

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b>		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b>	<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b>		
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b>			<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>		
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>			<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>		
			<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>		
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>		
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>			<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>		
			<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>		
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b>					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b>					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b>					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>

United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22314-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

---

---

**TITLE:** An Assessment of the Global War on Terrorism through the lens of Sun Tzu

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**AUTHOR:** Major Michael S. Hritz, United States Marine Corps

AY 2017-18

---

---

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved:

Date:

Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved:

Date:

*Army Louise Antonoff*  
*Army Louise Antonoff*  
*4/5/18*  
*Nathan M. Packard*  
*Nathan M. Packard*  
*4/5/18*

## Executive Summary

**Title:** An Assessment of the Global War on Terrorism through the lens of Sun Tzu

**Author:** Major Michael Hritz, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Assessing the conduct of Al-Qaeda in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) reveals that the organization has waged its war since 2002 using the principles of Sun-Tzu. It has sought to “out-wit” the United States by turning their weaknesses (small numbers/distributed operations) into strengths while at the same time, turning their enemies strengths (democratic principles/economic power/publicized strategy) into weaknesses. It has done so by seeking a protracted war that utilizes the concept of economy of force to extend the United States’ military and degrade the financial health of the United States – a strategy of financial attrition. The United States may have reacted to terroristic acts after 9/11 in line with this strategy and disproportionate to the actual threat.

**Discussion:** Previous authors that examined GWOT concluded that the United States adeptly applied the principles of Sun Tzu and that Al Qaeda erred in its attacks. However, most authors conducted their review in 2005 or before except for one. With the advantage of additional time as perspective, this analysis reaches a different conclusion. This paper argues that Osama Bin Laden sought to achieve a quagmire in Afghanistan leading to a weakened America and a forced withdrawal from the Middle East. After the quagmire failed to occur, Al-Qaeda revisited its strategy in 2002, eventually seeking a strategy of financial attrition. Strategy newly determined, Al-Qaeda morphed its tactics into those commiserate with those espoused by Sun Tzu. Using America’s historic strategy of annihilation against her, al-Qaeda anticipated and forced the United States to react, pushing the geographic conflict zones globally. In doing so, the United States stretched its military, resulting in increased expenditures and readiness issues.

**Conclusion:** In countering terroristic groups, the United States must analyze terroristic acts within the enemy’s strategic frame. Continuing GWOT in the way that it has been pursued over the last sixteen years – through a strategy of annihilation - may necessitate hard domestic economic choices to leverage the strength of the American economy. Without economic changes, policy should change to better relate to the threat, one in which former-President Obama insinuated was exaggerated. Good *policy* must prevail over good *politics* which normally demands some response to high-profile, terroristic acts that has great psychological impact on the electorate.

## DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

*Tables*

	Page
Table 1: US Gross National Debt 1972-2016.....	25

### *Acknowledgements*

The prosecution of the Global War on Terror has expanded vertically and horizontally since 2001. Even now, the war is expected to continue for quite some time. The total costs incurred as a response to 9/11 equate to 35% of all debt since 2001. This essay intends to add to the debate amongst the public and decision makers a new perspective – that in prosecuting a war to combat terrorists, the United States is actually conducting itself as Al-Qaeda intended since 2002. Al-Qaeda is seeking a strategy of financial attrition in a prolonged war to weaken America through her center of gravity, its economic strength. The United States' counter-terrorism strategy should carefully weigh the risks of inaction as well as action. In both instances, lives and treasure are at stake.

Numerous individuals helped me throughout the research and writing process for this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Anne-Louise Antonoff for her guidance and mentorship. Her breadth of knowledge, expertise, and eye for detail were essential and helped me consider new ideas and perspectives, greatly enriching this paper. I would also like to thank Dr. Nathan Packard for reviewing this paper and pushing me to think more about economic considerations. I would also like to thank Ms. Andrea Hamlen and Ms. Stase Wells, both of whom proof-read multiple versions of this paper and provided suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Dr. Jacqueline Gold, without whom I would not have had the time to research and write this paper. She was instrumental as a sounding-board to bounce ideas against in an effort to further develop them as well as encouraging me during my times of frustration.

While the aforementioned individuals provided invaluable advice during the writing of this paper, the views, opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this paper are strictly my own. They are not responsible for any errors or omissions in this paper.

*Table of Contents*

	Page
DISCLAIMER.....	i
LIST OF TABLES.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES.....	3
SUN TZU IN CONTEXT.....	6
THE <i>ART OF WAR</i> AND GWOT.....	10
THE UNITED STATES AT PRESENT.....	22
CONCLUSIONS.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	32
ENDNOTES.....	36

In 2002, the propagandist Abu Ubayd Al-Qurashi wrote a series of articles for Al-Qaeda's Al-Ansar magazine. In one article, he described how Al-Qaeda can defeat America: "by causing the country to overextend and overspend."<sup>1</sup> This message aligned with Bin Laden's who, only a few days after 9/11, explained that the attacks on the Pentagon and Twin Towers on 9/11 "were not targeted at women and children. The real targets were America's icons of military and economic power."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Bin Laden considered America's strength, its center of gravity, as its economy, "this Zionist stranglehold on the American government," underpinning America's foreign policy and use of its military.<sup>3</sup> According to this argument, by eliminating the capitalistic strength of the United States, the American government and its military would be weakened. While not meant as a decisive blow, the attack was another salvo in a war that Al-Qaeda began years earlier with an attack on the USS Cole. In 2002, Al-Qurashi's message demonstrated final agreement within Al-Qaeda that *the American economy formed the center of gravity in Al Qaeda's war on the United States*. The twin towers, according to Bin Laden, symbolized the economic power of the United States and foreshadowed the strategy that Al-Qaeda eventually decided upon – financial attrition.

In order to provide insight into how Al-Qaeda has sought to achieve its objective of eroding American economic strength, this paper analyzes the Global War on Terror (GWOT) through the lens of Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. This lens is especially important since Sun Tzu's strategic theory revolved around outwitting a stronger opponent to achieve one's ends. "Outwitting" means to turn one's own weaknesses into strengths and one's enemy's strengths into weaknesses. This paper argues that Al-Qaeda has attempted to fight the United States using Sun Tzu's principles, and that the United States has at times responded to terroristic acts in line with how Al-Qaeda intends. Additionally, this paper aims to contribute to the debate within the

public and policy spheres by offering a new perspective – that counteractions taken by the United States in response to terroristic acts may play into Al-Qaeda’s strategy and, over the long-run, contribute to Al-Qaeda’s goal of financial attrition.

The United States has prosecuted the war at times in a way that is advantageous to Al-Qaeda’s strategy but historically similar to America’s military tradition. Russell Weigley originally called that tradition one of “annihilation,” which he deemed “the American way of war,” in contrast to “attrition.”<sup>4</sup> Subsequent debate has called into question Weigley’s understanding of attrition as a strategy and instead has introduced a warfighting dichotomy between “maneuver” and attrition, not without its own confusion as the real contrast is between seeking and circumventing battle. In any case, the United States historically has had periods whereby it has pursued a strategy of attrition in warfare, most notably in Vietnam. Whatever one calls the strategy and however one describes the operational approach, the United States has been seeking to destroy Al Qaeda and affiliated terrorists and terrorist organizations around the globe for more than sixteen years now.

In doing so, the United States has spent nearly \$5 trillion, roughly 25% of today’s national debt, or a whopping 35%<sup>1</sup> of the debt incurred since 2001 in the protracted conflict. As the United States continues to prosecute the war, it is important to understand how Al-Qaeda intended to fight and ask itself if the United States has taken action commensurate with that strategy. To best describe how Al-Qaeda has waged its version of war, it is necessary to describe Al-Qaeda in historical context along with its stated objectives the development of Al Qaeda’s

---

<sup>1</sup> This number is derived from dividing the debt incurred from GWOT from 2001-2016 (\$4.79T) as a percentage of total debt incurred since 2001. Using the treasury department’s calculator, the debt on September 12, 2001 was \$5.7T. Crawford’s study ended in Aug 2016. The Treasury Department’s database lists the debt as \$19.4T that month. Total debt incurred from 2001-2016 is therefore \$13.7T. Therefore, the GWOT stake represents 34.9% of the debt since 2001 ( $4.79/13.7 = .349$  or 34.9%.) This is mentioned as a prologue to further discussion on page 21-22 with citations of references included in that section.

strategy and the parallels between it and passages in *The Art of War*, and the United States' response and possible side-effects. Only in this process will adjustments to the future strategy of the United States present themselves.

### **Historical Context and Objectives**

To understand Al-Qaeda, one must understand those theoreticians who influenced Bin Laden. The originator of militant Islamist ideology, Sayyid Qutb, predominates in this regard.<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian government sent Qutb to the United States on fellowship with the hope that his already emerging radical viewpoints would mellow. Instead, he became more radicalized, largely by separating himself from American society and using selective, reductionist history to portray America as evil.<sup>6</sup> The United States' pursuit of global peace, Qutb argued, is a mask for global domination.<sup>7</sup> Qutb also argued that "capitalism is based on *usury* – that 'fundament of the Jewish economy' and the consequent accumulation of wealth."<sup>8</sup> To summarize Qutb's arguments, at least as they relate to the United States, he mainly takes issue with the United States' interventionism globally and its capitalistic economy. Capitalism, he posited, is repugnant due to the inherent inequality of the system, its exploitation of the poor, as well as its alleged Jewish roots.<sup>9</sup> These ideas greatly inspired Bin Laden.

In August 1996, Osama Bin Laden declared jihad against the Americans. His grievances included the deaths of Muslims in places like Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon, among others, borne of interventionist policies of the United States.<sup>10</sup> Bin Laden stated that "the only way of repelling the invasion is through the combined efforts of all Muslims," and so he sought, through various letters, videos, interviews, and finally actions, to entice the Muslim world against the United States.<sup>11</sup> On October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Al-Qaeda fired the first shots of this war with a suicide attack

on the USS Cole, killing seventeen and wounding another thirty-nine sailors.<sup>12</sup> Less than a year later, Al-Qaeda attacked the Pentagon and the Twin Towers in New York.

After the attacks, Al-Qaeda's allies sought to promote its agenda. One of Al-Qaeda's most prominent propagandists after 9/11, Abu Ubayd Al-Qurashi, attempted to recruit and convince others that Al-Qaeda could defeat the United States.<sup>13</sup> According to one author who studied his work, Al-Qurashi assumes that one who reads his work "sees the Twin Towers as symbols of globalization and the economic power behind it."<sup>14</sup> The idea of attacking the military and the symbols of globalization and economic power of the United States falls in line with Qutb's ideology.

A year after the United States invaded Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden described his war aims. He published a "Letter to America" that detailed the grievances he had with the United States, listed several demands, and ended the letter with his "end-state." In this letter, one can see the influence of Qutb and his anti-Semitism when Bin Laden referred to *usury*, the same word used by Qutb to describe Jewish ties to capitalism:

You are the nation that permits usury, which has been forbidden by all the religions. Yet you build your economy and investments on usury. As a result of this, in all its different forms and guises, the Jews have taken control of your economy, through which they have then taken control of your media, and now control all aspects of your life making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense.<sup>15</sup>

Bin Laden tied America's economy to the Jews, much as Qutb did, and proclaimed his grievances, which included spilling Muslim blood, occupying Muslim lands, and stealing Muslim property such as oil, among others. Bin Laden, no doubt, believed his anti-Semitic rhetoric, but by using such language, he hoped to unite Muslims against Israel's supporter, the United States. He continued the letter with demands which included ending support of Israel, departing Muslim lands, and ending influence over Muslim countries. Perhaps most importantly,

he presented his end state, the object against which America's success or failure must be judged: "If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy."<sup>16</sup> Given this emphasis, Bin Laden likely envisioned the economy as America's center of gravity, believing that it drove American foreign policy and military intervention.<sup>17</sup>

Al-Qaeda prior to 9/11 thought that provoking the Americans into a conflict in Afghanistan would lead to a result similar to that which the Soviets faced there in the 1980s – an unwinnable quagmire – causing the United States inevitably to leave in a weakened state.<sup>18</sup> However, the United States crushed Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan soon after it invaded, and the organization had to quickly adopt a new strategy. Bin Laden, after setting the original end-state of Al-Qaeda, eventually "left the detailed development and exposition of his strategy to others," one of whom was Ayman Al-Zawahiri.<sup>19</sup>

According to Michael Ryan, author of *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, Al-Qaeda morphed and evolved, eventually accepting a strategy inspired by Mao. Al-Qaeda's strategy, he argues, became "based on communist revolutionary strategy developed by Mao Tse-tung, [which] refuses to accept defeat as long as any of its members are alive and fighting for their goals."<sup>20</sup> This influence reveals indirectly the importance of Sun Tzu, who originally inspired Mao in guerilla strategy. There are, however, differences between the two East Asian philosophers.<sup>21</sup> Mao, for instance, argued that guerrilla warfare was only a means to an end. Guerrilla warfare would demoralize the enemy, raise the spirit of potential recruits (thereby getting stronger), and, when numbers of fighters were great enough, turn guerrillas into a conventional force that would annihilate the enemy in a piecemeal fashion.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, it can

be argued that Al-Qaeda has not sought a strategy of annihilation since 2001 when it was soundly defeated and expelled from Afghanistan. This experience seems to have prompted a fundamental change in Al Qaeda strategic thinking, influenced more by Sun Tzu. Unlike Mao, Sun Tzu argued that a prolonged war would be detrimental to states, and that the economic consequences of such a war can be reasonably exploited. Therefore, analyzing Al-Qaeda's strategy as it relates to Sun Tzu may be more important than analyzing it through the lens of Mao for any true assessment of GWOT in the years since the 2001 setback in Afghanistan.

After the United States ejected Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan in 2001, a military quagmire going forward no longer appeared to be a reasonable expectation, forcing Al-Qaeda to revisit its strategy. Eventually, Bin Laden aimed to undermine his purported center of gravity of the United States – its economy. Badly beaten, Al-Qaeda's leaders recognized that it could not win in the short-term but that time was on the organization's side.<sup>23</sup> In 2002, Al-Qurashi wrote a series of articles for Al-Qaeda's Al-Ansar magazine in which he described Al-Qaeda's winning strategy against the United States: "by causing the country to overextend and overspend."<sup>24</sup> He pointed out that, because of 9/11, the United States spent tens of billions of dollars in security measures at the time of his writing (2002). Al-Qaeda's strategy became one of financial attrition. Its tactics, too, are best explained by understanding Sun Tzu's teachings.

### **SUN TZU IN CONTEXT**

Although the GWOT has expanded globally and uses technology inconceivable to Sun Tzu, the latter's approach appears most apt in explaining the course of the war. However, to apply *The Art of War* to GWOT, one must first understand Sun Tzu, his context, and his overarching theme. He was a general in ancient China and lived in a period that experienced significant upheaval and change. Over the course of nearly four centuries prior to his writing,

nearly 400 battles were fought.<sup>2</sup> The use of deception was an innovative military concept in the Chinese tradition. Additionally, the nature of warfare evolved, becoming more common, violent, protracted, and geographically expansive.<sup>25</sup> The changes of warfare and the increasing propensity for conflict to explode in intensity and scope begged for a new theory of warfare, and Sun Tzu rose to the task.

The overarching theme of Sun Tzu is outsmarting one's "stronger" enemy: "The Chinese...have tended to focus on the discovery, and refinement of schemes that would enable the weak to defeat the strong, as merely defeating an adversary of equal or lesser strength is considered unremarkable in Chinese strategic thought."<sup>26</sup> The idea of outwitting one's opponent is exemplified in the oft quoted Sun Tzu line "know your enemy and yourself and through a hundred battles, you will never be in danger."<sup>27</sup> By understanding how the enemy will react to one's moves, one can forecast the upcoming battle. Additionally, the idea of knowing the enemy and one's self allows the superior general to turn one's own weaknesses into strengths and the enemy's strengths into weaknesses. Sun Tzu's way of war is more than outsmarting the enemy, however, and borrows from several Chinese concepts, which are important to define before discussing how Al-Qaeda has sought to use these principles.

One concept that inspired Sun Tzu is the importance of harmony (*ho*) and is paramount in Chinese strategic thought. The idea has its roots in Confucianism, the predominant civilian philosophy in Sun Tzu's time. A Confucian phrase is "the exemplary person pursues harmony, not sameness."<sup>28</sup> As it relates to war, it is the coordination and synchronization of independent parts that achieves success much more than uniformity of like parts. John Boyd, another military

---

<sup>2</sup> Some debate whether or not Sun Tzu was the sole author of *The Art of War* or whether the work is a conglomeration of multiple authors. For the purpose of this paper, Sun Tzu is attributed as the author, though the important elements are the principles contained within the text, regardless of authorship.

theoretician, studied Sun Tzu and concluded that the ancient philosopher considered harmony and trust paramount to success.<sup>29</sup> From a General's perspective, though individual units may be underperforming, the General should focus on the system as a whole to maximize the interplay between units, and not be distracted by smaller problems.

As a Taoist, Sun Tzu understood the world as rife with contradictions to be accepted exploited rather than solved.<sup>30</sup> Contradictions, such as underperformance in some areas, are to be expected and normal, and therefore should not become a distraction. By contrast, Western thought is more reductionist or scientific. Westerners do not consider contradictions normal but instead try to resolve them, often breaking apart the problem to determine what is "wrong." The analytic disassembling of a problem and mental reconstruction to understand it takes some time. Hence, contradictions can more easily become distractions. If the Eastern General is concerned with harmonizing his individual pieces, he is likewise concerned with creating chaos within the enemy's system, something easier to do if facing a Western opponent. By knowing one's enemy, by using his strategy, propensity, and anticipated moves against him, the superior general can achieve disharmony of the enemy. This theme can extend beyond the enemy's military and into the enemy's alliance structure or even his societal structure. In other words, one can attack the enemy's harmony, in multiple areas, so as to unbalance him.

Sun Tzu's use of dialectics throughout his text is explained through this understanding of contradictions. One study described dialectical thinking as allowing one "[to] retain basic elements of...two opposing perspectives and believe that both perspectives might contain some truth, even at the risk of tolerating a contradiction."<sup>31</sup> One example of dialectics within *The Art of War* would be the comment of "making the indirect route the most direct." [This seeming contradiction builds on the famous opposition between "cheng" and "chi," i.e., the orthodox and

the unorthodox, or the expected and the unexpected.] If one can make the enemy have to react to one's own movements, his route becomes longer than that of the other army.<sup>32</sup>

In a similar fashion, Sun Tzu emphasized Chinese strategic thought as revolving around deception, much more so than in Western thought, though trickery certainly is recognized as having a role in Western warfare.<sup>33</sup> One presents the enemy with a situation resembling what he is inclined to see, while preparing the unexpected for him on one's own terms; in falling for the ruse, he finds himself trapped in a situation disadvantageous to his army and advantageous to the friendly force. In this way, Sun Tzu demonstrates the concept of *yin*, or responding to one's context. When applied to espionage and deception, the concept of *yin* means to use the enemy against himself.<sup>34</sup>

Sun Tzu also placed emphasis on the concept of *Shi*, or strategic potential, devoting an entire chapter to the matter. One author describes the concept as recognizing that "every situation or condition...can be brought into play and directed to one's advantage" if the superior general recognizes the hidden structure and potential.<sup>35</sup> This is consistent with Taoist thought since Tao literally means "pathway," providing clarity for one's temporal and special position.<sup>36</sup>

Another idea that influenced Sun Tzu was the idea of Ch'i, meaning energy force. Achieving balance of energy is essential in Confucian thought. Additionally, the concept is meant to describe relationships between two things: "etymologically, the character ch'i...is probably acoustic, making "resonance" and "tensions" a particularly appropriate way of describing the relations that obtain among things."<sup>37</sup> Throughout his work, many of Sun Tzu's tips are provided from the perspective of one's own army but presented *in relation* to the enemy, demonstrating this relationship.

Definitions in hand, the next task is to describe how Al-Qaeda has attempted to pursue its objectives by using the principles of Sun Tzu.

### **The Art of War and GWOT**

If “knowing one’s self” is to have any meaning, the United States’ must analyze its political structure and possible repercussions. At the most basic level of assessment, one recognizes the power of the electorate since it is the electorate that determines who holds seats in Congress and the Presidency. Inflaming the passions of the people can have the result of spurring the American government into action, since any inaction could prove detrimental to one’s own elected position. If a politician desires re-election, the politician is driven to satisfy his or her constituents. In this way, the people’s anger could influence foreign policy and government expenditures.

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter argue in “The Strategies of Terrorism” that no terrorist’s objective ends with instilling fear in the target population. Rather, the goal is to “cause governments and individuals to respond in ways that aid the terrorists’ cause.”<sup>38</sup> Terrorism may be an apt tool to apply against democratic systems since 1) attacks can be conducted without major coordination once operatives begin execution, 2) terrorism can strike fear among the populace, 3) fear can be translated to political pressure to counter-act potential threats, and 4) this pressure results in some action. The counter-action to a high-profile, anger-inducing, terroristic act is likely to have an economic component to it, whether it be increasing capabilities of intelligence, direct military action, or increasing the capabilities of other friendly foreign governments. If the power of the United States, as Bin Laden believed it did, resulted from economic strength, forcing many economic expenditures over time may weaken the system – a “death by 1,000 cuts” mentality. Direct military action resulting in a quagmire, which Bin

Laden sought, can also serve to weaken the state's morale, political resolve, and military capabilities. According to this logic, terrorism, by inflaming the passions of the electorate, might lead to a weakened state. A quagmire has the potential to disrupt the democratic system's *ho* (harmony) and create an unbalanced condition. By understanding the relationships that drive the American political processes (knowing one's enemy), Bin Laden had the potential to use the enemy's propensity of action (and the traditional strategy of annihilation) against it. The text of Sun Tzu will now be used to examine how these concepts have been demonstrated in Al-Qaeda's war. Original Sun Tzu principles are italicized for emphasis throughout this work.

Sun Tzu scholar, Derek Yuen, described in his book *Deciphering Sun Tzu*, that "the economic cost of war can be used in an advantageous way as part of strategy aimed at draining the resources of an adversary in a war of attrition."<sup>39</sup> He relates this concept from Sun Tzu's adage that "*there has never been a case of a state that has benefited from an extended war.*"<sup>40</sup> Importantly, Al-Qaeda does not consider itself a state – instead, it is a transnational organization. A modern interpretation of Sun Tzu might suggest that any protracted war, especially one that uses the concept of economy of force by a weaker organization (to be discussed further below), may drain the enemy state of financial resources while preserving one's own resources. The preeminent point is that the United States, in participating in a prolonged war, may be negatively impacted.

Al-Qaeda, by choosing a strategy of attrition as described by Al-Quarashi, is adopting a strategy in keeping with Sun Tzu's principles. If Bin Laden achieved a global quagmire of the United States military, he might hope to weaken the economy of the state. The difficulty of the United States is that it has not outlined the final conditions for victory; therefore the war continues. Without doing so, a terrorist organization might only go dormant and come to the

forefront when conditions once again permit. This goes into the very heart of the concept of Ch'i. A stateless terrorist organization, when going dormant, can preserve its energy while the enemy is expending its own, potentially leading to exhaustion. Sun Tzu stated: "nourish your troops and do not wear them out. Conserve their energy and shepherd their strength. Ensure that the movements of your forces and the plans that you make cannot be fathomed."<sup>41</sup> Going dormant preserves one's Ch'i. Attacking now and again demonstrates the continued existence of the organization, preventing the United States from declaring victory against Al-Qaeda. In this way, GWOT has extended to its sixteenth year and certainly fits the definition of a protracted war. Al-Qaeda, attempting to inspire individuals to launch independent attacks against the United States, recognized the *Shih* (strategic potential) of individual actors. This is best relayed in terms of understanding the historical underpinnings of United States' strategic thought. From Al-Qaeda's perspective, understanding America's traditional way of war is important to Sun Tzu's in fulfilling the idea that "*in military operations, it is best to attack the enemy's strategy.*"<sup>42</sup>

According to "A National Strategy to Win the War Against Islamist Terror," after 9/11, "President Bush placed terrorism at the top of Washington's national security priority list and adopted a strategy that pursued America's enemies no matter where they were."<sup>43</sup> Combatting terrorists, wherever they are, is a fight one associates with unlimited war aims – either destruction or complete surrender. Such a strategy of fighting wherever the enemy takes the field can be used against the United States, however. When Al-Qaeda moved beyond Afghanistan to other countries, the United States under such a strategy had to seek to counter the move.

After 9/11, the United States forced Al-Qaeda to extend operations beyond Afghanistan, but the call for global jihad (holy war) started much earlier. Al-Qaeda's inspiration, Qutb, framed jihad in terms of actual fighting. He argued that Muhammed took up the sword, setting the example for others to follow, and that proselytizing through peaceful means is an inadequate practice of Islam. Qutb's interpretation is described as "pseudo-intellectual and selective."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he inspired Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. In his letter "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," Zawahiri echoed Qutb when he described the universality of the jihad.<sup>45</sup> By extending holy war globally, he directly attacked Bush's strategy of defending everywhere. Zawahiri eventually described the battlespace as encompassing three circles. The first circle of jihad (the leadership) is to remain hidden. The second circle involves "open fronts" in areas with more intense conflict, like in Iraq, Yemen, and Algeria. The third circle involves deep targets that are available for exploitation by small groups or individuals.<sup>46</sup> In his Knights letter, he called for attacks in America, noting that "it is always possible to track an American or Jew, to kill him with a bullet or a knife, a simple explosive device, or a blow with an iron rod."<sup>47</sup> Emphasizing that small groups can spread great fear, he advocated attacks that inflict mass casualties; for the greater the fear, the greater the need for the United States to respond.

Zawahiri's message was meant to promote terroristic acts that inspire fear but also inspire individuals in areas where Al-Qaeda does not have operatives. Inspired individuals, while not directed or coordinated by Al-Qaeda's leadership, can still attain its aims. Instilling fear in the target population can "cause governments and individuals to respond in ways that aid the terrorists' cause."<sup>48</sup> Individual acts of terrorism inspired by Al-Qaeda can portray the group as more capable than it actually may be. Additionally, such acts can have the additional benefit of outbidding (outperforming) rival terrorist groups, one potential goal of terroristic acts.<sup>49</sup> If Al-

Qaeda sought to enlarge its numbers, well-publicized attacks could achieve this aim by appearing more capable than other groups. Al-Qaeda intended to pursue attrition of the United States while outbidding other terrorist organizations for Muslim support.

Al-Qaeda attempted to channel the *Shih* (strategic potential) of small groups or individuals, creating a larger impact than the attack itself would suggest. If one takes at face value the idea that the response to terroristic acts is more important than the act itself, one must consider how the United States' reaction to any terroristic act will ultimately affect the struggle. For instance, will the reaction play into Al-Qaeda's strategy of financial attrition or will its reaction unite Muslims against America due to a heavy-handed response? Such questions are necessary in determining any move consequent to a terrorist attack. After 9/11, the decision to use conventional forces against terrorist groups is far-reaching.

In response to the United States' use of conventional forces, Al-Qaeda, at times, has taken on a role of an insurgency rather than strictly a terrorist organization. In 2002, Al-Qurashi, published an article entitled "Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW)," in which he promoted the use of hybrid tactics (conventional and insurgent warfare). His inspiration was the American author, Marine Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, who wrote about 4GW in the 1980s. Hammes mistakenly credited Mao instead of Sun Tzu for this "evolved form of insurgency" where the target is the "minds of the enemy decision makers."<sup>50</sup> When America invaded Iraq in 2003, Al-Qaeda used the opportunity to proclaim classic jihad (regionally based, armed struggle against crusaders), calling on Muslims to defend Muslim lands though insurgent tactics.<sup>51</sup> Though Al-Qaeda uses non-conventional tactics to wage war, it may have recognized the benefit of combining conventional and non-conventional warfare, especially since Sun Tzu wrote: "*The key to ensuring that the army can engage the enemy without ever suffering defeat is the use of regular*

*and special forces.*"<sup>52</sup> By calling for others to join its cause, Al-Qaeda sought the quagmire in Iraq that it was originally denied in Afghanistan. Subsequently, many foreign fighters flooded Iraq to fight the "crusaders." Notably, however, early attacks in Iraq had nothing to do with Al-Qaeda. Only after the leader of the Iraqi jihadis, Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, pledged allegiance to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda after months of negotiations, was Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) borne.<sup>53</sup> At this point, Al-Qaeda demonstrated elements of both an insurgency and a terrorist organization.

Al-Qaeda strategists proclaimed that America could be defeated if Al-Qaeda was an international organization, without a state and without borders, stretching American defenses.<sup>54</sup> This description of an organization is completely in line with Sun Tzu's thinking as well. According to Yuen, Sun Tzu's analogy of an army that fights like water means that it is formless. In a decentralized, distributed organization like Al-Qaeda was evolving into, better technology or better intelligence might be able to penetrate only part of the "army." However, an enemy cannot easily discern a distributed army's true intentions since a spy cannot penetrate something that is formless and decentralized.<sup>55</sup> With the formation of AQI, the organization finally became international and likely intensified the conflict, with resulting larger amounts of American lives and resources expenditures.

Over the next decade after the initial attacks, the United States believed it had successfully neutralized Al-Qaeda. In Iraq, AQI no longer posed a significant threat and the state largely stabilized, while ISIS (popularly characterized as Al-Qaeda 2.0) had not yet seized territory in Syria. In retrospect, Al-Qaeda may have only been preserving its Shih (potential energy) and been utilizing deception, preserving its forces, while looking for an opportune moment to strike. According to Sun Tzu, "*The way of war is deception. And so, when you have the ability to strike, appear as if you have none...When you are near, appear far away. When far away, appear*

*near.*<sup>56</sup> By going dormant, Al-Qaeda exploited the *yin* [context] and allowed the United States to see what it wanted to see.

On September 11, 2012, President Obama reportedly told a small group at the Pentagon, “Al-Qaeda’s leadership has been devastated and Osama Bin Laden will never threaten us again.”<sup>57</sup> Within twenty-four hours, Al-Qaeda proved this statement as inaccurate. This time, the organization struck in Libya, killing four Americans including the Ambassador, Christopher Stevens. Four months after President Obama dismissed the threat of Al-Qaeda, Secretary Clinton met with the Committee on Foreign Affairs and testified that renewed efforts were in order: “We need to work together to accelerate a diplomatic campaign to increase pressure on Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other terrorist groups in the region.”<sup>58</sup> Though Secretary Clinton called for renewed diplomatic efforts, the Select Committee on Benghazi blamed an inadequate military response as one of the failures.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps recognizing a gap, the Marine Corps created and deployed a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) to provide a crisis response force in April 2013.<sup>60</sup>

A terrorist organization that embraces the mindset that ‘unless every fighter is killed, it is not truly defeated’ has a distinct advantage, especially if it advocates individual action that may not necessarily be well-coordinated. If the United States views an uncoordinated organization as inept, it can be caught off-guard when the group launches a successful attack. Conducting an attack at an unexpected place influences perception worldwide. Though in reality, the group may be small with only the capability to attack targets with small teams, the successful attack and the unknown strength create fears of *possible* future attacks. Shortly after Benghazi, Fareed Zakaria penned an opinion piece entitled “After Benghazi, is Al-Qaeda back?” Such a question in the

prominent journal *Time* could inspire nationwide fear and discussion that would necessitate a government response.

The decentralized, transnational character of Al-Qaeda makes countering such an organization difficult. According to Sun Tzu, *“If they do not know where I will attack, they must prepare for attack in many places.”*<sup>61</sup> The creation of SPMAGTF is directly related to the Benghazi attack and is meant to prevent or respond to similar attacks in the future. According to the I Marine Expeditionary Force website:

Since the Benghazi attack, Marines have deployed or re-positioned in response to regional unrest in the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) areas of responsibility. In a rapidly changing security environment, SPMAGTF-CR was created to oversee multiple requests for forces and provide a crisis response force to the region.<sup>62</sup>

Because of Benghazi, the Marine Corps has deployed in Europe and the Middle East to provide this quick reaction force. However, Al-Qaeda is unlikely to attack if they adhere to Sun Tzu principles such as *“approach by unexpected routes, and attack in places left unguarded”* once again waiting for an opportune moment.<sup>63</sup> Yet, Osama Bin Laden correctly anticipated how an attack like Benghazi would cause the United States to react. In 2004, in a video published by Al Jazeera, Osama Bin Laden said, "All that we have to do is to send two mujahedeen to the furthest point east to raise a piece of cloth on which is written Al-Qaeda, in order to make generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses."<sup>64</sup> Reacting to such an event may actually play into Al-Qaeda's strategy. As part of the 2004 video, Bin Laden stated:

We are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy...Every dollar of Al-Qaeda[‘s] defeated a million dollars, by the permission of Allah, besides the loss of a huge number of jobs...As for the economic deficit, it has reached record astronomical numbers estimated to total more than a trillion dollars.

Bin Laden's focus on the economy is of paramount importance. He was not necessarily saying that the economic deficit of the United States is attributed solely to Al-Qaeda since other factors certainly contribute to it. Rather, he was claiming that Al-Qaeda's actions are forcing the United

States to spend more money in areas that it otherwise would not. This includes war expenditures where, for example, cheaply made improvised explosive devices led to the acquisition of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles that cost \$1,000,000 each.<sup>65</sup> While saving lives (certainly a worthwhile endeavor), the cost nevertheless greatly exceeds the technology the United States is seeking to counter. Costs incurred to counter Al-Qaeda's tactics could also include infrastructure hardening such as upgrading airport security after the organization exposed deficiencies during 9/11.

While Bin Laden focused on the deficit, an annual depiction of revenue versus expense, no doubt he also understood how a prolonged war over many years of deficits could affect the national debt, a figure that depicts the amount borrowed by the government in total to date through all means of borrowing. In 2004, at the point that Bin Laden exhibited glee over US annual spending, the Treasury Department listed the national debt as being \$7 trillion.<sup>66</sup> The American response to establish more quick reaction forces abroad in response to Benghazi incurred greater financial costs. With Americans still in Afghanistan and only just removed from Iraq, American placement of SPMAGTF forces in Europe and the Middle East recalled another Sun Tzu tenet: *"those good at waging war manipulate the enemy and are not manipulated by them."*<sup>67</sup> Al-Qaeda's attack in Benghazi that resulted in four lost lives (including an Ambassador) forced the United States to react.

The utility of that reaction, specifically standing up SPMAGTF in Europe, is questionable. SPMAGTF-Crisis Response, while providing Combatant Commanders flexibility in response options, are probably underutilized. SPMAGTF permits Combatant Commanders the ability to conduct partnered training, but have been utilized operationally very sparingly since 2012. One response was part of an anti-ebola, medical response<sup>68</sup> and another the evacuation of

the South Sudanese embassy by two C-130s.<sup>69</sup> The Marine Expeditionary Unit, in both instances, might have been as capable to respond. A further study in the utilization versus the cost of employment of the SPMAGTF is suggested, but one may wonder whether use of the unit, born out of Al-Qaeda's attack on Benghazi, is worth the costs.

For all of the United States' efforts, the threat by Al-Qaeda seems to have stretched across the globe. In 2016, the Congressional Research Service summarized that "after nearly a decade and a half of combating Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States faces an increasingly diverse threat from Al-Qaeda affiliates in the Middle East and Africa."<sup>70</sup> Markedly, the report notes that it does not cover Al-Qaeda affiliates outside of the region, highlighting the fact that Al-Qaeda has expanded into Southeast Asia as well.

While the paper thus far has focused exclusively on Al-Qaeda, it is important to note that the Al-Qaeda, after 9/11, assumed allies or expanded and morphed in other countries, eventually creating splinter groups. The United States, in seeking to destroy Al-Qaeda, classified its ally who harbored the organization as an enemy as well. Prior to the invasion, President Bush delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban: "They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate."<sup>71</sup> Since then, the "frontline" has expanded beyond the original wartime boundaries of Afghanistan. In the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, the war on terror is referred to as "war in countries we are not at war with."<sup>72</sup> Geographically, the Authorization for Military Force (AUMF) originally intended as a response to 9/11 has been used by Presidents Bush and Obama in nine other countries: the Philippines, Georgia, Yemen, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, and Somalia.<sup>73</sup> Besides expanding horizontally, the war has expanded vertically as well, encompassing not just greater territories, but other organizations as Al-Qaeda has transformed.

Al-Qaeda has inspired splinter groups, most notably the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL, according to congressional testimony, formed out of AQI. Eventually, this group was so extreme in its views and in its violence that Al-Qaeda disavowed the group.<sup>74</sup> Whereas Al-Qaeda eventually wanted to push the United States out of the Middle East to create a state of its own, ISIL formed a conventional army with the intent to do that very thing, eventually capturing territory that spanned from Syria to Mosul in Iraq.<sup>75</sup> ISIL threatened the United States indirectly through attacking its allies in the Middle East, to include Iraq and Jordan, as well as its interests such as oil exports, threatened the United States directly through its incorporated foreign fighters, some of whom came from the United States. ISIL, with its ruthlessness and rapid, highly publicized success of territorial gains, attracted not only foreign fighters, but also vast sums of money. With the unexpected collapse and withdrawal of the American-trained Iraqi forces, ISIL captured an estimated \$579 million worth of equipment to include armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition.<sup>76</sup> In response, President Obama sent 1,700 troops back into Iraq only a few years after completely withdrawing.<sup>77</sup>

More recently, an ISIL affiliate in Niger ambushed US Green Berets with roughly 50 personnel, killing three Americans.<sup>78</sup> Top Senate leaders admitted to not even knowing that the military was engaged in operations in Niger, perhaps highlighting the fact that GWOT has expanded in areas unanticipated in the 2001 AMUF.<sup>79</sup> Eventually, Congress requested the Secretary of Defense to testify on the need of a new authorization of military force, since Congress appeared to be concerned that AMUF had been used in areas not originally envisioned by Congressional lawmakers. On 30 October 2017, Secretary of Defense Mattis testified that a new authorization “is not legally required to address the continuing threat posed by Al-Qaeda,

the Taliban, and ISIS,” highlighting the Trump administration’s position that the AMUF is *sufficiently vague enough* to permit operations globally against new terrorist groups.<sup>80</sup>

Bin Laden aimed to make the United States defend everywhere, stretching its military and resources. Indeed, nearly seventeen years after 9/11, the military today is conducting operations in many more areas than just Afghanistan. Part of Bin Laden’s strategy of financial attrition is to simply demonstrate presence in new places.<sup>81</sup> Bush’s strategy required a response to any such presence.<sup>82</sup> Like Bush, on 10 September 2014, nearly 13 years after the attacks on 9/11, President Obama proclaimed in an address to the Nation that “I have made it clear that we will hunt down terrorists who threaten our country, wherever they are.”<sup>83</sup> Similar to Bush and Obama, President Trump recently made a speech discussing the “new” strategy in Afghanistan proclaiming that “these killers [terrorists] need to know they have nowhere to hide; that no place is beyond the reach of American might and American arms. Retribution will be fast and powerful.”<sup>84</sup>

At least according to public proclamations, the leaders of the United States since the inception of the Global War on Terrorism have proclaimed to fight the terrorists wherever they may arise. This approach arguably is one of battle without strategy. . Politically, it may be wise since such a stance is imbued with emotion, but militarily, it violates one of Sun Tzu’s principles: “*If you know when to fight and when not to fight, you will be victorious.*”<sup>85</sup> By not differentiating where, when and how to fight, the United States risks falling prey to Bin Laden’s strategy of exhaustion and financial attrition. The sixteen years of offensive and defensive actions have had an effect on the United States’ economy and military.

### **The United States at Present: Economic Health and Military Readiness**

To determine possible effects of the protracted war, one must analyze two aspects: the financial costs of GWOT and the state of military readiness. In 2016, a Boston University professor of political science, Neta Crawford, wrote a report entitled “US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: 4.79 Trillion and Counting.” She expanded the costs of GWOT beyond Department of Defense spending on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan which totaled \$1.7 trillion and included items such as Homeland Security spending for prevention and response to terrorism, interest, and veterans medical and disability costs. As she notes several times, these costs are considered conservative estimates. Her analysis is summarized below:

<b>Category</b>	<b>\$ Billion</b>
DOD and State (Overseas Contingency Operations or OCO) FY2001-2016	1,742
Other War-Related: estimated additional DOD base budget (\$733 B) and Veterans (\$213 B) spending, FY2001 - FY2016	946
Homeland Security spending for prevention and response to terrorism, FY2001- FY2016	548
Interest on borrowing for wars, FY2001-FY2016	453
<b>Total War Appropriations and War-Related Spending through 2016</b>	<b>3,689</b>
Estimated Future Obligations for Veterans Medical and Disability 2017 - 2053 <sup>8</sup>	1,000
FY2017 Request for DOD and State OCO, incl. Afghanistan, Iraq/Syria	66
FY2017 Request for Homeland Security for prevention and response to terrorism	37
<b>Total Spending and Future Obligations through 2053</b>	<b>4,792</b>

*Source:* Neta Crawford, “US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: \$4.79 Trillion and Counting.” Brown University.

The cost of the GWOT has added significantly to the national debt. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the total national debt now stands at \$20.5 trillion dollars.<sup>86</sup> According to the treasury’s own online statistics, the debt in September 2001 amounted to \$5.8 trillion dollars.<sup>87</sup> In 2016 (the same year that Crawford’s study ended), the Treasury Department listed the national debt as \$19.3 trillion dollars.<sup>88</sup> Using Crawford’s numbers, since 9/11, GWOT spending amounts to over a third of the debt incurred during that time (4.79T/(19.3T-5.8T)).

In 2012, CBS reported the national debt as \$15.3 trillion.<sup>89</sup> Only a month later, Secretary of Defense Panetta cited the national debt as a national security risk.<sup>90</sup> Similar to Secretary of Defense Panetta, Secretary Mattis agreed that the debt is now the largest national security risk.<sup>91</sup> Bin Laden believed that the power of the United States rested on its economic prowess; however, the system appears to be out of harmony. While GWOT is not the only contributor to raising this debt, it has *contributed significantly* to the national debt, and has now cost more than the United States spent on World War II, adjusted for inflation.<sup>92</sup>

Out of concern over the size of the national debt in total, Congress initiated sequestration that aimed to arbitrarily cut spending, doing so across many governmental programs without regard to operational impact. Initially, sequestration was intended to be so bad that the threat of it would spur Congress to work together. The threat didn't work and in 2011, sequestration took effect.<sup>93</sup>

The budgetary constraints caused by sequestration have resulted in a military readiness issue. With a high operational tempo, planes are breaking more frequently. Those planes need parts to repair them but the budgetary strain has resulted in 62% of the Navy's F/A-18s being unable to do so for lack of parts.<sup>94</sup> With an inability to fly, training readiness suffers. Like the Navy, the Marine Corps is suffering similar issues with less than 50% of all available aircraft ready to fly.<sup>95</sup> In March 2016, the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dunford, testified before Congress and agreed that readiness suffered across the services. He attributed the reasons as being related to resource shortfalls and a high operational tempo. The operational tempo, as noted, is partly due to countering Al Qaeda and ISIS worldwide, along with increasingly belligerent state actors like Russia and China. He stated that some services aren't projected to recover from a readiness standpoint until as late as 2028.<sup>96</sup>

In September 2017, the House Armed Services Committee held a hearing to discuss naval readiness after a number of accidents including plane crashes and naval ships running into each other such as with the USS John McCain and Fitzgerald. At the hearing, a representative from the Government Accountability Office, in his opening statement, cited “unrelenting operational demand and a limited supply of ships” as being an issue and stated that “the Navy has been warning for some time that they’ve been keeping a pace that is unsustainable.”<sup>97</sup> The limited availability of ships was caused by a backlog of maintenance issues – without adequate funding, parts are unavailable and repairs delayed. With ships out of service for maintenance, the strain on the remaining ships goes up to meet operational demand, with a subsequent impact on training. Because of training and maintenance issues, readiness rates are suffering, directly as a result of underfunding for the operational demands being placed upon the Navy.<sup>98</sup> As early as 2015, the Department of Defense cited the declines in readiness in the Navy and Marine Corps as being attributed to sequestration.<sup>99</sup>

The effects of sequestration were discussed in the latest National Security Strategy. In it, President Trump wrote that “the breakdown of the Nation’s annual Federal budgeting process, exemplified by sequestration and repeated continuing resolutions, further contributed to the erosion of America’s military dominance during a time of increasing threats.”<sup>100</sup> The degradation of the military perhaps was the impetus that necessitated legislative action to remedy the situation. In March 2018, Congress passed a \$1.3 trillion budget which ended sequestration.<sup>101</sup> Of that budget, \$654 billion is allotted for defense spending in 2018 and \$686 billion in 2019.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusions

One famous historian, Thucydides, believed that states engaged in war out of fear, honor, or interest.<sup>103</sup> The terrorist attacks on American soil on September 11, 2001 created much fear among the population and necessitated a change of the United States national security structure. Not long after the attacks, the United States began military operations in support of GWOT, altered and expanded the organization of its government, and invested heavily in internal security, all of which greatly contributed to a large increase in the national debt. Certainly, the debt expanded for a variety of reasons such as the 2008 recession; however, one can see in the chart below that the debt began to increase at a greater rate than previous years around 2003, the invasion of Iraq.

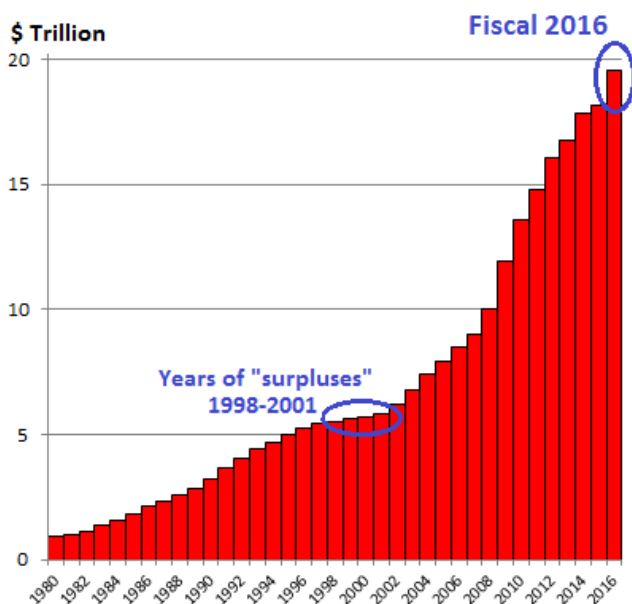


Table 1: US Gross National Debt 1972-2016<sup>104</sup>

On December 15, 2015, former senator and GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum said that “we have entered World War Three.”<sup>105</sup> Later, a super political action committee (Super PAC) linked the comment to the threat that terrorists represent, representing how much fear after

9/11 is still very much alive.<sup>106</sup> Such comments can inflame the passions of the American people and perpetuate war against terrorist groups. Perhaps out of fear of other terrorist attacks, the terrorist *threat* has shifted during that time, beginning with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, moving to the Taliban, to Al-Qaeda affiliates worldwide, and then to ISIS. Politicians, elected by the people, are inclined to portray themselves as hawkish on terrorism. Doing something, in other words, is more politically palatable than doing nothing, given the emotions behind the threat.

Doing *something* has meant countering terrorist organizations globally, incurring financial costs since 9/11 that exceed the United States' expenditures during World War II and stretching the force globally, raising concerns of the operational tempo by Secretaries of Defense and Service Chiefs alike. The financial costs of GWOT are impressive but represent a much smaller percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than military spending in World War II, which exceeded a third of the economy at one point during the war.<sup>107</sup> This comparison, however, speaks to the changing nature of the economy (like the growth of social programs today as opposed to 1945) and the protracted nature of the current conflict more than anything else.

Some may even argue that the protracted nature of the conflict plays to the strength of the United States – its economic might – and that our expenditures demonstrate the resolve of the United States. That is true, but the rising national debt, regardless of the reasons, is decreasing the strength of the United States in the long run. Besides multiple Secretaries of Defense citing it as a concern, the apprehension of the debt has found its way into the latest National Security Strategy. President Trump wrote that “the national debt, now over \$20 trillion, presents a grave threat to America’s long-term prosperity and, by extension, our national security.”<sup>108</sup> Likewise, some economists list three direct consequences of the rising national debt: a drag on economic

growth, less money available for all public expenditures to include investment in such things as infrastructure, and a reduced capability to respond to crises. Aside from these consequences, it is notable that China, a near-peer adversary, controls 20% of the United States' national debt, creating geopolitical and economic problems, including *constraints to policy and reduced international influence*.<sup>109</sup>

Senator Lindsay Graham, in a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on 27 April 2016, highlighted the intermingled issues of readiness, high operational tempo, and the budget. In Senate testimony, he asked the Chairman if “there’s a bad situation next year, [is it foreseeable] that the Marines cannot get there because of budget problems? We’re having to take aircraft out of the fight, redeploy them back to the United States, and their capability to deploy is going to be cut in half.”<sup>110</sup> While the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs answered that the military can meet its mission with Special Purpose MAGTF-Crisis Responses, the exchange highlights the growing concern that budgetary problems may necessitate a military pull-back.<sup>111</sup>

Sun Tzu’s overarching theme is to outsmart a stronger enemy by using the enemy’s propensity and strategy against him. The goal is to create disharmony within the enemy’s systems, be it social, political, economic, or in its military. One can reason that Bin Laden anticipated the reaction that 9/11 could elicit from the United States. Such a response meant at least an economic, if not a military, expenditure.<sup>112</sup> Such a strategy, based on the premise of economy of force, becomes important when the organization is much smaller than the force it faces, much like what Al-Qaeda’s was and remains today. After all, “by knowing yourself and your enemy, one has the capability to defeat him.”<sup>113</sup>

The United States must assess the strategy that it has used over the last 15 years in relation to the strategy that Al-Qaeda pursued. Additionally, properly assessing the threat is as

important as the strategy itself. Whereas Senator Santorum described the threat as amounting to a World War, President Obama disagreed. In response to Santorum, Obama stated in his 2016 State of the Union address that “as we focus on destroying ISIL, over-the-top claims that this is World War Three just play into their hands... they do not threaten our national existence.”<sup>114</sup> President Obama, perhaps to highlight that fears of terrorism may be disproportionate to the threat, asked media outlets to compare American deaths caused by terrorism on American soil with the number of Americans killed by gun violence in the last decade. Politifact conducted a comparison and found the numbers to be anywhere between 24-71 deaths attributed to terrorism (depending on the definition) versus 301,797 deaths caused by gun-related deaths in the same time period.<sup>115</sup> To further put that into perspective, just over 10,000 people died by drunk driving in 2015 alone.<sup>116</sup> In the same year, cancer caused over 595,000 deaths, diabetes 79,000, and suicide 44,000.<sup>117</sup>

The low numbers of deaths caused by terrorism in comparison with other causes highlights one of two things: either GWOT has been massively successful (with great human and financial cost) or, and perhaps more likely, the threat is exaggerated. This is a question that cannot be resolved, but given the statistics above, the threat is likely exaggerated. President Obama, even after committing troops to combat ISIS, stated the following:

Groups like ISIL can't destroy us, they can't defeat us. They don't produce anything. They're not an existential threat to us. They are vicious killers and murderers who perverted one of the world's great religions. And their primary power, in addition to killing innocent lives, is to strike fear in our societies, to disrupt our societies, so that the effect cascades from an explosion or an attack by a semi-automatic rifle.<sup>118</sup>

Why continue pursuing terrorist groups if they do not constitute an existential threat? Likely it is because the democratic political system demands it. The perception of the threat may be disproportionate to reality, but the politician cannot afford to do nothing while terroristic acts

receive great coverage in today's twenty-four hour media coverage. The effect on the viewer and public policy can be psychologically profound:

The intertwined nature of terrorism and its media portrayal produces an inescapable invasion into the lives of a multitude of people, far beyond the direct victims of the attack. The structured signaling game of the orchestrated attack aimed at creating an illusory effect of magnified strength draws the audience into the web of fear that so serves the terrorists' purposes... The significant emotional and attitudinal modifications, even to the most brief exposure, reinforce the power held by the media to effect significant change among viewers. This power possibly attains even greater weight with repeated media coverage of terrorism in a conflict environment, in influencing viewers' emotional state and general public discourse about the conflict. In an elevated state of alert, even failed or foiled terrorist attempts reported repeatedly in the media, can produce a strong alarming effect on a wide audience.<sup>119</sup>

If one believes the threat is actually overstated, America's response to counter the threat is disproportionate. However, in the American form of government, political power is derived from popular support via elections. Recognizing that expenditures may be disproportionate to the threat, there may still be a reason to respond – public perception. Media coverage of terroristic acts receives much coverage, reinforcing the idea that the threat is greater than it is. This perception appears to create an imperative to demonstrate to the electorate that the government is countering the perceived threat. The efforts to counter the enemy, whether through military means or passive measures like infrastructure hardening, have resulted in economic expenditures, which in turn have greatly contributing to the national debt that has soared to levels now described by Secretaries of Defense as the largest national security threat. While GWOT isn't the only factor that has enlarged this debt, at 25% of the current debt, its share is sizeable.

This essay does not suggest that Al-Qaeda is on the path to achieving Bin Laden's stated objective, namely the withdrawal of American influence and/or the bankruptcy of America, nor does it purport to provide the answer to solving the problem of terrorism. It does provide, perhaps, a new window to analyze GWOT, suggesting that the terroristic threat as it stands today

may be overstated and that decisions to expand the conflict globally may be psychologically induced. If policy makers believe the threat of terrorism to be non-existential, much as former President Obama did, they must disassociate sound *policy* from *politics* where emotional responses in a representative republic demand some type of action.

If the threat is genuinely considered to be something that must be countered, politicians should consider the long-term implications on military readiness and the economic costs of continuing the fight as it has been. Furthermore, in any assessment of the United States' conduct of the war, one should consider Al-Qaeda's actions in light of their Sun Tzu-like strategy. Is the terrorist act that causes few casualties but causes great psychological fear among the citizenry an attack on the political system, demanding some (likely expensive) action? Would any military counter-reaction to a terrorist attack play into this strategy? Could the reaction lead to results that are counterproductive?

If countering such an event is deemed necessary, given the expansion of the national debt in total, politicians may have to make hard economic and political choices such as raising taxes, reducing domestic spending, or some combination thereof. Doing so, while politically distasteful, will better leverage the economic strength of the United States in this protracted conflict. The better balancing between spending and revenue does not seem to be occurring. Though Congress passed the 2018 budget with a hefty increase in military funding in an attempt to alleviate some of the readiness concerns previously addressed, it did so after a large reduction in tax revenue. In other words, spending increased while revenue decreased.

Finally, the strategy of global pursuit of terrorism through combat must be reassessed and it appears as if this may be occurring. Previously President Trump implied pursuing terrorists wherever they are.<sup>120</sup> However, his National Security Strategy, published after that speech,

depicts a more surgical approach. He highlights more economical measures, such as security cooperation with allied nations that best considers the cost-benefit of using the military to counter terrorist groups. At the same time, within the document, he discusses working with allied nations to counter a common threat: terrorism.<sup>121</sup> If the United States follows through with selective use of the military to counter terrorist threats, it will be more in line with choosing one's battles smartly and will finally break from Bin Laden's aim of financial attrition through forcing battle everywhere.

### Bibliography

- About-Enein, Youssef H. *Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2010: 122-135.
- Agence France-Presse. "ISIS Captured 2,300 Humvee Armoured Vehicles from IraCh'i forces in Mosul." *The Guardian*, May 31, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/01/isis-captured-2300-humvee-armoured-vehicles-from-iraCh'i-forces-in-mosul>
- Al Zawahiri, Ayman. "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner." In *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, 47-50. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008.
- Amadeo, Kimberly. "Sequestration, Its Causes and Impact." *Thebalance.com*, December 30, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-sequestration-causes-and-impact-3305775>.
- Bartley, Caleb M. "The Art of Terrorism: What Sun Tzu Can Teach Us about International Terrorism." *Comparative Strategy* 24, no. 3 (2005): 237-251.
- Benen, Steve. "Obama on ISIS: 'They're Not An Existential Threat to US,'" *MSNBC*, March 24, 2016. <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/obama-isis-theyre-not-existential-threat-us>.
- Bin Laden, Osama. "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries." In *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, 47-50. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008.
- Bin Laden, Osama. "Muslims Have the Right to Attack America," interview by Hamid Mir, *The Guardian*, 10 November 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/11/terrorism.afghanistan1>
- Bin Laden, Osama. "Bin Laden: Goal is to Bankrupt US," *CNN*, November 1, 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/11/01/binladen.tape/index.html>
- Bush, George. "Address to Congress and the Nation." Youtube video, 7:58, September 20, 2001. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQFVT48eeqU>
- Clinton, Hillary. "Benghazi Testimony Before Congress." Speech. Washington, DC, January 23, 2013. *NY Daily News*. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/transcript-hillary-clinton-takes-responsibility-benghazi-attack-article-1.1246025>.
- Ch'iu, Linda. "Fact-Checking a Comparison of Gun Deaths and Terrorism Related Deaths." *Politifact*. October 5, 2015. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/oct/05/viral-image/fact-checking-comparison-gun-deaths-and-terrorism/>.

- Cohen, Zachary. "Two-Thirds of Navy Strike Fighter Jets Can't Fly." *CNN*. February 10, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/10/politics/us-navy-planes-grounded/index.html>.
- Coker, Christopher. "What Would Sun Tzu Say About The War on Terrorism?" *The RUSI Journal* 148, no 1 (2003): 16-20.
- Congressional Budget Office, *Federal Debt and Statutory Limit, November 2017* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2017) 1, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53336-debtlimit.pdf>.
- Crawford, Neta. "US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: \$4.79 Trillion and Counting." Brown University. Accessed December 17, 2017. <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2016/Costs%20of%20War%20through%202016%20FINAL%20final%20v2.pdf>.
- "Defense Secretary: Huge Deficits and Debt are National Security Threats," YouTube video, February 14, 2012, 0:57. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS9jWDsX2Fk>.
- Dettmer, Jamie, Christopher Dickey, and Eli Lake. "The Truth Behind the Benghazi Attack." *Newsweek* 160, no. 18 (2012): 22-24.
- Farooq, Gerard. "US Marines Complete Two Months of Support to Ebola Response in West Africa." *Marines.mil*. December 8, 2014. <http://www.marines.mil/News/News-Display/Article/555614/us-marines-complete-two-months-of-support-to-ebola-response-in-west-africa/>.
- Gaouette, Nicole and Laura Koran, "Tillerson, Mattis: We Don't Need a New War Authorization to Fight Terror," *CNN*. October 30, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/30/politics/tillerson-mattis-aumf-senate/index.html>.
- "Graham Questions Secretary Carter and General Dunford Regarding FY17 Budget." Video. 6:24. April 27, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTi8T4ajCX0&app=desktop>.
- Ivanhoe, P. J. *Master Sun's Art of War*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2011.
- Haltwanger, John. "How Many Troops Does the US Have in Africa? Top Senators Didn't Know Military Was in Niger," *Newsweek*. October 23, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-many-troops-does-us-have-africa-top-senators-didnt-know-military-was-niger-690937>.
- Hammes, Colonel Thomas X. USMC. *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century*. St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2006: 23-31.
- Kamolnick Paul. *Al-Qaeda Organization and the Islamic State Organization: History, Doctrine, Modus Operandi, and U.S. Policy to Degrade and Defeat Terrorism Conducted in the Name of Sunni Islam*. Washington, U.S. Army War College Press, 2017.

- Kaplan, Thomas. "Trump Signs Budget Deal to Raise Spending and Reopen Government." *NYTimes.com*. February 8, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/us/politics/congress-budget-deal-vote.html>
- Klimas, Jacqueline. "Less than Half of Marine Corps Aircraft are Ready to Fly." *The Washington Examiner*, March 10, 2017. <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/less-than-half-of-marine-corps-aircraft-are-ready-to-fly/article/2617014>.
- Kydd, Andrew and Barbara Walter. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49-80.
- Library of Congress. Foreign Affairs Division. *The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force Background in Brief*, 2013.
- Maxwell, David. "Operation Eduring Freedom-Philippines: What Would Sun Tzu Say?" *Military Review* 84, no. 3 (2004): 20-23.
- McNeilly, Mark. "Terrorism and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Applying Sun Tzu's Principles." In *Sun Tzu and the Art of Modern Warfare*, Chapter 8. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Nichols, Hans and Jonathan Allen. "Still in a Stalemate', Top US Commander in Afghanistan Says." *NBC News*. November 24, 2017. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/nationAl-security/still-stalemate-says-top-u-s-commander-afghanistan-n823671>.
- Obama, Barack. "Address to the Nation." Speech. Washington, DC, September 10, 2014. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/09/watch-obama-isil-speech-live/380010/>.
- Obama, Barack. "State of the Union Address." Speech. Washington, DC, January 12, 2016. Medium, <https://medium.com/@ObamaWhiteHouse/president-obama-s-2016-state-of-the-union-address-7c06300f9726>.
- Peng, Kaiping, Richard E. Nisbett, and Fowler, Raymond D. "Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction." *American Psychologist* 54, no. 9 (1999): 741-54.
- Roberson, Darryl. "*Fight Against Terrorism: Sun Tzu Revisited*." National War College, National Defense University. 2002.
- Ryan, Michael W. S. *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle against America*. Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare. Columbia University Press, 2013.

- Santorum, Rick. "GOP Primary Debate." Video. 1:09, *CNN* GOP Debate on December 15, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2015/12/15/santorum-cnn-gop-debate-world-war-3-comments.cnn>.
- Schlesinger, Jill. "12 Scary Debt Facts for 2012." *CBS News*. February 12, 2012. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/12-scary-debt-facts-for-2012/>.
- Seck, Hope. "Crisis Response Force Commander: Deploy a MEU to the Mediterranean." *Military.com*, November 1, 2017. <https://www.military.com/dodbuzz/2017/11/01/crisis-response-force-commander-deploy-meu-mediterranean>.
- Shoshani, Anat, and Michelle Slone. "The Drama of Media Coverage of Terrorism: Emotional and Attitudinal Impact on the Audience." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 7 (2008): 627-40.
- Simeone, Nick. "Sequester Degrades Navy, Marine Corps Readiness, Officials Say." *Defense.gov*. February 26, 2015. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/604183/sequester-degrades-navy-marine-corps-readiness-officials-say/>.
- Soage, Ana Belén. "Islamism and Modernity: The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (2009): 189-203.
- Starr, Barbara, Ryan Browne, and Brad Lendon, "3 Green Berets Killed in Ambush in Niger," *CNN*, October 5, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/04/politics/us-forces-hostile-fire-niger/index.html>
- Strauss, Daniel. "Santorum Super PAC Ad Warns 'WWIII is Upon US.'" *Politico*. December 14, 2015. <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/rick-santorum-superpac-wwiii-216738>.
- Sun, Kitsap. "Navy Secretary: Resolving Shipyard Backlog is Crucial." *Military.com*. October 17, 2017. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/10/18/navy-secretary-resolving-shipyard-backlog-is-crucial.html>.
- Sunzi, and Roger T Ames. *Sun-Tzu : The Art of Warfare : The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-Ch'üeh-Shan Texts. 1st Ed. ed. Classics of Ancient China*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Edited by Robert B. Strassler. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Trump, Donald. "Address to the Nation." Speech. Washington, DC, August 22, 2017. *CNN*. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/21/politics/read-trump-speech/index.html>.

United States. Congress. House. Homeland Security Committee. *A National Strategy to Win the War Against Islamist Terror*. 114th Cong., 2016, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/A-National-Strategy-to-Win-the-War.pdf>.

United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, Trade. *The Rise of ISIL Iraq and Beyond*, 2014.

United States. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *Al-Qaeda and US Policy: Middle East and Africa*, by Carla E. Humud. RL43756. 2016.

United States. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *Costs of Major U.S. Wars*, by Stephen Daggett. RS22926. 2010.

Weigley, Russell F. *The American Way of War: A History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

The White House. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC, 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

Xu, Min, Suk Hi Kim, and Hassan Moussawi. "The US Government Debt: Consequences, Causes, and Solutions." *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 18, no. 1 (03, 2016): 69-76.

Yuen, Derek M. and Sunzi. *Deciphering Sun Tzu: How to Read 'The Art of War.'* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy: The Deep Battle against America*. Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 114.

<sup>2</sup> Osama Bin Laden, "Muslims Have the Right to Attack America," interview by Hamid Mir, *The Guardian*, November 10, 2001. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/11/terrorism.afghanistan1>

<sup>3</sup> Paul Kamolnick, *Al-Qaeda Organization and the Islamic State Organization: History, Doctrine, Modus Operandi, and U.S. Policy to Degrade and Defeat Terrorism Conducted in the Name of Sunni Islam*. (Washington: U.S. Army War College Press, 2017): 33.

<sup>4</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, *Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat*, (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2010): 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-125.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>8</sup> Ana Belén Soage, "Islamism and Modernity: The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 10, no. 2 (2009): 195.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>10</sup> Osama Bin Laden, "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries," in *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008).

- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 49.
- <sup>12</sup> “USS Cole Bombing,” 9/11 Memorial and Museum, accessed December 16, 2017, <https://www.911memorial.org/uss-cole-bombing>.
- <sup>13</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 2013: 84.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., 108.
- <sup>15</sup> Osama Bin Laden, “Letter to America,” *The Guardian*, November 24, 2002. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Kamolnick, *Al-Qaeda Organization and the Islamic State Organization: History, Doctrine, Modus Operandi, and U.S. Policy to Degrade and Defeat Terrorism Conducted in the Name of Sunni Islam*. (Washington: U.S. Army War College Press, 2017): 33.
- <sup>18</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 2013: 57.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 9.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 52.
- <sup>21</sup> Yuen, Derek M. and Sunzi. *Deciphering Sun Tzu: How to Read 'The Art of War.'* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> Mao Tse-tung, “On Protracted War,” Marxists.Org, date accessed February 19, 2018, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_09.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm).
- <sup>23</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 2013: 72.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 114.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 51-59.
- <sup>26</sup> *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 73.
- <sup>27</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War*: 20.
- <sup>28</sup> Sunzi and Roger T Ames. *Sun-Tzu : The Art of Warfare : The First English Translation Incorporating the Recently Discovered Yin-Ch'ueh-Shan Texts*. 1st Ed. ed. Classics of Ancient China. (New York: Ballantine Books 1993): 59.
- <sup>29</sup> *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 139.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 70.
- <sup>31</sup> Kaiping Peng, Richard E. Nisbett, and Raymond D. Fowler, "Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction." *American Psychologist* 54, no. 9 (1999): 741.
- <sup>32</sup> P. J. Ivanhoe, *Master Sun's Art of War*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2011): 43.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69.
- <sup>34</sup> Sunzi and Roger T Ames. *Sun-Tzu : The Art of Warfare* : 85.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., xxvi.
- <sup>36</sup> *Sun-Tzu : The Art of Warfare*, 50.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., 55.
- <sup>38</sup> Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 50.
- <sup>39</sup> *Deciphering Sun Tzu*, 105.
- <sup>40</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War.*, 12.
- <sup>41</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War*, 75.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 17.
- <sup>43</sup> House Homeland Security Committee, *A National Strategy to Win the War Against Islamist Terror*, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2016, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/A-National-Strategy-to-Win-the-War.pdf>.
- <sup>44</sup> *Militant Islamist Ideology: Understanding the Global Threat*, 128.
- <sup>45</sup> Ayman Al Zawahiri, “Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner,” in *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008).
- <sup>46</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 2013: 81-82.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 50.
- <sup>49</sup> Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 50.
- <sup>50</sup> Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, USMC, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2006), 23-31.
- <sup>51</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan, *Decoding Al-Qaeda's Strategy*, 2013: 71.

- <sup>52</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War*, 29.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.
- <sup>55</sup> Deciphering Sun Tzu, 120.
- <sup>56</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War*, 17.
- <sup>57</sup> Jamie Dettmer, Christopher Dickey, and Eli Lake, "The Truth Behind the Benghazi Attack," *Newsweek* 160, no. 18: (2012) 22-24.
- <sup>58</sup> Hillary Clinton, "Benghazi Testimony Before Congress," (speech, Washington, DC, January 23, 2013), NY Daily News, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/transcript-hillary-clinton-takes-responsibility-benghazi-attack-article-1.1246025>.
- <sup>59</sup> "Select Committee on Benghazi Releases Proposed Report," House.gov, accessed December 17, 2017. <https://benghazi.house.gov/NewInfo>.
- <sup>60</sup> Hope Seck, "Crisis Response Force Commander: Deploy a MEU to the Mediterranean," *Military.com*, November 1, 2017. <https://www.military.com/dodbuzz/2017/11/01/crisis-response-force-commander-deploy-meu-mediterranean>.
- <sup>61</sup> P. J. Ivanhoe, *Master Sun's Art of War*, 37.
- <sup>62</sup> I MEF, "Special Purpose MAGTF: Crisis Response-Central Command," *Marines.mil*, accessed December 16, 2017. <http://www.imef.marines.mil/Units/SPMAGTF-CR-CC/History/>
- <sup>63</sup> P. J. Ivanhoe, *Master Sun's Art of War*, 75.
- <sup>64</sup> "Bin Laden: Goal is to Bankrupt US," *CNN*, November 1, 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/11/01/binladen.tape/index.html>
- <sup>65</sup> David Zucchino, "From MRAP to Scrap: US Military Chops Up \$1M Vehicles," *LA Times*, December 23, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/dec/27/world/la-fg-afghanistan-armor-20131227>
- <sup>66</sup> "Bin Laden: Goal is to Bankrupt US."
- <sup>67</sup> P. J. Ivanhoe, *Master Sun's Art of War*, 35.
- <sup>68</sup> Gerard Farao, "US Marines Complete Two Months of Support to Ebola Respnse in West Africa," *Marines.mil*, December 8, 2014. <http://www.marines.mil/News/News-Display/Article/555614/us-marines-complete-two-months-of-support-to-ebola-response-in-west-africa/>.
- <sup>69</sup> "Marines Evacuate Embassy in South Sudan," *Africom.mil*, January 6 2014. <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/article/11624/marines-evacuate-embassy-in-south-sudan>.
- <sup>70</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Al-Qaeda and US Policy: Middle East and Africa*, by Carla E. Humud. RL43756. (2016).
- <sup>71</sup> George Bush, "Address to Congress," video, 7:58, address to Congress and the nation on September 20, 2001, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQFVT48eeqU>
- <sup>72</sup> Department of Defense, "Quadrennial Defense Review," February 6, 2006. <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/QDR20060203.pdf>.
- <sup>73</sup> Library of Congress, Foreign Affairs Division, *The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force Background in Brief*, 2013: 5 and 18.
- <sup>74</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, Trade. *The Rise of ISIL Iraq and Beyond*. (2014).
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.
- <sup>76</sup> Agence France-Presse, "ISIS Captured 2,300 Humvee Armoured Vehicles from IraCh'i forces in Mosul," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/01/isis-captured-2300-humvee-armoured-vehicles-from-iraCh'i-forces-in-mosul>
- <sup>77</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, Trade, 6.
- <sup>78</sup> Barbara Starr, Ryan Browne, and Brad Lendon, "3 Green Berets Killed in Ambush in Niger," *CNN*, October 5, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/04/politics/us-forces-hostile-fire-niger/index.html>.
- <sup>79</sup> John Haltwanger, "How Many Troops Does the US Have in Africa? Top Senators Didn't Know Military Was in Niger," *Newsweek*. October 23, 2017. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-many-troops-does-us-have-africa-top-senators-didnt-know-military-was-niger-690937>.
- <sup>80</sup> Nicole Gaouette and Laura Koran, "Tillerson, Mattis: We Don't Need a New War Authorization to Fight Terror," *CNN*. October 30, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/30/politics/tillerson-mattis-aumf-senate/index.html>.
- <sup>81</sup> "Bin Laden: Goal is to Bankrupt US," *CNN*, November 1, 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/11/01/binladen.tape/index.html>
- <sup>82</sup> House Homeland Security Committee, *A National Strategy to Win the War Against Islamist Terror*, 114th Cong., 2016, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/A-National-Strategy-to-Win-the-War.pdf>.

- <sup>83</sup> Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation,” (speech, Washington, DC, September 10, 2014), *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/09/watch-obama-isil-speech-live/380010/>.
- <sup>84</sup> Donald Trump, “Address to the Nation,” (speech, Washington, DC, August 22, 2017), *CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/21/politics/read-trump-speech/index.html>.
- <sup>85</sup> P. J. Ivanhoe, *Master Sun's Art of War*, 20.
- <sup>86</sup> Congressional Budget Office, *Federal Debt and Statutory Limit, November 2017* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2017) 1, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/115th-congress-2017-2018/reports/53336-debtlimit.pdf>.
- <sup>87</sup> US Treasury, “Historical Debt Outstanding – Annual 2000 – 2015,” Accessed 19 February 2018. [https://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt\\_histo5.htm](https://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt_histo5.htm)
- <sup>88</sup> US Treasury, “The Debt to the Penny and Who Holds It,” Accessed 30 March 2018. <https://www.treasurydirect.gov/NP/debt/search?startMonth=&startDay=&startYear=&endMonth=12&endDay=&endYear=2016>
- <sup>89</sup> Jill Schlesinger, “12 Scary Debt Facts for 2012,” *CBS News*, February 12, 2012, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/12-scary-debt-facts-for-2012/>.
- <sup>90</sup> “Defense Secretary: Huge Deficits and Debt are National Security Threats,” YouTube video, February 14, 2012, 0:57, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS9jWDsX2Fk>.
- <sup>91</sup> “General Mattis Agrees that the National Debt is our Biggest National Security Threat,” CSPAN video, January 12, 2017, 0:29, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4645271/gen-mattis-agrees-nationAl-debt-biggest-nationAl-security-threat>.
- <sup>92</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Costs of Major U.S. Wars*, by Stephen Daggett. RS22926. (2010).
- <sup>93</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, “Sequestration, Its Causes and Impact,” *thebalance.com*, December 30, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-sequestration-causes-and-impact-3305775>.
- <sup>94</sup> Zachary Cohen, “Two-Thirds of Navy Strike Fighter Jets Can’t Fly,” *CNN*, February 10, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/10/politics/us-navy-planes-grounded/index.html>.
- <sup>95</sup> Jacqueline Klimas, “Less than Half of Marine Corps Aircraft are Ready to Fly,” *The Washington Examiner*, March 10, 2017. <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/less-than-half-of-marine-corps-aircraft-are-ready-to-fly/article/2617014>.
- <sup>96</sup> “Dunford: Military has Significant Readiness Problem (sic) Across the Board,” YouTube video, March 22, 2016, 2:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAGIjuwxw3c>.
- <sup>97</sup> “20170907 Navy Readiness – Underlying Problems Associated with the USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain,” YouTube video, September 7, 2017, 2:54:52, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWrj8qMDGoE>.
- <sup>98</sup> Kitsap Sun, “Navy Secretary: Resolving Shipyard Backlog is Crucial,” *Military.com*. October 17, 2017. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/10/18/navy-secretary-resolving-shipyard-backlog-is-crucial.html>
- <sup>99</sup> Nick Simeone, “Sequester Degrades Navy, Marine Corps Readiness, Officials Say,” *Defense.gov*. February 26, 2015. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/604183/sequester-degrades-navy-marine-corps-readiness-officials-say/>.
- <sup>100</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, DC, 2017): 27. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.
- <sup>101</sup> Thomas Kaplan, “Congress Approves \$1.3 Trillion Spending Bill, Averting a Shutdown,” *NYTimes.com*, March 22, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/us/politics/house-passes-spending-bill.html>.
- <sup>102</sup> Marcus Weisgerber, “Mattis to Military: You Have Your Money. Spend It Wisely,” *Defenseone.com*. March 27, 2018.
- <sup>103</sup> Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Edited by Robert B. Strassler. New York: The Free Press, 1996: 1.76.
- <sup>104</sup> Wolf Richter, “This is Why US Gov. Deficit Numbers are a Big Lie,” *Wolfstreet.com*, October 1, 2016. <https://wolfstreet.com/2016/10/01/why-u-s-government-deficit-numbers-are-a-big-lie-nationAl-debt/>
- <sup>105</sup> Rick Santorum, “GOP Primary Debate,” video, 1:09, CNN GOP Debate on December 15, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2015/12/15/santorum-cnn-gop-debate-world-war-3-comments.cnn>.
- <sup>106</sup> Daniel Strauss, “Santorum Super PAC Ad Warns ‘WWIII is Upon US,’” *Politico*, December 14, 2015. <https://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/rick-santorum-superpac-wwiii-216738>.
- <sup>107</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Costs of Major U.S. Wars*, by Stephen Daggett. RS22926. (2010).
- <sup>108</sup> *National Security Strategy*: 19.

- 
- <sup>109</sup> Min Xu, Suk Hi Kim, and Hassan Moussawi, "The US Government Debt: Consequences, Causes, and Solutions," *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 18, no. 1 (03, 2016): 72-73.
- <sup>110</sup> "Graham Questions Secretary Carter and General Dunford Regarding FY17 Budget." Video. 6:24. April 27, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTi8T4ajCX0&app=desktop>.
- <sup>111</sup> "Graham Questions Secretary Carter and General Dunford Regarding FY17 Budget," video, 6:24, April 27, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTi8T4ajCX0&app=desktop>.
- <sup>112</sup> "Bin Laden: Goal is to Bankrupt US," CNN, November 1, 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/11/01/binladen.tape/index.html>
- <sup>113</sup> *Master Sun's Art of War*, 20.
- <sup>114</sup> Barack Obama. "State of the Union Address," (speech, Washington, DC, January 12, 2016), Medium, <https://medium.com/@ObamaWhiteHouse/president-obama-s-2016-state-of-the-union-address-7c06300f9726>.
- <sup>115</sup> Linda Ch'iu, "Fact-Checking a Comparison of Gun Deaths and Terrorism Related Deaths," Politifact, October 5, 2015. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/oct/05/virAI-image/fact-checking-comparison-gun-deaths-and-terrorism-/>.
- <sup>116</sup> "Motor Vehicle Safety," CDC.gov. Accessed January 10, 2018. [https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired\\_driving/impaired-drv\\_factsheet.html](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-drv_factsheet.html).
- <sup>117</sup> "Leading Causes of Death," CDC.gov. Accessed January 10, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>.
- <sup>118</sup> Steve Benen, "Obama on ISIS: 'They're Not An Existential Threat to US,'" *MSNBC.COM*, March 24, 2016. <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/obama-isis-theyre-not-existential-threat-us>.
- <sup>119</sup> Anat Shoshani and Michelle Slone, "The Drama of Media Coverage of Terrorism: Emotional and Attitudinal Impact on the Audience," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 7 (2008): 637.
- <sup>120</sup> Donald Trump, "Address to the Nation," (speech, Washington, DC, August 22, 2017), *CNN*, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/21/politics/read-trump-speech/index.html>.
- <sup>121</sup> *The National Security Strategy*, 2017.