Poole, What's in a Name, 5.

<sup>130</sup> McCants, 2006, 1.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Waller, A Real War, 54.

<sup>133</sup> McCants, 2006, 1.

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against God and Muhammad. Some alternative terms pose similar concerns. The move to replace *jihadi* with *irhabi* (terrorist) or *mufsid* (corruptor) could incite other to join the *jihadist* movement because some Qu'ranic verses state that believers have a duty to terrorize the enemies of God (*Surah* 8:60).

**Conclusions**

Marcus Tullius Cicero taught that rhetorical questions about fact, definition, quality, and procedure were an important means of “winning hearts and minds,” framing controversies, and influencing public opinions.<sup>134</sup> He cautioned against language outpacing the ability to contain its effects or realize the expectations it can engender and believes that public discourse should be used to instruct and inspire.<sup>135</sup> Waller states, “A study of statements made by the most senior U.S. officials reflects how the rhetorical, semantic battle was handicapped from the start and offers a lesson on how it might be repaired.”<sup>136</sup> The U.S. government has to go beyond simply trying to convince Muslims that it is not in a war against the Islamic religion. It must take relentless actions to show that extremists are operating outside the religion of Islam and push the unity of Arabic Religions that are against the enemy into the forefront. By necessity, “the American political counterattack in the “war of ideas” should be geared toward depriving radical elements of their ability to dominate religious semantics and

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<sup>134</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, cited in Ken Zagacki, “Cicero and the Rhetoric of War,” North Carolina State University Department of Communications (October 4, 2001) <http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/communication/www/alumnircle/cwt/zagacki.htm> (accessed May 31, 2008): 3. Cited hereinafter as “Cicero.”

<sup>135</sup> Cicero, 3.

<sup>136</sup> Waller, A Real War, 62.

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rhetoric. In so doing, this will help destroy the perception of the enemy as the hero – a crucial mechanism that has been identified as one of the factor instigating the attacks against the U.S. and its allies. This means using U.S. rhetoric in a semantic infiltration operation against al Qaeda to find other words that accurately depict and describe the enemy and their actions. While some argue against the implementation of semantic infiltration operations it should be noted that any strategy could be considered inadequate if it failed to acknowledge the possibility of ambiguous threats and unconventional warfare and did not adjust accordingly.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter explains the design of the research, data collection processes, and describes the methodology used to support or disprove the hypothesis for this thesis. It also outlines the approach and discusses the limitations derived from the case studies.

#### **Research Design**

The research question presented in this thesis asks to what degree can semantic infiltration of a target demographic affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT. The research design of this thesis is qualitative, not quantitative. This thesis relies on material collected from news reports, historical and sociological studies, and religious sources. These sources are the works of scholars, analysts, journalists, experts, and researchers of diverse backgrounds and countries. The data selected was chosen with the intent of gaining additional insight into semantic infiltration strategies of Islamic extremists. To understand the data, a comparative case study methodology was used.

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### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Research data was collected from previous influence and persuasion campaigns conducted during the Cold War and more recent conflicts involving Al Qaeda. These two cases were selected based upon the role semantic infiltration played in the strategic influence of the culture and relations positive or negative that involved the US. The Cold War case study was used to demonstrate the similarities between how the Soviet Union utilized semantic infiltration tactics against the U.S. to similar tactics used in current and ongoing conflicts. It was also selected to acquaint with U.S. planning efforts to bolster indigenous anti-communist movements with the proposed applications of semantic infiltrations in the struggle against Islamic extremists.

Al Qaeda was selected as the second case study as an example of how semantic infiltration is utilized by Islamic extremists against target demographics in the GWOT. The analysis from this particular study was then used in chapter four to explain how the U.S. could counter the adversary's use of semantic infiltration against U.S. domestic populations and other target demographics and dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism. Both case studies also highlight the areas where semantic infiltration was most effective and identified critical areas of vulnerabilities.

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### **Research Validity and Reliability**

Qualitative triangulation was used to establish research validity and reliability for qualitative research. According to Patton, triangulation is the best method to improve validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings.<sup>137</sup> It permits the analysis and understanding of construction of others by combining data or methods.<sup>138</sup> Triangulation is defined as “A validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories of study.”<sup>139</sup> Triangulation is typically used by researchers to involve several researchers’ interpretation of data. The triangulation method was the best fit to control bias and establish valid propositions in chapter four.<sup>140</sup> This method was selected to evaluate the validity and reliability because the final conclusion of this study was formulated utilizing existing analyses of multiple researchers as discussed in chapter two.

To ensure an equitable comparison, both cases were analyzed using Patton’s questions for high quality lessons learned (Figures 4-1 & 4-2). “The high-quality lessons learned represent principles extrapolated from multiple sources and independently triangulated to increase transferability as cumulative knowledge working hypotheses that

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<sup>137</sup> M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2001/2002, 247.

<sup>138</sup> B. R. Johnson, “Examining the Validity Structure of Qualitative Research,” *Education* vol. 118, no. 3 (1997), 284.

<sup>139</sup> J. W. Creswell and D. L. Miller, “Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry,” *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 39, no. 3 (2000), 124-131.

<sup>140</sup> S. Mathison, “Why Triangulation?” *Educational Researcher*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1998): 13-17.

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can be adapted and applied to new situations as a form of a pragmatic utilitarian generalization.”<sup>141</sup>

### **Research Limitations**

Given the fact that there were not a significant number of conflicts that involved the use of semantic infiltration, it is important to note that the conclusions reached in this study rest on general qualitative data, and not quantitative analysis. The translation of Islamic terminology was an area that also presented limitations. For example, the spelling of terms varied depending on the sources. The definitions and meaning of Islamic terminology was another limitation encountered during this study. I cannot speak, translate, and do not have any academic credentials in the Arabic language or culture outside the knowledge gained during my research. Research provides reasonable but limited assurance that the translations are accurate according to academic principles. The accuracy of the meanings of Islamic terminology is highly dependent upon the individual interpretations of the authors and the sources used.

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<sup>141</sup> Patton, 566.

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## CHAPTER 4

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE AFFECT OF SEMANTIC INFILTRATION ON THE PROGRESS AND OUTCOME ON THE GWOT**

A comparative analysis of the two semantic infiltration case studies was performed to answer the main question of this thesis: To what can semantic infiltration of a target demographic affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT? The two cases chosen for this study were selected based on the role semantic infiltration played in the strategic influence of the culture and relations positive or negative that involved the U.S. Specific effort was made to select cases with the intent of gaining additional insight into semantic infiltration strategies. These were Islamic extremists, particularly Al Qaeda, and the Cold War Soviet Union disinformation operations.

This chapter will review the findings of the case studies. First, it will begin with an examination of the methods by which semantic infiltration was utilized in both case studies. Next, the results derived from the comparative analysis will be reviewed to determine if the U.S. can counter the adversary's use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics. Lastly, a discussion regarding whether the findings aid in establishing the degree to which semantic infiltration of a target demographic can affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT will conclude the chapter.

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To ensure an equitable comparison, both cases were analyzed using Patton's questions for high quality lessons learned (Figures 1 & 2).<sup>142</sup> The responses to the following questions were used for comparison in each case study:

1. By whom was the lesson learned?
2. What is the evidence supporting each lesson?
3. What is the evidence that the lessoned was learned?
4. What are the contextual boundaries around the lesson (i.e., under what conditions does it apply)?
5. Is the lesson specific, substantive, and meaningful enough to guide practice in some concrete way?
6. Who else is likely to care about this lesson?
7. What evidence will they want to see?
8. How does this lesson connect with other lessons?

The results of both case studies used in the comparative analysis demonstrate that semantic infiltration had an affect on the outcome of each operation. To better understand the impact semantic infiltration had on each individual outcome, it is necessary to review the semantic infiltration strategy of both case studies, identify the evidence supporting each lesson learned, the contextual boundaries and the applicable conditions in which the lesson was learned, and the connection, if any, between the lessons.

### **Case Study #1: Soviet Union Cold War Semantic Infiltration Analysis**

During the Cold War, the U.S. was the principle power opposing the non-Soviets. The NSC-68 stated that, "free society values the individual as an end in himself, requiring of him only that measure of self-discipline and self restraint which make the rights of

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<sup>142</sup> Patton, 565.

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each individual compatible with the rights of every other individual.”<sup>143</sup> The Kremlin regarded the U.S. free society as the only major threat to the communist ideology. As such, it was targeted as the principal enemy of the Kremlin and Soviet expansion.

For the Kremlin to achieve its objective of Soviet world dominance, it demanded “total power over all men within the Soviet state without a single exception, demanded total power over all Communist Parties, and all states under Soviet domination.”<sup>144</sup> To accomplish this, Stalin, the Soviet Union’s most influential leader, ordered the theory and tactics of Leninism as expounded by the Bolshevik party mandatory for the proletarian parties of all countries.<sup>145</sup> This consisted of communist states demonstrating “true patriotism” by upholding the position (love) and “peace policy” of the Soviet Union. The peace policy of the Soviet Union, however, sought peace by total conformity to Soviet policy.<sup>146</sup> These particular semantic infiltration tactics were utilized to divide and immobilize the non-communist world as “a more advantageous form of fighting capitalism.”<sup>147</sup>

Stalin’s semantic infiltration strategy was also successful in getting American and international leaders to change the terminology by which they referred to the Soviet Union from the negative term “totalitarian” to one of a more superficial use “people’s democracy.”<sup>148</sup> According to Milovan Djilas, the term “people’s democracy” was

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<sup>143</sup> NSC-68, Sec. IV.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

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coined by Stalin.<sup>149</sup> This term accompanied the formation of the 1947 news publication *Cominform*. Stalin utilized the *Cominform* as an accredited source in an attempt to legitimize the term and increase its use.<sup>150</sup> Using this medium the Russians also successfully implanted semantic infiltration into political warfare. In doing so, positive words such as “democratic,” “fraternal,” “liberation,” “progressive,” and “people” were negatively corrupted.<sup>151</sup> Moynihan complained that prior to anti-democratic seizure, words such as “peace,” “people,” “democratic,” and “liberation,” were previously U.S. democratic symbols.<sup>152</sup> The Russians used semantic infiltration to refer to Communist police states as “people’s democracies” and terrorist gangs as “liberation movements.”<sup>153</sup> The Russians also redefined the word “peace” to mean a state of forced tranquility in accommodation with Soviet strategic and economic interests while single-party Marxist regimes used the term “social justice” to replace repression.<sup>154</sup> The corrupted meanings were then incorporated into discourse. Senator Moynihan argued that by adopting communist labels, the U.S. Department of State bought into the enemy’s rhetoric and as a result adversely affected U.S. attitudes toward this particular conflict.<sup>155</sup> In the argument

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<sup>148</sup> Moynihan, Words, 69-70.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>150</sup> Moynihan, Words, 70.

<sup>151</sup> Guirard, USIA, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Jim Guirard, “Cold War Disinformation,” TrueSpeak Institute <http://www.truespeak.org/print.php?id=1984usiapaper> (accessed April 14, 2008), 1. Cited hereinafter as “Guirard, USIA.”

<sup>153</sup> Guirard, USIA, 1.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>155</sup> Moynihan, Further Thoughts, 53.

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he also placed great emphasis on the importance of conveying the impression to the world that the U.S. understands the difference between “national liberation... , and progressive brutalization of politics which was being carried on by the Soviets in the name of national liberation.”<sup>156</sup> For example, multiple statements made by the U.S. Secretary of State, referencing the armed components of its two totalitarian supporters (Soviet Union and China) as the “Patriotic Front” and the “Salisbury Group” is evidence that its semantic infiltration strategy was a success. During a brief on July 17, 1978, the spokesman for the Department of State referred to the “patriotic force” as liberation forces in another example. This is significant because the patriotic force was composed of guerillas armed by the Soviet Union and China.<sup>157</sup> The term ‘patriotic forces’ carried dual meanings with the first being conveyed as liberation forces and as a group in the capital as the second.<sup>158</sup> Moynihan argued that the use of these terms created a picture of political legitimacy and confused how the public perceived the outcome of the groups’ behavior. In summation, Moynihan stated, “it is essential to our own well-being in the world that other nations not be permitted to distort these concepts into a shape which would exclude our own democracy from the proper definition.”<sup>159</sup> He believed that, “the more receptive the world became to the Soviet linguistic imperialism the more the nations of the world will begin to accommodate themselves to Soviet strategic aspirations.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Moynihan, Words, 71.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>160</sup> Moynihan, Further Thoughts, 55

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## Case Study #2: Al Qaeda & GWOT Semantic Infiltration Analysis

To have a better understanding of the degree to which Al Qaeda's semantic infiltration strategy has affected the outcome of the GWOT, the next section will briefly review the two phenomena that helped shape the West understanding of terrorist ideology.

The first occurred during the early 1990s. It was during this era that "apologist literature attempted to convince readers and audiences in the West that *jihad* was a "spiritual experience only, not a menace."<sup>161</sup> Clerics of the Wahabi regime in Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood produced this plan to prevent *jihad* and *jihadism* from being considered by the West and the international community as an illegal and/or forbidden activity.<sup>162</sup> In these plans Al Qaeda's messages conveyed to the West were significantly different from the messages conveyed to Muslims. Messages to America rarely evoked Islamic theology.<sup>163</sup> Instead, the discourse was centered around the Muslim world's political grievances with the West. These plans were forwarded to American and Western based interest groups for dissemination within the U.S.

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<sup>161</sup> John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. (New York: Oxford University Press) 1999. Cited in Walid Phares, "Preventing the West from Understanding Jihad," American Thinker, July 17, 2007 [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/07/preventing\\_the\\_west\\_from\\_under.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/07/preventing_the_west_from_under.html) (accessed May 25, 2008): 1.

<sup>162</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

<sup>163</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, "Would a Jihadi by Any Other Name Smell as Foul?" American Thinker, June 5, 2008 [http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/06/would\\_a\\_jihadi\\_by\\_any\\_other\\_na.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/06/would_a_jihadi_by_any_other_na.html) (accessed June 7, 2008): 2. Cited hereinafter as "Ibrahim."

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specifically targeting U.S. defense and security agencies.<sup>164</sup> These plans were used as a deception tool to confuse the U.S.' perception of Al Qaeda.<sup>165</sup>

Al Qaeda's messages conveyed to Muslims were not based on political grievances, but were grounded in Islamic theology and law. These messages emphasized how "Muslims are commanded to have antipathy for infidels and to constantly be in a state of war with such infidels.<sup>166</sup> These strategies and tactics are defined by Islamic law as *taqiya*, the doctrine on deception and deflection in support of *jihad*.<sup>167</sup>

The *taqiya* includes the teachings of Islam that involve faith and duty (*din*). This process consists of the "*tawid*" and the "*shari'a*." The *tawid* defines all that man should believe and the *shari'a* stipulates everything that man should do.<sup>168</sup> This is significant because "al-walaa" is one of the most important concepts in the religion of Islam.<sup>169</sup> It implies that "the strongest tie of imaan (bond of faith) is having loyalty, disassociating from others, love and hatred for the sake of Allah.<sup>170</sup> True believers must exercise these

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<sup>164</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>166</sup> Raymond Ibrahim, "Would a Jihadi by Any Other Name Smell as Foul?" American Thinker, June 5, 2008 [http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/06/would\\_a\\_jihadi\\_by\\_any\\_other\\_na.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/06/would_a_jihadi_by_any_other_na.html) (accessed June 7, 2008): 2.

<sup>167</sup> Phares, Preventing the West, 2.

<sup>168</sup> J. Zarabozo, Understanding the Qu'ran, 27.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Sayyid Saeed Abdul Ghani, "*Haqeeqah al-Walaa wa al-Baraa fi Mutaqaad Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*," (Beirut: Daar ibn Hazm, 1998), 57. Cited in Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din M. *How to Approach and Understand the Quran*. (Boulder, CO: al-Basheer Company for publications and Translations, 1999), 49-51. Cited hereinafter as "Abdul Ghani."

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beliefs to demonstrate faith. Only those whom have demonstrated their love for Allah will receive the luxuries of paradise in the after-life.<sup>171</sup>

Al Qaeda drew on the sense of religious nationalism as an additional opportunity to distort the meaning of *jihad* and contextualize it to persuade Muslims to fulfill their commitment of faith and duty to Allah. Following a path similar to that of the Soviet Union disinformation operations, Al Qaeda used the term “democracy” to justify “*jihad*,” as semantic infiltration during the U.S. invasion of Iraq.<sup>172</sup> Al-Qaeda portrayed democracy as a U.S. encroachment upon Muslim land and encouraged Muslims to fight against it – *jihad*.<sup>173</sup> “...the rallying cry for Al Qaeda and the radical *jihadi* movement is the call to arms in resistance to what was, and is, perceived as continued U.S. and Western aggression against Muslims and a neo-colonialist encroachment on Muslims.”<sup>174</sup> In pursuit of an Islamic theocracy, Al Qaeda uses the semantic significance of Islamic law, the basis of the religion, to sustain complete devotion to this effort, recruit new followers, and garner the financial and logistical support of sympathizers, even though, *jihad* is addressed differently within the four major Sunni schools of law. Shafi’ee Figh defines *jihad* in *Shara’ee* terms as to make the utmost effort in fighting in the path of Allah.<sup>175</sup> According to the Maliki Figh, Muslims are to fight with the *Kuffar* to advance

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<sup>171</sup> J. Zarabozo, *Understanding the Qu’ran*, 35.

<sup>172</sup> Ben Venzke and Aimee Ibrahim, “Al- Qaeda’s Advice for Mujahideen in Iraq: Lessons Learned in Afghanistan,” *IntelCenter* April 2003 vol. 1, IntelCenter/Tempest Publishing, LLC <http://www.intelcenter.com/Qaeda-Guerrilla-Iraq-v1-0.pdf> (accessed May 22, 2008): 8. Cited hereinafter as “Venke and Ibrahim 2003.”

<sup>173</sup> Venzke and Ibrahim, 2003, 5.

<sup>174</sup> Hoffman, *Combating Al Qaeda*, 10.

<sup>175</sup> Gawthrop, 9-14.

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Allah's religion. In *Hanbali Fiqh*, *jihad* means to fight against the unbelievers.<sup>176</sup> The *Hanafi Fiqh* interprets *jihad* as to be involved in the fighting in the path of Allah by one's life, wealth, and speech.<sup>177</sup> It is further explained to call unbelievers towards the true religion of Islam and to fight against them, if they are unwilling to accept this true religion. Despite which school of thought is perceived to be the most applicable, *jihad* in Islamic law is the controlling and binding definition for Muslims.<sup>178</sup> Many Muslims have declared the Islamic law to be binding upon themselves, regardless of whether it is accepted by non-Muslims. According to Islamic law, *jihad* is an individual and collective duty on the community as a whole, and failure to fulfill their duty constitutes a gross error.<sup>179</sup>

Al Qaeda has also used Qu'ranic scriptures to serve as a basis for declaring *jihad* against the West. High ranking Al Qaeda leaders often cite various Qu'ranic verses to gain the momentum necessary to push the *jihadi* movement globally. For example, verse 2:216 which states, "Fighting is prescribed by you," verse 4:89 encourages Muslims to "slay" non-believer wherever they can be found; and verse 9:36 instructs Muslims to "fight the idolators utterly."<sup>180</sup> These verses all command Muslims to fight in the name of *jihad*. According to a *hadith* related to Muhammad, Muslims have been ordered to fight polytheists until they say "there is no God but Allah." In this sense *jihad* was and is

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Khadduri, 1966, 4.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1994). Cited in Joseph Myers, "Strategic Collapse in the War on Terror," American Thinker, [http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic\\_collapse\\_in\\_the\\_war.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic_collapse_in_the_war.html) (accessed May 5, 2008): 3.

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presently being used as a form of religious propaganda carried out by spiritual and material means.<sup>181</sup> The ability of Islamic extremists to use specific terminology of Qu'ranic *surahs* (chapters), the tradition of haddiths, and the *sunnah* is significant because it manipulates how the Quran is to be applied.<sup>182</sup> It is of great importance to recognize that the same terminology is not only used as propaganda to elicit the support of other Muslims, but is also used as semantic infiltration against a different target audience – Muslim sympathizers.

The second strategy, designed to delay the West's understanding of *jihadism*, transpired post 9/11. This strategy involves the extremists' detailing the meaning of their *aqida* (doctrine) and expressing their intention to apply *jihadism* by all means possible.<sup>183</sup> Al Qaeda used the correlation between radical Islam, anti-Americanism, and violence to inspire a *jihadi* movement much greater than its own organization, thus making it that much more difficult to control. "In theory, this *jihadist* "movement" or what would be called in Arabic the "*salafist-jihadist* current," is a global push by like-minded individuals and groups to restore pure Islam by overthrowing the "apostate" regimes of the Muslim World, to ensure that "the word of God is supreme" by imposing everywhere a strict interpretation of Islamic law, and defeat forces of "unbelief" by destroying the United States of America and Israel."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Khadduri, 1966, 12-16.

<sup>182</sup> J. Zarabozo, *Understanding the Qu'ran*, 212.

<sup>183</sup> Phares, *Preventing the West*, 1.

<sup>184</sup> Daniel Kimmage, *The Al-Qaeda Media Nexus: The Virtual Network Behind the Global Message*, (Washington DC: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Inc. 2008), 16.

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The advantages of globalization allowed Al Qaeda to utilize this movement as a vehicle to convey its message to a much broader audience. Al Qaeda has learned that it can utilize real time media coverage of its so called “*jihad*” to capitalize its intent to elicit new recruits and exploit the lack of knowledge of Islamic terminology and jurisprudence. Al Qaeda utilized this lesson to prevent and conform Islamic terms into a context that was easily assimilated by the audience to which the message is directed. These directions have typically come by way of Osama bin Laden, al-Zawahiri and other Al Qaeda leaders through audio and video recordings on *jihadi* websites, and lessons taught by radical clerics in mosques.<sup>185</sup> Al Qaeda encouraged emulation by using videos of past sacrificial martyrs in combination with messages to reiterate the importance of maintaining a continuous battle against Islam’s enemies. For example, Al Qaeda used depictions of 9/11 attacks as a victorious feat against the U.S. to sustain morale. It also used this attack to draw parallels between the destruction of the World Trade Center, the 9/11 attacks with *mujahideen*’s defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan in which it believes led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism.<sup>186</sup> Al Qaeda used the following strategy to guide its *jihad* target selection:

“America is in retreat by the grace of God Almighty and economic attrition is continuing up to today, but needs further blows. Young men need to seek out the nodes of the American economy and strike the enemy’s nodes.”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Hoffman, *Combating Al Qaeda*, 7.

<sup>186</sup> Osama bin Laden, quoted in John Miller, “Interview: Osama Bin Laden (May 1998)” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontlines/shows/binladen/who/interview.html> (accessed April 13, 2008). Cited hereinafter as “Bin Laden 1988.”

<sup>187</sup> CNN, “Your Security is in Your Own Hands,” CNN World, bin Laden’s 29 October 2004 Video Taped Message, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/10/29/bin.laden.transcript/> (accessed May 16, 2008). Cited hereinafter as bin Laden 29 October 2004.

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These tactics were used by Al Qaeda to portray the U.S. as being in financial ruins, as a result of the 9/11 attack on the U.S. economy similar to that of Russia.<sup>188</sup>

Al Qaeda also used the media to disseminate Osama bin Laden's letter declaring war against crusaders (Americans) and infidels (non-Muslims).<sup>189</sup> It has published an online magazine "al Battar Camp" that offers counsel to would-be terrorists on issues regarding physical fitness to weapons training. Diplomats and counter-terrorism experts reported that the online magazine is the latest evidence that al-Qaeda is using the anonymity and global reach of the Internet both to reach new recruits and send messages to sleeper cells.<sup>190</sup> It is of great concern that the lack of funding and resources will permit sites like the al Battar Camp and online chat rooms to be used as venues to pass instructions to terror cells.<sup>191</sup>

Al Qaeda has also utilized the internet to broadcast its contemporary weapon against the West – a violent English-language rap song urging young Muslims to wage *jihād*.<sup>192</sup> The song titled "Dirty *Kuffar*," or Dirty Infidels, was accompanied by music video performed by Sheikh Terra and the Soul Salah Crew, a London-based group deeply sympathetic to Osama bin Laden's network. The video uses various bits of footage and

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<sup>188</sup> Bin Laden 1998.

<sup>189</sup> Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War Against Americans Occupying the Lands of the Two Holy Places," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, August 23, 1996 [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research\\_topics/research\\_topics\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=164384&attrib\\_id=7580](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research_topics/research_topics_show.htm?doc_id=164384&attrib_id=7580) (accessed May 24, 2008): 1-18.

<sup>190</sup> Gretchen Peters, "Al Qaeda Publishes Magazine on the Net," South China Morning Post, February 15, 2004 [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research\\_topics/research\\_topics\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=211317&attrib\\_id=7580](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research_topics/research_topics_show.htm?doc_id=211317&attrib_id=7580) (accessed May 24, 2008): 1. Cited hereinafter as "Peters 2004."

<sup>191</sup> Peters, 2004, 1.

<sup>192</sup> "Al Qaeda Sympathizers Battle 'Infidels' with Rap," Foundation for Defense of Democracies, February 11, 2004 [http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research\\_topics/research\\_topics\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=229480&attrib\\_id=7580](http://www.defenddemocracy.org/research_topics/research_topics_show.htm?doc_id=229480&attrib_id=7580) (accessed May 24, 2008): 1.

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images from news agencies and television of a US soldier killing an Iraqi man and then cheering to elicit sympathy from its viewers. The U.S.' failure to produce effective measures to counter Al Qaeda's semantic infiltration operations has led to "the portrayal of the West as an aggressive and predatory force waging war on Islam."<sup>193</sup> This not only resonates with the larger Muslim Population but also undermines any effort to impede Al Qaeda's ability to recruit and replenish the limitless supply of "*jihadi* holy warriors."

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<sup>193</sup> Hoffman, Combating Al Qaeda, 1.

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### Comparative Analysis

FIGURE 4- 1

<b><i>CASE STUDY: Soviet Union Cold War Semantic Infiltration Analysis</i></b>		
1.	<b>By whom was the lesson learned?</b>	U. S. Other Nations
2.	<b>What is the evidence supporting each lesson?</b>	Stalin's semantic infiltration strategy was successful in getting American and international leaders to change the terminology in which they referenced the Soviet Union from the negative term "totalitarian" to one of a more superficial use "people's democracy." <sup>194</sup>
3.	<b>What is the evidence that the lessoned was learned?</b>	The establishment of a task force under the National Security Council (NSC) to assess problems and proposed an institutionalized means to respond to inaccurate or misleading terminology in international political discourse. <sup>195</sup> The referenced task force yielded - The NSC-68. <sup>196</sup>
4.	<b>What are the contextual boundaries around the lesson (i.e., under what conditions does it apply)</b>	Retention and solidification of absolute power within the Soviet Union and areas under Soviet control. <sup>197</sup>
5.	<b>Is the lesson specific, substantive, and meaningful enough to guide practice in some concrete way?</b>	<p>The U.S. understood and anticipated that by developing the moral and material strength of the free world that the Soviet regime would become convinced of the falsity of its assumptions and the pre-conditions for workable agreements could be created. <sup>198</sup></p> <p>The U.S. also believed that by demonstrating the practicality of its integrity and vitality of its system. the free world could widen the possibilities of reaching an agreement. The intent was to gain Soviet acknowledgement of realities which would in turn create fallacy on the Communist ideology.<sup>199</sup></p> <p>In the NSC-68, it was acknowledged that a military victory alone would only partially and perhaps only temporarily affect the fundamental conflict in the realm of ideas. Although the ability of the Kremlin to threaten U.S. security may be for a short time destroyed, the resurgence</p>

<sup>194</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Words and Foreign Policy," *Policy Review* (Fall 1978): 69-70.

<sup>195</sup> Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., Chairman. United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *The Role of USIA and Public Diplomacy*, January 1984.

<sup>196</sup> NSC-68, Sec. I.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, III.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.

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		of the totalitarian forces and the re-establishment of the Soviet system would quickly revitalize unless greater efforts were made in the fundamental conflict. <sup>200</sup>
6.	<b>Who else is likely to care about this lesson?</b>	U.S. Other non-Communist societies
7.	<b>What evidence will they want to see?</b>	Complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society in the countries of the non-Soviet world and replacement by an apparatus and structure subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin. <sup>201</sup>
8.	<b>How does this lesson connect with others lessons?</b>	Similar to the present circumstance with al Qaeda, the Kremlin had the discretion of choosing the means in which it would carry out its objective. The U.S. doesn't share the same discretion. During the Cold War the U.S. elected to use semantic infiltration to end the fundamental conflict in the real of ideas. As a supplement to the current strategies, semantic infiltration maybe the most effective method for the U.S. to dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism.

**Figure 4-1. Soviet Semantic Infiltration Lessons Learned**

**Source:** Michael . Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications, Inc., 2001

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<sup>200</sup> NSC-68, Sec. IV.

<sup>201</sup> NSC-68, Sec. III.

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FIGURE 4-2

<b>CASE STUDY: Al Qaeda &amp; GWOT Semantic Infiltration Analysis</b>		
1.	<b>By whom was the lesson learned?</b>	Al Qaeda
2.	<b>What is the evidence supporting each lesson?</b>	Guirard's "Work -A-Day Glossary" provides numerous Islamic terms such as jihad, infidel, etc., utilized as semantic infiltration against the U.S. <sup>202</sup>
3.	<b>What is the evidence that the lesson was learned?</b>	This process has, in part, been embodied in the writings, training manuals and other material of the group. <sup>203</sup> The referenced article provides useful insight into al-Qaeda's guerrilla warfare tactics, techniques and procedures in Afghanistan, and what the group will be seeking to employ in Iraq and other future conflicts. <sup>204</sup>
4.	<b>What are the contextual boundaries around the lesson (i.e. under what conditions does it apply)</b>	Al Qaeda assimilated its tactics according to the targeted audience. However, limited understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, terminology, and religious implications are optimal conditions in which Al Qaeda can flourish.
5.	<b>Is the lesson specific, substantive, and meaningful enough to guide practice in some concrete way?</b>	Al-Qaeda understands that for its guerrilla or terrorist operations to succeed in the fluid environment in which it currently exists, the group must continually improve upon what strategies worked and change those that did not. A continuous evolutionary process is key to its survival. <sup>205</sup>  The language and details of the messages must be adjusted according to the audience. <sup>206</sup> Al Qaeda utilized the U.S.'s response to its attacks to measure effectiveness and adjust its methods accordingly. The U.S. faces a similar challenge in the GWOT. <sup>207</sup>
6.	<b>Who else is likely to care about this lesson?</b>	U.S. and other nations
7.	<b>What evidence will they want to see?</b>	"We can expect to see al-Qaeda continue this practice of taking the lessons it has learned through its own experience and through looking at the past successes and failures of other terrorist and rebel organizations in order to better improve its own likelihood of success." <sup>208</sup>
8.	<b>How does this lesson connect with others lessons?</b>	The U.S. can utilize lessons learned from the semantic infiltration tactics employed during the Cold War as a guide in future strategic war planning efforts.

<sup>202</sup> Guirard, Glossary, 1-7.

<sup>203</sup> Venzke and Ibrahim. 7.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Cragin and Gerwehr, 29.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>208</sup> Venzke and Ibrahim. 8.

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**Figure 4-2. Al Qaeda Semantic Infiltration Lessons Learned**

**Source:** Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications, Inc., 2001

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## Key Lessons

Several key lessons can be drawn from both case studies. First, in both cases, the messages were adjusted according to the different responses and reactions of the audience. The comparative analysis also revealed that in both cases the media was the main conduit utilized to conduct semantic infiltration. The Soviets understood that for its semantic infiltration strategy to be successful against the target audience it was necessary to solidify absolute power in the Soviet Union and other areas under its control. Soviet leaders believed that by maintaining this level of control their power would be perceived by other nation states as an extension authority and lead to the elimination of any opposition to its authority.<sup>209</sup> Given the difference in the periods of time in which each of the operations were conducted, Al Qaeda clearly had a greater advantage. The main challenge for Al Qaeda is promoting its durability as an ideology and concept.<sup>210</sup> This can only be achieved if its violent and dramatic acts are portrayed in the media as defenders and avengers of Muslims everywhere.<sup>211</sup> These calls for support have regenerated resentment for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and breathe new life into the *jihadi* movement.<sup>212</sup> The findings also demonstrated that a semantic infiltration campaign directed toward al Qaeda will also need to be “flexible to adjust to

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<sup>209</sup> NSC-68, Sec. III.

<sup>210</sup> Hoffman, *Combating Al Qaeda*, 8.

<sup>211</sup> CNN, *Bin Laden*, 29 October 2004.

<sup>212</sup> Hoffman, *Combating Al Qaeda*, 7.

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the differences between audience's attitudes and beliefs in the Muslim world and strategic to account for conflicts between parallel influence operations as well as other foreign or domestic policy objectives.”<sup>213</sup>

Second, in both case studies, the effectiveness of the semantic infiltration operations were determined according the U.S. utilization of the terms discussed in data collected, in the context established by the adversary. According to Patton's questions for generating high-quality lessons learned both the Soviets and Al Qaeda effectively utilized semantic infiltration against the U.S.

Similar to the present circumstance with al Qaeda, at the onset of the Cold War the U.S. did not have a defense strategy to protect the American public against its own misinterpretation of true meanings or to undermine efforts of the adversary reinforcement of misinterpretations. During the Cold War a great deal was invested in understanding how the Soviets thought about warfare and strategy. The U.S. acknowledged the use of semantic infiltration by the adversary and took corrective action. In recognition of such tactics the U.S. Advisory Commission responded with the following statement:

“We believe that the times require a conscious effort to improve the accuracy and political impact of words and terms used by our leaders in speaking to the world. By so doing they can help disclose the hypocrisy and distortions of hostile propaganda. This is not a problem that will go away, and we must be prepared to deal with it on a systematic basis.”<sup>214</sup>

In order to counter the Soviets Disinformation Operation and fulfill this intelligence gap the Commission recommended the establishment of a task force under the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC would assess the problem and propose

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., Chairman, United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *The Role of USIA and Public Diplomacy*, January 1984. Cited hereinafter as “Feulner 1984.”

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an institutionalized means to respond to inaccurate or misleading terminology in international political discourse.<sup>215</sup> This included misused or abused words and terms used as propaganda to alter perceptions, thoughts and actions.

The result of this task force yielded the development of the NSC-68 Threat Model. This model outlined fundamental variables underlying conflict in the realm of ideas and values between the U.S. purpose and the Kremlin design.<sup>216</sup> It also identified the actual and potential political and psychological intentions and capabilities of both the U.S. and that of the Soviets.<sup>217</sup> In doing so, the U.S. was able to capitalize on the demeaning effects of the Kremlin's relations with its people, a vulnerability identified in the NSC-68. The NSC-68 allowed the U.S. to gain a better understanding of the ideological importance of the Kremlin. As noted in chapter two, the strategies for the GWOT have not been extended similar due diligence. "Apart from some earlier futile attempts to identify a terrorist or terrorist prone-personality, the U.S. has tended to pay less attention to terrorists thinking."<sup>218</sup>

Third, just as the Soviets utilized semantic infiltration to influence the world's perception of the U.S., so has Al Qaeda. The difference in the Al Qaeda case study was the fact that since the employment of semantic infiltration by the Al Qaeda against the

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<sup>215</sup> Feulner, 1984, 1.

<sup>216</sup> National Security Council, "NSC 68.: United States Statement of Objectives," <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm> cited in Joseph Myers, "Strategic Collapse in the War on Terror," American Thinker, [http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic\\_collapse\\_in\\_the\\_war.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/printpage?url=http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/05/strategic_collapse_in_the_war.html) (accessed May 5, 2008), 2. Cited hereinafter as "NSC 68."

<sup>217</sup> NSC-68, Sec. I.

<sup>218</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, "Lessons for Intelligence in the Campaign Against Al Qaeda." Rand Corporation. <http://www.rand.org/commentary/2006/03/01/VC.html> (accessed April 14, 2008).

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U.S. was identified in the 1990s the U.S. continually and unsuccessfully utilized conventional warfare tactics in an attempt to combat an ideological war.<sup>219</sup> The U.S. has failed to wage an effective counter-ideological campaign against Al Qaeda.<sup>220</sup> According to William Gawthrop, an Islamic Studies Intelligence Analyst, “The lack of an effective strategic response capability places the U.S. in an unpleasant position of having to respond to an idea without an equivalent strategic lever of power.”<sup>221</sup> The lack of a strategic counter-strategy, the U.S., reinforced and legitimized Al Qaeda’s efforts by incorporating the words and terminology Al Qaeda used in its messages just as Moynihan had warned about the Soviets.

Finally, the comparative analysis also exposed difference in the outcome of each case study. In the case of Soviet Union, the U.S. learned the lessons from the adversary’s semantic infiltration campaigns. The U.S. learned during the Cold War Disinformation operations learned that “demonstrating the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application...” was the best practical and ideological method to counter Soviet semantic infiltration campaigns<sup>222</sup>. The U.S. also recognized that if it U.S. failed to convey the nature of its objective in conjunction with the application of force, would compromise the U.S. purpose - to persuade Eastern Europeans and Soviet countries to view communism as oppressive and misguided.”<sup>223</sup> To the contrary, in the GWOT, Al Qaeda appears to have taken advantage of the lessons learned. Al Qaeda utilized its own

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<sup>219</sup> RRI, 4.

<sup>220</sup> Venzke and Ibrahim, 16.

<sup>221</sup> Gawthrop, 9-14.

<sup>222</sup> NSC-68, Sec. IV.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

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semantic infiltration campaigns against the U.S. to measure effectiveness, modify its message according to the targeted audience, and incorporated the lessons learned into its training manuals, videos, etc.<sup>224</sup>

### **Conclusion of Analysis**

In conclusion, the comparative case studies revealed similarities and differences that contributed to the degree semantic infiltration of a target demographic can affect the progress and outcome of the GWOT. From these, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the two cases are similar in the respect that the primary target audiences are of the different culture, ethnicity, and/or religious group as the leader or organization conducting semantic infiltration. Despite the difference in medium and period of time, analysis also revealed that the use of mass communications as the conduit for semantic infiltration in both cases had an affect on the outcome. Given this finding, the utilization of mass media to execute semantic infiltration is a viable option for U.S. use against Al Qaeda and other U.S. adversaries.

Second, although in both cases the semantic infiltration strategies impacted the outcome of each conflict, the degree to which each was affected varied significantly. This was due in part to the fact that the Cold War Disinformation Operations conducted by the Soviet Union against the U.S. resulted in political and communal support of the West to counter the communist ideology. The same has not occurred in the case of Al Qaeda. Instead, the U.S. downplayed the notion of idea, history, and culture as political

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<sup>224</sup> Venzke and Ibrahim, 7.

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motivators and chose to place emphasis on physical well-being and personal security.<sup>225</sup>

This has allowed Al Qaeda to continue to use semantic infiltration to recruit new members and sympathizers in the name of *jihad*, further legitimizing their quest.

**RELATION TO HYPOTHESIS**

Both the review of the literature and the analysis of the comparative case studies suggest that semantic infiltration modified the long and short-term behaviors of the targeted audiences. Research results also indicated that intentional semantic infiltration of U.S. adversaries has the potential to affect widespread attitudinal change and therefore, must also be defended against to limit or avoid like effects on the U.S. If employed properly, semantic infiltration could be expected to also support U.S. counter-terrorism efforts against Al Qaeda and dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism. The use of semantic infiltration is indicative of the ability to transcend time and the boundaries of specific audiences to have a significant affect on the long and short-term behaviors and attitudes and thereby supports the hypothesis.<sup>226</sup> To achieve the best results, however, the semantic infiltration strategy should be used as part of an overall national strategy. This would entail cognitive, irregular and conventional means of warfare.

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<sup>225</sup> Frank Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1989), 22. Cited in William Rosenau, "Waging the "War of Ideas," RAND Corp [http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND\\_RP1218.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1218.pdf) (accessed May 25, 2008): 1132.

<sup>226</sup> Cragin and Gerwehr, 2005, ix.

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Based upon the comparative analysis it was discovered that the degree semantic infiltration of a target demographic affects the progress and outcome of the GWOT are highly contingent upon contextual factors such as the operating environment, individual perceptions, and exposure to outside influences. Failure to consider these factors could be counter-productive and potentially decrease the effectiveness of the outcome.

Semantic infiltration can be successful if: the objectives, message and delivery are adapted to the target audience; a system of measurement and feedback is integrated to permit the refinement of messages or methods of persuasion; and, realistic expectations consider the contextual factors that also influence the operational environment.<sup>227</sup> Not having a comprehensive understanding of the psychological objectives of an influence campaign, or not adjusting the message to the audience, can also decrease the effectiveness of the campaign. Subsequent research found that theories of persuasion indicate that the most effective campaigns account for the timing of events and sequence of operations.<sup>228</sup> Consequently, semantic infiltration techniques utilized in the past may have different implications in the future.

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>228</sup> S. Chaiken and A. Eagly, "Communication Modality as a Determinant of Message Persuasiveness and Message Comprehensibility," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, No. 34, (1976): 605-614. Quoted in Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, "Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism," RAND Corporation [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG184.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG184.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2008): 13.

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## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the question, to what degree can semantic infiltration of a target demographic affect the progress and outcome of the Global War on Terror? To answer this question, research was conducted on how the strategy and related tactics of semantic infiltration have been used in other conflicts of a similar nature, how the U.S. could counter the adversary's use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics to dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism. This chapter will entail a discussion of the final conclusions of this thesis, implications, and recommendations for future research.

The findings of this study suggested that semantic infiltration by the U.S. of the Al Qaeda center of gravity/target demographic can positively influence the progress and outcome of the GWOT. The degree to which semantic infiltration affects the progress and outcome, however, is contingent upon additional contextual factors. To have a significant effect on the operating environment, individual perceptions and exposure to outside influences are all essential factors for consideration. The success of the semantic infiltration operations in the two case studies demonstrates that, if employed properly, U.S. semantic infiltration can be used to counter the adversary's own use of semantic infiltration against the U.S. domestic population and other target demographics and dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism when incorporated into the

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comprehensive military strategy.<sup>229</sup> Finally, as demonstrated by Al Qaeda, semantic infiltration operations are most effective when the objectives, message and delivery are assimilated or adapted to the needs of target audience, feedback is utilized to modify the message or approach, and expectations are adjusted according to the contextual factors.

### FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The use of semantic infiltration as a strategy against U.S. adversaries would provide the U.S. government with the ability to educate the public at home and abroad on the appropriate meanings and interpretations of Islamic terminology to mitigate the affects of Islamic extremists' propaganda. However, it is essential that U.S. policy-makers include the cognitive dimension of warfare into the strategic planning and decision-making processes. Based on the findings of this research, semantic infiltration by the U.S. of the Al Qaeda center of gravity/target demographics can positively influence the progress and outcome of the GWOT.

Therefore, it is the conclusion of this study that the findings substantiate the hypothesis. In compilation, the data collected for the literature review and comparative analysis of the two case studies demonstrates that semantic infiltration could support U.S. counter-terrorism in the GWOT. This can be achieved by using semantic infiltration to dissuade ideological support for Islamic extremism by using the most accurate terms to describe, define, or refer to terrorists, acts of terrorism, and their ideology. Use of terms such as *hiraba*, *mufisduun* (evil-doers/mortal sinners), and *muharibuun* (evil warriors/barbarians) to replace *jihad* (holy war) and *mujahiddin* (holy warriors) are most

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<sup>229</sup> Cragin and Gerwehr, 2005, 24.

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effective if utilized in the mass communications mediums. If U.S. government officials, politicians, and media utilize Islamic terminology or the English equivalent, then the word choice will more accurately depict the actions of Islamic extremists to reference or describe terrorists, acts of terrorism, or their ideology. Defining our terms on Al Qaeda should be more than a matter of semantic interests. If the U.S. can better define what Al Qaeda, the U.S. will have a better understanding of the threat Al Qaeda poses at a critical moment.<sup>23</sup>

The research conducted during this thesis identified key factors that can affect the ability of U.S. semantic infiltration efforts against its adversaries. These factors include the lack of knowledge of the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence, media support, and methods to measure the effectiveness of semantic infiltration operations. Additionally, research findings also suggest that U.S. government agencies, policy and decision-makers, and media outlets come to a consensus on which Islamic terms to utilize to describe terrorists, acts of terrorism, and ideologies.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings and conclusions of this thesis uncovered several potential implications that will be discussed briefly. These involve accurate interpretation of the Arabic language, a clear understanding of Islamic jurisprudence, media cooperation, and methods to measure effectiveness.

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Bergen, "The Dense Web of Al Qaeda," *WashingtonPost.com*, December 23, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A29182-2003Dec24?language=printer> (accessed May 23, 2008).

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First, in order for semantic infiltration to have a significant effect against U.S. adversaries, U.S. government agencies, policy and decision-makers, the media, as well as the public must be able to understand the meanings behind and correctly interpret the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence. This will require each of the aforementioned parties to either (a) pursue lessons in Arabic translations or (b) the development of an Arabic/Islamic source of reference easily accessible to all. The data collected indicates that many have unintentionally acquired and used the adversary's words to describe terrorists, acts of terrorism, or Islamic ideology. This semantic infiltration by Al Qaeda against the West has helped to further legitimize Al Qaeda's positions.

Second, in most cases, it is essential that news media report unbiased and accurate information. This again, will require educating the sources reporting the information on the accurate definitions, meanings, and terms. Since this industry is both publicly and privately owned, such efforts may have to be taken one step further – offer education and/or resource data-base independent of the U.S. government. The U.S. must also exercise caution in this approach and respect the first amendment rights of the press. Failure to gain consensus on the words used in reporting is a contextual factor that can significantly impede the desired outcome of semantic infiltration operations against U.S. adversaries.

Lastly, the ability to measure the effectiveness of a semantic infiltration operation is crucial in determining if the methods utilized should be modified to achieve the best results. This will require additional research and the development of a particular scale of measure. Based on the case studies, it could be assumed that each party perceived its own semantic infiltration operation as a success despite the actual magnitude of the

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achieved effect. While the effect of each semantic infiltration operation will be perceived differently, from one person to the next, there will come a time when it is absolutely necessary to discern benchmarks from milestones to determine success. The challenge to U.S. policymakers will be patience – semantic infiltration works over time – it is not a fire and forget weapon.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The correlation between semantic infiltration operations and the GWOT is imperfect. Additional research and analysis may provide insight into alternative uses and establish methods and scales of measure. Another study could research how to U.S. government agencies, policy and decision-makers, and the media can collaborate on or contribute to the development of an Arabic/Islamic resource database in support of semantic infiltration operations. Finally, any future research should include an examination of the best method to educate the public on the use words that that accurately describe terrorists, acts of terrorism, or their ideology.

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