The elimination of a Taliban-governed Afghanistan as al-Qaeda’s physical base in 2001 hastened the dispersal of global jihadists into cities, which became less securable and, by extension, less governable. In turn, the advent of Iraq as a field of jihad has prompted jihadists to refine and spread urban warfare techniques. If they chose to apply these techniques robustly to infiltrated cities elsewhere, the extraordinary need for special-operations forces – grossly superseding the general Western taboo on using a nation’s military forces against its own citizens within its own territory – could arise. The development of this scenario has driven post-11 September American military planning, now enshrined in the US Department of Defense’s latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and, reportedly, in a new Pentagon campaign plan for the ‘global war on terrorism’. Although the Pentagon does recognise the non-military imperatives of the counter-terrorism effort, it still appears inclined to believe that the application of military power – albeit unconventional military power – will ultimately dictate victory. Given the evolved organisational power of the Office of the Secretary of Defense – which arguably has reached its peak during George W. Bush’s presidency – within the US national security system, such an attitude could lead to the downplaying of paramount non-military aspects of counter-terrorism, to the detriment of national and international security.

The military temptation
One of the most powerful scenarios that could support the QDR’s implicit faith in military power as the primary counter-terrorist instrument is Richard Norton’s idea of ‘feral cities’. With a deft balance of analysis and provocation, Norton raises the possibility of cities with millions of inhabitants where the
putatively authoritative government ‘has lost the ability to maintain the rule of law within the city’s boundaries yet remains a functioning actor in the greater international system’. The imagined urban landscape might resemble the Los Angeles of the 1982 movie Blade Runner, but the only extant feral city, Norton suggests, is Mogadishu, Somalia.

Feral cities are the ultimate consequence of a shortfall between governmental capacity and human needs that is growing in several parts of the world. The central global security problem that this discrepancy presents is not so much utter chaos and insecurity, but rather the privatisation of order and safety – the creation of a market for security in which criminals, clans, tribes, gangs or indeed terrorists become the principal suppliers. This market, says Norton, could exert ‘an almost magnetic influence on terrorist organisations ... especially those having a cultural affinity with at least one sizeable segment of the city’s population’.

The rise of civil incapacity in cities would seem to create a law-enforcement vacuum that might, by default, best be filled by military forces of some kind. Large units from a traditional force structure geared to state-to-state conflicts would make little sense. Since shortly after 11 September 2001, however, a large US special-operations force detachment, now about 1,200 strong, has been stationed in Djibouti – not coincidentally, about 650 miles from Mogadishu. And it is tempting to believe that forces with special-operations capabilities, quickly deployable in small units, might be able to neutralise global terrorist threats through a combination of strategic infiltration, operational awareness and tactical superiority.

The QDR, as well as the new National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism, indulges this temptation. The 2006 QDR envisages a ‘long war’ not against nation-states but rather against non-state networks, which calls for a US capability to engage enemies in countries with which it is not at war ‘in many operations characterised by irregular warfare’ and an ability ‘to operate clandestinely and to sustain a persistent but low-visibility presence’.

Accordingly, ‘long-duration, complex operations involving the U.S. military, other government agencies and international partners will be waged simultaneously in multiple countries around the world, relying on a combination of direct (visible) and indirect (clandestine) approaches’. The QDR acknowledges that transnational terrorists ‘cannot be defeated solely through military force’, and the national strategic plan concedes that the clandestine and decentralised character of the global Islamist terrorist network ‘complicates the employment of military power’. Yet both documents also broadly embody the view that the so-called ‘global war on terrorism’ integrally involves the military in that aggressive intervention abroad is necessary to forestall terrorist operations on US territory. The QDR asserts that ‘maintaining a long-term, low-visibility pres-
ence in many areas of the world where US forces do not traditionally operate will be required’. The document places corresponding premiums on, for example, accurate real-time intelligence, proactive military train-and-equip programmes with key countries, quick global-response capabilities, and riverine warfare capacities to help foreign security forces deny terrorists territorial access.

The QDR’s principal prescribed counter-terrorist instruments are special-operations forces, which ‘will possess an expanded organic ability to locate, tag and track dangerous individuals and other high-value targets globally’. The fact that after 11 September US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) became a ‘supported’ as well as a ‘supporting’ combatant command, with substantial budgetary and operational independence from the regional combatant commands, and was assigned the lead military counter-terrorist role under the 2004 Unified Command Plan, reinforces this mission. So does the 9/11 Commission’s recommendation that the military take over the CIA’s paramilitary division, as well as Congress’s decision in 2005 to provide SOCOM with $25 million annually in discretionary money that can be used to buy foreign allegiances – a function previously the CIA’s alone. In turn, the national strategic plan tasks SOCOM with preparing a ‘Global Strategic Plan’ for the ‘war on terrorism’ that will become the centrepiece of the American counterterrorist enterprise. Consistent with this plan, SOCOM is now the only supported command with a geographically unlimited remit.

By its own lights, SOCOM’s vision is ‘to be the premier team of special warriors thoroughly prepared, properly equipped, and highly motivated: at the right place, and at the right time, facing the right adversary, leading the Global War on Terrorism, accomplishing the strategic objectives of the United States’. By the end of the 2006 fiscal year, US special-operations forces are expected to number 52,846 – the troop strength of three or four infantry divisions. SOCOM’s baseline budget has increased 81% since 2001, and for fiscal-year 2006 will come to $6.6 billion. Over the next five years, the Department of Defense plans to increase SOCOM’s personnel by more than 13,000 (15%), and to add $9bn to SOCOM’s budget. The department will also increase the number of active-duty US Army Special Forces battalions by a third; expand psychological operations and civil affairs units by 3,700 personnel, or 33%; establish a 2,600-strong Marine Corps Special Operations Command; stand up a special-operations unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) squadron; and enhance special-operations capabilities for insertion into and extraction from denied areas from strategic distances.

Underlining SOCOM’s institutional significance is Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s inclusion of the SOCOM deputy commander on the 12-person Deputies Advisory Working Group, which was made a permanent part
of the Defense Department’s senior management structure in March 2006. No other combatant commander was so privileged.\textsuperscript{16} While acknowledging that defeating terrorism requires winning the war of ideas in long run, the new National Security Strategy, released on 16 March 2006, tends to stress military means for preventing attacks; denying terrorists support, sanctuary and access to nuclear, biological or chemical weapons; and denying them control of any nation or territory that they might use as a base and a platform.\textsuperscript{17}

Before 11 September, SOCOM’s nine principal missions were direct action; combating terrorism; foreign internal defence; unconventional warfare; special reconnaissance; psychological operations; civil affairs; information operations; and nuclear, biological and chemical counter-proliferation. These missions endured after the attacks occurred.\textsuperscript{18} While SOCOM’s portfolio has become more focused on terrorism, the subsidiary missions outlined by the QDR track the nine putative principal missions. According to the QDR, defeating terrorist networks will require, among other capabilities:

- ‘special operations forces to conduct direct action, foreign internal defense, counterterrorist operations and unconventional warfare’;
- ‘persistent surveillance to find and precisely target enemy capabilities in denied areas’;
- ‘the ability to communicate U.S. actions effectively to multiple audiences, while rapidly countering enemy agitation and propaganda’;
- ‘broad, flexible authorities to enable the United States to rapidly develop the capacity of nations to participate effectively in disrupting and defeating terrorist networks’;
- ‘special operations forces to locate, characterize and secure WMD’.

With the possible exceptions of civil affairs and foreign internal defence, SOCOM’s missions, though all broadly applicable to counter-terrorism, contemplate action mainly in lieu of – rather than in concert with – civilian law enforcement. And in fact, open-source reports emerged in early 2005 that Rumsfeld in autumn 2004 had authorised US military personnel – they would logically be drawn from special-operations forces – to pose as corrupt foreign businessmen and recruit local citizens to commit guerrilla or terrorist operations against targets inimical to US interests. Such operations could take place in countries where the United States had a full civilian presence – i.e., an ambassador, a diplomatic mission and a CIA station chief – but without their knowledge or participation. The Pentagon’s new rules also permitted special-operations forces to set up small covert action teams – called ‘military liaison elements’ – in American embassies.
(especially in Africa, Southeast Asia and South America) that directly target terrorists in foreign countries, including US allies. It appears that the Office of the Secretary of Defense has, in effect, tried to establish virtual Defense Department autonomy across most of the counter-terrorism spectrum.

Contra-indications
The transformative shift towards special-operations forces embodied in the QDR and the National Military Strategic Plan, and carried forward by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, is in part intended to correct the mismatch between small, irregular guerrilla or terrorist cells and a large-unit military force structure of Cold War vintage. Within a strictly military context, such a shift would advance this goal. But the relevant context is manifestly not exclusively military. Rather, in addition to the military, it encompasses civilian law-enforcement and intelligence functions and the ‘war of ideas’. In fact, the sharpest spur to Rumsfeld’s movement of the US military towards special operations forces was the CIA’s effectiveness in coordinating the war in Afghanistan, which demonstrated sensitivity to political perceptions prompted by global counter-terrorist operations.

And, among several reasons that military capabilities cannot seamlessly supplant civilian ones, the most glaring is that the use of military force of any kind – conventional or unconventional – implies some loss of political control. Even if cities do become increasingly feral over the next generation, such a concession would be prematurely nihilistic, and would send the wrong message to the silent majority of Muslims who trust neither the Judeo-Christian West nor the radical Islamists.

In any case, other official US national security documents suggest that the global jihad is not likely to hijack cities so much as metastasise through them. For example, the National Intelligence Council’s Mapping the Global Future assessment looking out to 2020, promulgated in December 2004, contemplates the possibility of a transnational and substantially virtual Islamist infrastructure that is more political and ideological than the current incarnation – a kind of caliphate-in-progress – and less inclined to use the terrorist instrument directly; terrorism would continue, but would emanate from local groups even more intensively and predominantly than it does now. Present facts on the ground lend credibility to this forecast. Despite fears that jihadists would re-congregate in weak states – e.g., Somalia or Yemen – after their expulsion from Afghanistan, thus far they have not done so. Further, an increasing number of second- and third-generation European Muslims feel at once trapped in socially, politically...
and economically marginalised Muslim communities in secular, non-Muslim Europe, and unattached to their countries of ethnic and national origin. As a consequence, they find more authentic and satisfying Islamic identities in an imagined single transnational nation of Muslim believers (that is, the umma) in which Osama bin Laden’s narrative of humiliation and victimology and the need to respond to it with violence is a powerful force. Among other things, this pathway of radicalisation for European Muslims cuts against the thesis that Islamism is motivationally subordinate to a potent nationalism that might draw them back to their respective home countries. Their grievances turn more on alienation from their host countries than on any nationalistic plight of their home countries. If the European pathway through an umma infiltrated and energised by bin Ladenism is prevalent, the al-Qaeda leadership is likely to favour inspiration and to a lesser extent facilitation over direct operational collaboration. The result would be a decentralised globe-spanning array of home-grown local groups rather than physical and operational convergence, and with it decreasing ideological coherence.

Even where jihadists appear to have flocked, as in Iraq, dispersal rather than concentration could well emerge as the decisive dynamic. The rhetoric of Salafi jihadism is multiplying the number of radicalised Iraqis as well as radicalised Muslims from other countries. Reuven Paz’s March 2005 study indicates that most of the suicide attackers operating in Iraq were not Iraqis but Saudis, who constituted 61% of the 154 Arab jihadists killed in Iraq during the previous six months, with Syrians, Iraqis and Kuwaitis and making up another 25%. The Washington Post Internet trawl that the study cites produced broadly comparable numbers, with Saudis constituting a strong 44% plurality. In both assessments, however, the jihadists’ socio-economic and religious backgrounds were similar to that of well-spoken, middle-class Iraqi jihadists, one of whom was interviewed in Time magazine. Most had no background in terrorism. The upshot is that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of ‘al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia’, is able to attract literate young people from the entire Arab world, including Iraq, and beyond. Many Iraqi insurgents as well as foreign jihadists appear to derive much of their energy and commitment from radical Islam. They are not easily distinguishable from foreign jihadists. Indeed, given the substantial and early infiltration of Iraqi society by the foreigners and pre-existing Saddam-era trend of Islamisation, the distinction may be less germane, from a counter-terrorism point of view, than coalition forces and the Iraqi government have thought. Two relevant points emerge. First, standard counter-insurgency tactics may have a more attenuated effect on Iraqis than military analysts would hope. Secondly, Iraq is more likely to become a net exporter than a net importer of terrorists.27
In general, such developments have been rendered more probable by the defensive benefits that dispersal has brought al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and by the propaganda gains that the occupation of Iraq, the abuses at Abu Ghraib, the tenuous legality of Guantanamo Bay, and other factors have afforded them in the war of ideas. US democracy promotion and the non-violent political ascent of Hizbullah and Hamas also may have perversely raised Islamist expectations that they could gain politically via an open political process. From these perspectives too, the counter-terrorism premium would be on infiltration and information – that is, intelligence and law enforcement – with an eye towards countering the jihadist message of victimisation rather than on military warfighting capabilities. While SOCOM may be the most capable military instrument for fulfilling these functions, it is not the most appropriate instrument overall.

**The messy reality**

US officials do not discount forecasts that still assume that over the next decade transnational jihadists will seek a stable territorial base – a failed state or a feral city – to replace Afghanistan. This fits with the assumption that as the US military presence in Iraq is drawn down, fewer jihadists will be attracted to Iraq, which in turn will become a less fertile proving ground for young terrorists. Such developments, other things being equal, would support a robust counter-terrorism function for SOCOM. Indeed, from a political and legal standpoint, feral cities would be easier operating environments for US military forces. It would be less burdensome to finesse the barrier of sovereignty, and assertions of security interests would be more credible in the light of the absence of effective governance and control.

Yet the same scenarios also assume the overall tendency of the global Islamist terrorist network to disperse and atomise. Groups in Europe and potentially in the US, inspired by 11 September and other spectacular jihadist operations, will spring up more or less autonomously and spontaneously in largely urban areas, manned more by ‘local talent’ than by imports from Afghanistan, the Gulf, South or Southeast Asia, or other fields of jihad. Indeed, the British Muslims who perpetrated the July 2005 bombings in the London underground appear to have been self-starters with no operational links to extant jihadist organisations. As noted, this trend cuts against the assumption that terrorists will seek a large and discrete base of operations, and makes the network relatively invulnerable to military power, including SOCOM, and more vulnerable to civilian law-enforcement and intelligence cooperation. On this view, in which terrorists do not coalesce, states
will also be that much less vulnerable to failure and cities that much less feral. Still, unruly cities or states which nonetheless have some level of governmental law enforcement and security authority may be even more susceptible to terrorist infiltration than truly feral ones. Merely weak cities and states interpose a corruptible government apparatus between foreign terrorists and potentially intervening outside powers or treacherous criminal elements, and therefore may be more attractive to terrorist hosts than feral cities or states that have already collapsed. Bin Laden apparently contemplated Somalia as his next stop following Sudan in 1996, but decided against it because the warlords who controlled Mogadishu – though Sunni Muslims as well – were too legally unencumbered and too venal and competitive to be considered trustworthy.

The intensification of militant Islamism in Europe suggests that terrorists will sometimes find at least workably comfortable enclaves in cities and countries with high levels of governmental control and first-rate civilian security structures. Overall, therefore, the most likely eventuality is for terrorists to remain distributed in cities and states in which sovereign authority in varying degrees still operates. In those places, military operations of any kind – including the irregular variety associated with special-operations forces – will be difficult to sustain. Most Western governments – including those hit hardest by Islamist terrorists – have an entrenched reluctance to allow the insinuation of state military power into homeland security. Even stronger reservations would logically extend to the armed forces of a foreign country.

There are, of course, situations in which special-operations forces could be counter-terrorist assets of early resort. For example, even if the jihadist network continues to favour dispersal rather than coalescence, it will need at least small training camps and will find countries with weak law enforcement, intelligence and military capabilities the easiest operating environments for establishing the necessary sites. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), for instance, is running a handful of small, mobile training camps for Jemaah Islamiah militants in an area of the Philippines – Mindanao – over which the Philippine government has flimsy control, and American special-operations forces have helped curtail the terrorist activity of both the MILF and Abu Sayyaf. And some governments that are politically constrained from overtly cooperating with the United States may be more willing to play ball provided American enforcement action is indeed undertaken covertly. Both of these cases would call for discriminate, discreet, time-sensitive transnational applications of military force – for instance, the takedown of a training camp, or the ‘snatch’ of a terrorist suspect in open territory or in a country whose government is reluctant for political reasons to detain the suspect itself – which SOCOM is especially well suited to provide.
Such situations, however, are likely to be few and far between. The Predator strike killing six al-Qaeda members in Yemen in November 2002, though actually executed by CIA officers, remains a stark example of the effective use of special operations to neutralise terrorists. Yet so far it has not been repeated. The circumstances of the Yemen operation were rare: the Yemeni government did not effectively control the area of the country in which the jihadists were travelling; Sana’a quietly gave its consent to Washington; and the sparseness of the population near the target made collateral damage easily avoidable. Had the United States lacked Yemen’s consent, the political risk of employing an armed UAV would have been considerable, as the conspicuously military character of the action would have precluded plausible deniability and justified a claim on Yemen’s part that the United States had breached its sovereignty.

Clandestine US civilian collaboration with authorities in countries harbouring terrorists – e.g., in the arrest of 11-September mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in Pakistan, and that of al-Qaeda–Jemaah Islamiah liaison Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali) in Thailand – have yielded more frequent and durable gains. The Istanbul, Madrid and London bombings suggest that the jihad’s epicentre is moving to Europe, where mature and broadly US-friendly democracies are the norm. In that theatre, even the most covert and discreet military activity would carry prohibitive risk. So, indeed, would a heavy-handed civilian operation, as demonstrated by the criminal investigations that Germany, Italy and Sweden have undertaken of the CIA’s alleged abductions of terrorist suspects in the execution of ‘renditions’. These episodes serve only to demonstrate the even greater infeasibility of even low-visibility military operations in what is arguably becoming the most critical field of jihad.

Even in less sensitive places, potential political liabilities attending the covert deployment of special-operations forces abound. In late 2004, one of the inaugural ‘military liaison elements’ had to be withdrawn from Paraguay after killing a street criminal and causing the United States – which had not disclosed the deployment of the special-operations team to the host government – diplomatic embarrassment. While the teams now operate under more restrictive guidelines established by the national intelligence director, CIA officials view the teams as conducive to unilateral US military activity that could ultimately impair operational as well as diplomatic relationships with other governments. CIA and Federal Bureau of Investigation officers have also registered worries about excessive interrogation techniques used by special-operations forces in Iraq, disclosure of which could reprise the Abu Ghraib revelations that have so profoundly marred the United States’ image in the Muslim world. Ominously, advocates of SOCOM’s growing role in the campaign against terrorism believe
that special-operations forces should be engaged in all of the 60-odd countries
in which jihadist cells are believed to operate.36

Re-orienting US policy
The military slice of the counter-terrorism pie is pretty small and getting smaller,
because the transnational Islamist terrorist network’s further dispersal appears
more likely than its reconcentration. Furthermore, the most alarming sub-trend
of that dispersal is the jihadist infiltration of Europe. Europe served very effec-
tively as a recruitment, planning and staging area for al-Qaeda’s attacks on US
interests prior to 11 September. If this infiltration continues, it could once again
become a platform for striking the United States and its assets. This scenario
clashes with current US policy, which leverages challenging terrorists abroad
militarily as a means of strengthening the security of the homeland. From a
political perspective, the notion of American special-operations forces operat-
ing robustly in Western Europe is little short of absurd. The United States, then,
needs to consider policy adjustments that account for the likelihood that par-
ticipants in the global jihad will generally regard themselves as better off as
a maximally decentralised and virtual network fully infiltrated into locales in
which the military instrument – including SOCOM – is subject to severe politi-
cal and operational limitations.

The Pentagon does not deny that counter-terrorism has a substantial non-
military dimension: the QDR itself acknowledges that terrorist networks ‘cannot
be defeated solely through military force’.37 What is disturbing is the Defense
Department’s effective exaltation of the military dimension with blandly dismissive
reassurance that it ‘fully supports efforts to counter the ideology of terrorism,
although most of the U.S. government’s capabilities for this activity reside in other
U.S. government agencies and in the private sector’.38 The inferred institutional
understanding betrays ignorance about the tension between the military effort to
thwart terrorism and the non-military campaign against terrorist ideologies and,
more pointedly, about the inverse relationship between coercive military action
– whether clandestine or visible – and winning hearts and minds.

This misconception reflects the broader American inclination to view
counter-terrorism as tantamount to war. Since the 11 September attacks there
has been substantial comment, especially among Europeans, on this American
tendency, and by now many have consigned the debate to the category of
semantic quibble. While it is verbally awkward to suggest that the West and
its partners are at war with a tactic rather than an opposing political entity, the
fact remains that they have found themselves in a long struggle requiring a sus-
tained mobilisation of resources that resembles that required in a major war in
Demilitarising the ‘War on Terror’

the Clausewitzean sense. Yet Michael Howard – Clausewitz’s foremost living interpreter – has warned that labels do matter. Writing more than a year before the Iraq intervention, he argued that

to use, or rather to misuse, the term ‘war’ is not simply a matter of legality or pedantic semantics. It has deeper and more dangerous consequences. To declare that one is at war is immediately to create a war psychosis that may be totally counterproductive for the objective being sought. It arouses an immediate expectation, and demand, for spectacular military action against some easily identifiable adversary, preferably a hostile state – action leading to decisive results.

The characterisation of the American-led campaign against transnational Islamist terrorism as a war did not lead inexorably to its intervention in Iraq, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that it subconsciously promoted it. And that characterisation has almost certainly reinforced the Pentagon’s organisational compulsion to justify an essentially conventional force structure and interventionist approach in terms of current security challenges which that structure cannot meet without substantial help from non-military organisations. Militarising counter-terrorism through intervention in local conflicts is liable to encourage the radical umma to graft those local conflicts onto the larger global one, such that those conflicts become part of a global war against Islam. This war, in turn, serves to justify the ‘defensive jihad’ asserted by bin Laden and his adherents. Indeed, aside from the Internet, the main accelerant of the jihad is the Iraq War. That war brilliantly confirms bin Laden’s narrative in which Western hostility towards, exploitation of, and domination of Islam places it in imminent peril. Furthermore, in conjunction with the Internet, the Iraq conflict has facilitated jihadists’ propagation of urban-warfare techniques throughout the world. In the extreme case, more aggressive military activity would only accelerate this trend, which, if unchecked, would render cities all the more feral, necessitate more provocative military action, and perpetuate a spiral of polarising confrontation between US-led and Islamist forces.

On the operational level, the trend towards self-starting jihadist groups, while extremely worrisome, also opens up the possibility of strategic ‘own goals’ as well as rivalries and ideological disputes that would impede the unity and progress of al-Qaeda and the jihad. This prospect points to the need to develop strategies that aggravate the divisions among jihadists rather than giving them common cause. Such strategies are likely to be largely non-military approaches, heavy on intelligence and information operations and ‘strategic communication’ and light on the use of force.
The upshot is that while the United States and its counter-terrorism partners do have to ameliorate local conflicts (especially Israel–Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir and of course Iraq itself), they had best do so through diplomacy so as to deny bin Laden traction in the umma. Hard counter-terrorist measures, some of them military, are indispensable, but they should be as inconspicuous and politically non-inflammatory as possible. Despite special-operations forces’ smaller footprint and their deserved status as ‘quiet professionals’ (the self-ascribed moniker of the Green Berets) compared to regular military, this reality dictates a strong preference for civilian over military measures. Accordingly, the US defence posture should expressly subordinate military measures – including special operations – to diplomacy and civilian law enforcement and intelligence. It should also emphasise special-operations forces’ training and advisory mission – their traditional strength and arguably their most important and distinctive capability – over their direct action one. Not only do the QDR and related documents fail to establish these doctrinal priorities; the Office of the Secretary of Defense appears to have activated plans and orders that have expanded SOCOM’s writ to the point where it threatens to usurp that of the CIA and other civilian counter-terrorism agencies, and potentially interfere with diplomatic efforts.

It may be a blessing that SOCOM’s implementation has not caught up with its remit. There remains widespread resistance within the US defence and intelligence community – including the regional combatant commands and some services, as well as civilian agencies – to SOCOM’s expansive and increasingly autonomous counter-terrorist role. The QDR’s special-operations forces focus privileges the US Army and the Marine Corps, so they would be organisationally hard-pressed not to go along with the Office of the Secretary of Defense’s vision. Even so, in mid-2005, General Richard Myers, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and an Air Force officer, essentially echoed Howard’s reservations, objecting to the term ‘war on terror’ ‘because if you call it a war, then you think of people in uniform as being the solution’ when in fact ‘it is more diplomatic, more economic, more political than it is military’. To hedge against future threats from more traditional, large-scale state forces, the Air Force still has to fulfil its traditional power-projection and global-mobility roles, while the Navy has to worry about China’s growing blue-water capabilities. To be sure, these services will make contributions of Air Commandos and SEALs to special-operations forces as they have for years, and undertake some new counter-terrorism-related missions such as homeland defence and maritime interdiction and develop newer
technologies (e.g., unmanned vehicles and smaller precision-guided munitions) and capabilities (e.g., more infantry-trained personnel) for counter-terrorism purposes. Overall, however, they are struggling to integrate counter-terrorism into their strategic doctrine.\textsuperscript{56}

The fact is, relatively few uniformed personnel in the Pentagon actually believe, on the merits, that the military has a large standing role to play in counter-terrorism. Even those who do are torn between pushing for new capabilities tailored to the terrorism threat and supporting the traditional ones on which they have built their careers. The Defense Department’s civilian leadership, however, seems to want to justify large budgets, views the rest of the government (including the White House) as suggestible, and is willing to exploit wishful thinking about the amenability of terrorism to the ‘transformational’ conventional military capabilities in which the United States is supreme in order to justify those budgets. As a result, procurement of big-ticket legacy items has proceeded at a Cold War pace even as military requirements have qualitatively changed.\textsuperscript{47} After the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, yet another restructuring of the US national security establishment is scarcely warranted. Instead, what is required is a clearer delineation of the respective powers of the Department of Defense, the CIA and other key agencies, and the designation of a lead agency for counter-terrorism that reflects a full appreciation for the crucial political component of the global campaign. From a substantive standpoint, the best-suited agency would be not the Department of Defense, but rather the Department of State. It is State, not Defense, that needs to be on a war footing.

In attempting to come to grips with a rising Islamist terrorist threat within its own borders in 2004, the government of the United Kingdom undertook a comprehensive study – entitled ‘Young Muslims and Extremism’ – of threats posed by the UK’s 1.6m-strong Muslim population and possible remedies.\textsuperscript{48} Although the study drew heavily on the assessments of the Security Service, more commonly known as MI5, the UK’s domestic intelligence agency, it was jointly overseen by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. The study arrived at a concerted plan, with covert as well as overt elements, ‘fundamentally cross-governmental … and properly costed and resourced’, to both integrate and co-opt British Muslims and reduce their threat.\textsuperscript{49} The heightened British effort did not stop the horrific terrorist bombings in London on 7 July 2005 or the abortive attempted bombings two weeks later on 21 July. Yet the multi-agency mobilisation prompted by ‘Young Muslims and Extremism’ did reflect an effective integration of soft and hard power which the UK Ministry of Defence would have been hard-pressed to achieve.
Admittedly, the State Department will find it tough to re-elevate itself. Whereas civilian authorities have maintained primacy in the UK’s campaign against Islamist terrorism, it is hard to deny that the State Department has been marginalised during Bush’s tenure. The Defense Department has soundly bested State and other civilian agencies – notably, the CIA – in the bureaucratic politics game. For instance, even though a national intelligence directorate was established last year to lend greater cohesion to the interagency process, the Pentagon – with help from Vice-President Dick Cheney’s office – was able to ensure that the enabling legislation cut the new national intelligence director out of the military chain of command, and Defense still controls 80% of the intelligence budget. In addition, the modest rise in the number of Foreign Service officers that occurred under former Secretary of State Colin Powell has been eaten up by the US Embassy in Baghdad and assignments to Afghanistan. While the Bush administration has paid lip-service to, for instance, the importance of public diplomacy in the campaign against terrorism, it has not expedited its pursuit. Karen Hughes, the current undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, did not assume her post for six months following her nomination. Her disastrous ‘listening tour’ last fall merely confirmed to Muslim populations American naiveté and ignorance about Islam and the impact of US policies. State currently has no reliable measures of how effective its programmes are. Polling is intermittent, and after-action reports from embassies on public diplomacy efforts are voluntary and methodologically unsophisticated. The US government has not aggressively recruited American Muslims to advise on its efforts to reach Muslims worldwide.

Defense has significant bureaucratic advantages over State, including a cultural predisposition to systematic planning and vastly greater financial and human resources. There has been some State and CIA pushback in response to perceived Pentagon encroachment. The public affairs and psychological operations communities regarded the Defense Department’s creation of the Office of Strategic Influence in early 2002 as a bureaucratic threat to their portfolios, and their complaints led Rumsfeld to grudgingly disband the unit within a week of its official inception. State has also resisted relinquishing the lead to Defense for counter-terrorism in non-combat locales, State’s counter-terrorism coordinator arguing that the ambassadors should retain primary authority. During Bush’s second term, under Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, a more reflective State Department has reclaimed some influence within the national security establishment from a neoconservative Department of Defense chastened by Iraq and an increasingly discredited and suspect Office of the Vice President. And Hughes has lately generated clout within the US national security bureauc-
racy and started to create a public diplomacy infrastructure. Yet Defense has been relentless and persistent in pursuing imperial designs on the interagency process. For instance, Rumsfeld defiantly indicated in a press conference some nine months after the Office of Strategic Influence had been officially shut down that it had been closed only in name.53 To level the playing field enough to make a difference, Congressional intervention would probably be required.

The 9/11 Commission Report found interagency rigidity in counter-terrorism before the 11 September attacks, prompting the legislative establishment of the National Counterterrorism Center to ‘break down stovepipes’ in allocating operational responsibilities to lead agencies.54 On the strength of these developments, one analyst has recommended that Congress create a relatively small (seven- to 12-member) interagency team to coordinate national counter-terrorism efforts under authority, not to manage day-to-day policy execution or to make substantive policy but rather to ‘focus … on seeking out and eliminating strategic inconsistencies or confusion and key impediments to strategy implementation’.55 If State were armed with a supervisory mandate along these lines, diplomatic, political, law-enforcement and intelligence efforts against terrorism would gain momentum and coherence. Perhaps most importantly, they would develop political weight sufficient to offset attempts by other agencies to acquire undue and counterproductive influence.

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Notes
2 The vision of Los Angeles in Blade Runner is that of director Ridley Scott and author Philip K. Dick, on whose novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (New York: Signet, 1969) the film is based.
3 Norton, ‘Feral Cities,’ p. 98.
4 A former US Navy commander, Norton himself is doubtful about the efficacy of the conventional military instrument against non-state actors ensconced in urban areas. Ibid., p. 105.
6 US Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report,
Although the Predator, an unmanned aerial vehicle often armed with Hellfire anti-tank weapons, was originally an exclusive US Air Force asset, since 11 September the CIA has increasingly controlled the drones.


Shanker and Scott, ‘Elite Troops Get Expanded Role on Intelligence’.


Quadrennial Defense Review, p. 22.

Ibid.


SOCOM has lately stressed (kinetic) direct action missions over training and advising indigenous military and security forces and then accompanying them in counter-insurgency operations. This advisory role, aided by SOF’s unparalleled intercultural communication skills and training expertise, produced superb results with the Kurds in northern Iraq, but so far not otherwise in Iraq. See Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr, ‘How to Win in Iraq’, Foreign Affairs, vol. 84, no. 5, September/October 2005, pp. 87–104.