

Divide the House: The Dhofar Campaign as a Model for Modern U.S. Counterterrorism

McCabe Webb

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Dr. Jeanette Fregulia

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Abstract

With an entire generation's experience being shaped by the scourge of terrorism, and with a respectable end to the global war on terror increasingly seeming like a distant dream rather than an achievable goal, it is time to rethink and restructure counterterrorism strategy. An effective strategy will include the dual strategy of prevention of the immediate threat of violence and long term preventative measures designed to address root causes of radicalization. Drawing on key tenets demonstrated by the Dhofar Insurgency of the 1960s and 70s a more holistic approach to counter and antiterrorism can and should be constructed in the pursuit of a more effective outcome.

“At this point in the war on terror, when we have reached an enormously consequential crossroads, the overriding question is whether the US and the West can summon the stamina and marshal their powerful resources and influence to help mitigate local conditions and grievances that are eagerly seized upon and exploited by these terrorist groups to consolidate their pernicious hold over local populations. The unappealing alternative is to consign these peoples and places to a theologically decreed totalitarian extremism that stands in direct contradiction to our values and national interest.”

-Bruce Hoffman

An entire generation of young adults have grown up accounting for the time it will take to take off their shoes at airport security in their travel itineraries. The idea that their parents could walk straight up to the gate to receive a family member, and the scenes from so many romantic comedies where the protagonists can reunite outside the airplane door, is met with a sense of wonder. The Global War on Terror has become a defining event for innumerable people around the world, one whose resolution more commonly conjures up images of human beings falling from airplanes as U.S. troops withdraw from Afghanistan rather than a respectable peace. This is the result of the stagnation of counterterrorism policy where the status quo has been accepted. This complacency can and should be broken, however. By drawing from the successful campaigns of the past the United States can and should adopt a more proactive and preventative approach to the threat of international terrorism.

It would be a mistake to consider the Global War on Terror a relic of history. The scourge of terrorism is far from dead and gone. Domestic terrorist plots reached a record high in 2020.¹

¹ Bruce Hoffman et al, “The War on Terror 20 Years on: Crossroads or Cul-De-Sac?,” Institute for Global Change, accessed September 6, 2021, <https://institute.global/policy/war-terror-20-years-crossroads-or-cul-de-sac>.

Jihadi linked insurgencies such as those in Somalia and Mali are more common today than they were before September 11th, 2001.² In addition to this, there are four times the number of Salafi-Jihadi terrorist organizations as on 9/11.³ With the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan still resonating in the international community, it is time to reevaluate the United State's approach to the Global War on Terror. A pertinent approach would be a balance between the prevention of imminent threats with a more long-term goal of addressing the incentives that lead to acts of terrorism in the first place. A promising outline to consider in crafting this ambitious new policy can be drawn from the little-known Dhofar counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign that took place in Oman.

When thinking of historical examples from which to draw for a modern counterterrorism strategy, the Omani Dhofar campaign is likely not the most obvious starting point. Surprisingly enough there has been scholarly work with some similarities to this topic in the past. These include Nick Higgins's article "The Dhofar Campaign: Applying Lessons Learned in Afghanistan," as well as Geraint Hughes's paper "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965-1975." Both of these articles investigate the Dhofar campaign to draw lessons to apply to modern-day strategy. However, these articles both focus on more narrow cases in which the Dhofar campaign may serve as a guideline for counterinsurgency. This article will endeavor to take the idea further and expand the model to use in the field of counterterrorism in addition to counterinsurgency rather than solely counterinsurgency. This paper will also seek to broaden applicable aspects from the Dhofar Campaign to the world writ large rather than a single instance. A central theme of this work will be advocating for a multipronged approach to the Global War on Terror in addressing the

² Daniel Byman, "The Good Enough Doctrine," *Foreign Affairs*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2021-08-24/good-enough-doctrine>.

³ Hoffman et al, "The War on Terror 20 Years on."

threatened violence, while also addressing the root cause for its arrival. Many academic works have covered similar ideas, including Mary Habeck's work *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* wherein the author emphasizes the importance of simultaneously addressing the imminent threat of violence, as well as "Jihadist Ideology" which is demonstrated to be the driving force of the continuity of such groups. This paper, while advocating for a multi-pronged approach as well as addressing the importance of addressing ideology as a driving force broadens incentives beyond jihadi ideology. So too will the focus be directly on the lessons to be derived from the Dhofar Campaign.

The War on Terror so Far

In the field of medicine there is a relatively common occurrence in which there has been some sort of damage, say a broken bone, which is then allowed to heal naturally over time rather than being attended to by a physician. While the damage does heal, it heals improperly, causing the physician to have to break the bone again to reset it so it may heal properly. Certain similarities can be drawn between this occurrence in the medical field, and the U.S. War on Terror. The wrong lessons were learned early on and were deeply ingrained as standard operating procedures. Dysfunctional crisis learning, allowing the broken bone to heal incorrectly, characterized the early days of the campaign and the lessons learned by President George W. Bush's administration. The U.S.'s quick defeat of the Taliban and the erasure of Al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan taught U.S. officials, particularly the influential Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, that the tried and true route of overwhelming force and military superiority was effective.⁴ These (mis)learned lessons then became the norm. This approach has since

⁴ Hoffman, "The War on Terror 20 Years on"

proved ineffective as shown by the moniker commonly given to the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq as “endless wars” or the “forever wars.”

Despite this, progress has been made. The current counterterrorism strategy of the U.S. is perhaps best explained by Daniel Byman as the “Good Enough Doctrine,”⁵ with particular importance placed on “decapitation strikes” as described by both Byman⁶ and Bruce Hoffman.⁷ The concept of the good enough doctrine is relatively simple, if not exactly reassuring. The overall idea is in the name. The United States does just enough to prevent another major terrorist attack on its soil or against its citizens.⁸ Rather than attempting to fully address the threat of terrorist attacks against it, the U.S. is simply deciding to manage the threat. This management is not dissimilar to a chore that needs to be handled, an idea which is encapsulated by the Israeli moniker for the strategy as “mowing the grass.”⁹ The good-enough doctrine has proven itself effective, and achieved the goal of preventing another terrorist attack against America in the mold of 9/11.¹⁰ An important iteration of the good enough policy comes in the form of decapitation strikes. Through decapitation strikes, terrorist leaders (the heads) are targeted for assassination. The primary idea of decapitation strikes is to keep the group in a constant state of flux and confusion either by forcing them to find new leaders or effectively rendering their leaders useless by forcing them into hiding.¹¹ Through this strategy, the most skilled members of the group are removed, disrupting planning and the promotion of less experienced members to

⁵ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine,”

⁶ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine,”

⁷ Hoffman, “The War on Terror 20 Years on”

⁸ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine,”

⁹ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine”

¹⁰ Sarah Chayes, Kori Schake; Peter D. Feaver; Risa Brooks, Charles King, Constanze Stelzenmüller, James M. Lindsay, Joshua Kurlantzick, Alyssa Ayres, and Zachary Laub. “Who Won the War on Terror?” Foreign Affairs, August 25, 2021. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/issue-packages/2021-08-24/who-won-war-terror>.

¹¹ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine,”

leadership positions.¹² Decapitation strikes have also proven effective, with Osama Bin Laden himself mentioning how similar strikes lead to inefficient leaders.¹³

Despite these successes, the fact remains that the standard the U.S. is holding itself to is low. Given the ever-evolving nature of terrorist organizations and terrorists themselves, it is hard not to be concerned that good enough will not always be good enough. Groups and individuals can change or morph in such a way that slips through the large holes in the net of the good enough doctrine. As for decapitation strikes, it seems as though an effective counter against this strategy could come from simple viewing of the movie *Iron Man 3*, where an actor is hired to play the figurehead of a terrorist organization and the real leader remains a secret. This is, of course, completely unrealistic, however, it does again produce the point that terrorist groups are highly adaptable. In addition to this, it has also been indicated that decapitation strikes are not incredibly effective against mass mobilization.¹⁴ The U.S. has reached the point where it will sooner or later need to break the bone and set it to heal correctly. The strategies that have proven effective should continue, however, complacency should be avoided and these policies should be built upon with long-term goals in mind. However alarmist it may sound, the bone will need to be rebroken, which can come from a policy shift within or forced with travesty.

To see how these strategies can be built upon, we may look to the successful Dhofar Campaign for lessons that can be adjusted and applied to modern counterterrorism strategies. Again, to properly apply these a historical foundation must be established.

A Brief History of the Dhofar Campaign

¹² Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2013): 32–43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23526906>: 33.

¹³ Byman, "Why Drones Work," 33.

¹⁴ Hoffman, "The War on Terror 20 Years on"

In the 1960's Oman was ruled by Sultan Said. Said was a despotic ruler who, despite his extravagant tastes, forced his country into poverty and hardship to maintain his grip on power.¹⁵ Despite this, and the Sultan's "abysmal" human rights record, Oman fell within the British sphere of influence.¹⁶ Said nearly completely relied upon the British as his paranoid desire to maintain power caused him to inhibit the development of both a local military and an effective intelligence service.¹⁷ In response to this the nationalist political group the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) rose up from the isolated southern region of Dhofar, pledging to modernize the region, and "Dhofar for the Dhofaris."¹⁸ The group started relatively small but was nearly successful in an attempt to assassinate Sultan Said.¹⁹ The Sultan's response to the group was horrific, consisting of heavy-handed military force, well capping, and collective punishment, the response was so brutal it left many soldiers disillusioned.²⁰ Rather than ending the rebellion, this response encouraged more people to join the insurgency.²¹

In 1968 the DLF combined with/was swallowed by communists from neighboring South Yemen and became the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG)²² The group also inherited mortars and mines from the British retreat from Aden.²³ The PFLOAG began gaining ground, actively campaigning their new communist ideology against the Sultan along the way. The ideological conflict quickly became even more apparent as

¹⁵ Geraint Hughes, "A 'Model CAMPAIGN' Reappraised: The Counter-Insurgency War in Dhofar, Oman, 1965–1975." Taylor & Francis. Accessed September 10, 2021. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390902743357>.

¹⁶ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

¹⁷ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

¹⁸ Nick Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign: Applying Lessons Learned in Afghanistan," *The Guardian: The Source for Antiterrorism Information* 12, no. 2 (2010): pp. 3-10: 4.

¹⁹ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

²⁰ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

²¹ Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign" 3.

²² Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

²³ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

the British and Omani army was seen as more of an occupying force in the south, largely because the army refused to draft or recruit Dhofaris, in addition to the Sultan's reliance on mercenaries.²⁴ The British were facing the realistic possibility of defeat and were pressuring Sultan Said to consider a new approach, which he refused.²⁵ The British then aided his son, who had been educated in Britain and served in the British Army, in taking power.²⁶ Under the new rule of Sultan Qaboos bin Said everything shifted. With Qaboos in power, the 5 point Counterinsurgency (COIN) Strategy previously recommended by Lieutenant Colonel John Watts could finally be enacted.²⁷ This strategy simultaneously advocated for the use of intelligence, while also meeting the needs of the Omani people.²⁸ The new Sultan immediately launched a series of reforms aiming to address both the origins of the insurgency and to counteract his father's rule. Sultan Qaboos modernized the military, in part by disbanding the army and groups of mercenaries in favor of local soldiers who understood the culture and language.²⁹ From there the Sultan engaged a type of two-pronged approach, military pressure against the fighting insurgents (far more humane than that of his father), and a secondary approach of development and support for both the country at large as well as the communities in which the fighters were coming from. The Sultan also fully devoted himself to the conflict of ideologies. As land was regained, civil development took place, providing tangible evidence of Qaboos's dedication. Sultan Qaboos also took advantage of the radical atheistic ideology and brutality of the PFLOAG to demonstrate himself as the one who cares for Omanis and as a defender of Islam and cultural traditions.³⁰ He also identified cracks within the PFLOAG between the communist ideologues

²⁴ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

²⁵ Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign" 3.

²⁶ Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign" 3.

²⁷ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

²⁸ Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign" 4.

²⁹ Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign" 4-5.

³⁰ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

and the nationalist holdovers from the DLF. They knew that if they could get the PFLOAG to cannibalize itself, the fight would be far easier. Qaboos and the British exploited and emphasized these fractures, while also providing a way out through an offer of amnesty and even a buyback of automatic weapons used by insurgents for 500 Omani Riyals.³¹ This policy, as radical and counterproductive as it may sound, worked wonders as many of the PFLOAG fighters were struggling to reconcile their renunciation of Islam.³² Over 4 years 797 fighters out of the total estimated force of 5,000 insurgents not only stopped fighting for the insurgency but began fighting for the Sultan.³³ In order to achieve all of this the Sultan leaned on a new and effective intelligence gathering network, including information provided by those now sympathetic to the government.³⁴ More humane military pressure also continued and this strategy led to the victory of the Omani government and their British allies against the insurgents.

This demonstration of flexibility, imagination, and, indeed, compassion by Sultan Qaboos and the British worked incredibly effectively and not only ended the insurgency but also vastly decreased the possibility of a similar uprising ever occurring again. Through this campaign we can learn lessons on the dangers of overwhelming force; the importance of intermediaries; the necessity of both pressure and “counter coercion”³⁵ to address present and future threats; the need for efficient intelligence; and the strategy of dividing the house.

The Dangers of Overwhelming Force

³¹ Clive Jones, “Military Intelligence, Tribes, and Britain’s War in Dhofar, 1970-1976.” *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (2011): 557–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41342740>: 569.

³² Bryan Ray. *Dangerous Frontiers : Campaigning in Somaliland and Oman*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2012: 61.

³³ Hughes, “A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised.”

³⁴ Hughes, “A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised.”

³⁵ Hughes, “A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised.”

Military pressure has proven itself as both necessary and efficient at combatting terrorism around the world, however, when force is readily utilized and condoned it quickly become counterproductive. As we see demonstrated by Sultan Said's response to the insurgency, brutality and collective punishment are not only horrifying but are also simply counterproductive. The response to this approach by Sultan Said was the galvanization of more fighters for the insurgency rather than its successful defeat.³⁶

The same rings true in the American approach to fighting terrorism. The more innocent civilians that are killed and the more brutal acts (such as torture) which are embraced, the more disillusioned people will become. A civilian in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003 explained that American actions cause shame and that "it is the *duty* of the man, and of that tribe, to get revenge on this soldier - to kill that man. Their duty is to attack them, to *wash the shame*. The shame is a *stain*, a dirty thing; they had to *wash* it. No sleep - we cannot sleep until we have revenge. They have to kill soldiers."³⁷ According to the same Iraqi boy, "" The Americans," he said, "*provoke* the people. They don't *respect* the people."³⁸ These actions of overwhelming force by the U.S. only sour relations and create more enemies. Terrorist organizations realize this and even plan it. Terrorist groups will attack Americans to provoke a violent response which will then only empower the organization and weaken the U.S.³⁹ Osama Bin Laden even predicted that his martyrdom (being killed by the U.S.) would create "more Osama Bin Ladens."⁴⁰ This acknowledgment speaks volumes about the dangers of overwhelming and excessive force. These

³⁶ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

³⁷ Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth : America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*. New York: New York Review Books, 2004: 1.

³⁸ Danner, *Torture and Truth*, 2.

³⁹ Danner, *Torture and Truth*, 5.

⁴⁰ Hoffman, "The War on Terror 20 Years on"

examples, as well as the lessons, shown by Sultan Said's overwhelmingly violent approach demonstrate its inefficiencies as a policy and practice to be used by the United States.

The Importance of Intermediaries

This is a difficult and timely subject to broach, especially with the U.S. withdrawing from Afghanistan, and the country's subsequent fall to the Taliban. The American public is tired of "endless wars" and rhetoric against "nation-building" is being flung around like snowballs by public figures. That being said, now is not a time for isolationism. It is important to note that partnering with other countries and intelligence campaigns work.⁴¹

Neither Sultan Qaboos nor the British acted alone. They both engaged with each other and shared ideas and strategies for the Dhofar Campaign. While I endeavor to avoid the narrative of solely equating America to Britain in the context of applying lessons learned from the Dhofar Campaign to the American War on Terror in favor of a more holistic approach, the British-American comparison does merit investigation in the context of intermediaries.

Firstly, Britain was tactful and cautious in its involvement with the Dhofar Campaign. Britain essentially acknowledged that its involvement in the conflict and country, in general, was temporary. They knew the importance of a local leader with legitimacy being the one largely in charge of the operation. They avoided the painting of Qaboos as an imperial puppet by the PFLOAG, which indeed he was not. They strategically supported and gave the advice in a way conducive to the situation and recognized the vital role played by local troops.⁴² While strategically designed in order to avoid any allegations of Sultan Qaboos being a British agent, it

⁴¹ Byman, "The Good Enough Doctrine."

⁴² Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

did also involve some luck in the manner that, despite reality, what truly matters is the perceptions of the people, which cannot be reliably controlled. Such perceptions can most reliably be managed by truly relying on and supporting expert intermediaries in a transparent manner wherein the populace can clearly see the role of the local leaders.

America is on shaky footing. When entering a situation in which they will be combatting terrorism in another country they should do so with a solid strategy in mind. The U.S. also needs to embrace multilateralism in the fight against terrorist organizations. The American government needs to walk the fine line between providing aid and support while not overstepping. Should the U.S. be painted as an imperialist puppet master pulling the strings of the local government, suddenly legitimacy is lost and the entire situation becomes much more difficult. The British largely used discreet and informal support to support Sultan Qaboos.⁴³ They also kept in mind that for legitimacy it had to be won or lost by Oman, not by the British.⁴⁴

Once again, this is a highly complex situation that fluctuates highly from case to case and should be addressed deftly by professionals regarding each region and government with a desire for genuine multilateral action at its core. We must also keep in mind the lessons learned recently, and through history that America is unsuccessful at building armies.⁴⁵ Perhaps it is put most simply by the famed Lao Tzu in his famous quote “A leader is best when people barely know he exists when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Hughes, “A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised.”

⁴⁴ Hughes, “A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised.”

⁴⁵ Rachel Tecott, “Why America Can't Build Allied Armies,” Foreign Affairs, September 1, 2021, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-26/why-america-cant-build-allied-armies?utm_medium=promo_email&utm_source=lo_flows&utm_campaign=registered_user_welcome&utm_term=email_1&utm_content=20210911.

⁴⁶ Michael Shinagel, “The Paradox of Leadership - Professional Development: Harvard DCE,” Professional Development | Harvard DCE, March 12, 2021, <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/the-paradox-of-leadership/>.

Pressure and “Counter Coercion”⁴⁷

One of the most important lessons we can learn from the Dhofar Campaign is the importance of a dualistic approach in which the immediate threat is addressed, but so too is the cause of the threat responded to to prevent further issues in the future.

Consider Sultan Said’s first response to the DLF. The insurgents were dealt with intensely, however, the root cause of the issue that caused the uprising in the first place was not addressed, and the PFLOAG simply rose as well. Instead of simply fighting off the threat in front of him Sultan Qaboos also addressed the impetus to prevent any similar uprising from occurring in the future. In the case of the Counterinsurgency (COIN) operation of Dhofar, this was accomplished by investing in the community and providing for the needs of the people, and showing that they could and would be cared for by the new government.

The U.S., should it hope to avoid the everlasting battle of constantly fighting a terrorist organization only to have to address a splinter group in the following years, needs to follow this example.

America is not indefatigable. Public support for the War on Terror and the “Endless Wars” is already dwindling. The new policies established should incorporate a focus on addressing the root causes that led to the birth of these organizations. Should these causes be effectively addressed then the U.S. would effectively be cauterizing the necks of the Hydra, rather than simply lopping them off.

That being said, pressure is both necessary and effective. The immediate threat must be addressed and prevented in order to save lives. The strategy cannot simply be to address the cause and wait for all of those currently posing a threat to die of old age, with fingers crossed

⁴⁷ Hughes, “A ‘Model Campaign’ Reappraised.”

that they do not perpetuate any attacks or take any more lives in the meantime. Ideally addressing the reasons why many fight in the first place, will cause desertion. However, the process of addressing the causes takes time, and many fighters would likely not desert. Therefore a surgical strategy of pressure must simultaneously be embraced. A major aspect of this should entail cultural and language training for all those involved.⁴⁸ Attacks must be prevented, while also keeping in mind the dangers of excessive force. The denial of havens for planning and regrouping, for example, has proved effective.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, this has become more complicated with the recent rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ideally, future policies will be simultaneously humane and effective while also minimizing civilian casualties and cases of mistaken identity. So too must military operations be seen and engaged as a means rather than an end.⁵⁰ Regardless, the U.S. should evaluate what has worked regarding pressure and consistently be improving upon those strategies until they are no longer needed.

That is not to say this will not be difficult. The motivations behind terrorism are not a monolith. The causes behind what incites people to commit terrorism are incredibly complex and also largely differ from group to group and from person to person. Daniel Byman encapsulates this difficulty best when he wrote “Slashing unemployment in Yemen, bringing democracy to Saudi Arabia, and building a functioning government in Somalia are laudable goals, but they are not politically or financially possible for the United States, and even if achieved, they still might not reduce the allure of jihad.”⁵¹

Terrorism is a tactic rather than a singular movement and therefore its complete elimination is impossible; however, progress can be achieved in order to address many of the

⁴⁸ Hughes, “A ‘Model Campaign’ Reappraised.”

⁴⁹ Byman, “The Good Enough Doctrine.”

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Corn et al, *War on Terror and the Laws of War : A Military Perspective*. Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2009. Accessed October 27, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central: 5.

⁵¹Byman. “Why Drones Work,” 35.

contributing causes. A contemporary example of such measures can be found in the Colombian counter-narcotics strategy “Plan Colombia.” The Congressional Research Service published a report entitled *Colombia’s Changing Approach to Drug Policy*. In this report, the authors detailed how the U.S. supported the program with over \$10 billion in foreign assistance while also helping to “support security and development programs designed to stabilize Colombia’s security situation and strengthen its democracy.”⁵² Through this strategy Colombia aimed at eliminating root causes that enable and support the drug trade by shifting “to a public health approach,” that “gives significant attention to expanding alternative development and licit crop substitution while intensifying interdiction efforts” and “promotes drug-use prevention and treatment for drug users.”⁵³ According to the report, this strategy also entails providing resources “to address the structural causes of poverty” which in this case entail “a lack of access to land; a lack of access to land titling, irrigation, roads, and limited technical assistance in remote areas; in addition to the absence of national government or state presence—including basic services such as education and health—in rural zones which remain lawless and abandoned.”⁵⁴ Such an approach is also reflected in a peace-deal with the guerilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which “according to President Juan Manuel Santos, the peace accord will draw former FARC members into efforts to counter illicit drug production and trafficking.”⁵⁵ Just as terrorism is a tactic, the drug trade is an illicit market, while complete elimination may be impossible, effective measures to improve the situation by addressing contributing causes can, and should, be pursued.

⁵² June S. Beittel, and Liana W. Rosen, *Colombia's Changing Approach to Drug Policy*. Vol. 10. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2017. Summary

⁵³ June S Beittel., and Liana W. Rose., *Colombia's Changing Approach to Drug Policy*, Summary.

⁵⁴ June S Beittel., and Liana W. Rosen, *Colombia's Changing Approach to Drug Policy*, 17.

⁵⁵ June S Beittel., and Liana W. Rosen, *Colombia's Changing Approach to Drug Policy*, Summary.

The Importance of Intelligence

Sultan Qaboos, and indeed modern America, both lean heavily on intelligence for their respective campaigns. Part of Lt. Col. Watts's COIN strategy relied on an efficient network of intelligence, in part to identify who was friendly and who was not. Qaboos then pursued this recommendation in establishing very effective civilian intelligence networks.⁵⁶ These systems, which were in part created by generating trust with the community, then provided invaluable information for the government to act upon.

Perhaps one of America's most effective approaches to counterterrorism comes in the form of intelligence. Through intelligence operations, numerous attacks have been avoided. This structure should be built upon, however, some alterations should be made. To the extent possible the American intelligence community should engage more locals and establish routes through which civilians may be able to provide information safely. U.S. intelligence should also increase focus on preventing civilian casualties, as well as cases of mistaken identity. Also, and perhaps most importantly, effective and empathetic strategies for gathering intelligence (through sources and convicted terrorists alive) should be emphasized and the use of torture should be discontinued.

Information also plays a central role. Qaboos prioritized transparency and information sharing with the public.⁵⁷ This then generated trust between the government and its citizens. The U.S. during its campaign against terrorism has been notorious for issuing reports that cast situations in a far better light than circumstances would dictate. Then, when accurate information reaches the public, trust in the government is lost.

⁵⁶ Nick Higgins, "The Dhofar Campaign: Applying Lessons Learned in Afghanistan," *The Guardian: The Source for Antiterrorism Information* 12, no. 2 (2010): pp. 3-10.

⁵⁷ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

Divide the House

Sultan Qaboos's decision to offer amnesty to the Dhofari insurgents who were willing to lay down their arms may seem like a small piece of the COIN operation with little to no relevance regarding a modern counterterrorism strategy. After all, terrorists are the enemy, and any politician or public figure who would ever suggest an extension of amnesty would more than likely have to kiss their career, and indeed the ability to walk outside their own home, swiftly goodbye.

It is not the specific decision to offer amnesty that we need to take into account, but rather the effects. Sultan Qaboos's strategy in offering amnesty was to weaken the opposing forces without having to fire a shot. After all, the reason why many of them had been fighting had been addressed. Many fighters deserted, resulting in a weaker enemy for the Sultan to deal with; this also resulted in the disillusionment of the insurgency fighters and dissension among the ranks.

The U.S. should seriously consider pursuing a similar strategy, one whose goal is to sow dissension among the ranks of terrorist organizations, increase disillusionment of its members and encourage desertion, while simultaneously disallowing collaboration or mergers.

It is important to note that terrorist organizations are far from uniform when it comes to beliefs or agendas. Groups have split up and fought over disagreements regarding beliefs and rhetoric. Simply consider the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram under Abu Bakr Shekau who were once the same group, but then split.

Should the U.S. be able to deftly put these organizations into situations where they must double down and officially state their stance as a group through means such as announcements and social media, the groups can effectively be pitted against one another, and in some cases have their numbers drastically reduced. These organizations being forced to put their beliefs and views of certain subjects out for the public to see would also isolate them from their surrounding communities. Through this gaining and sharing of information on the groups, the U.S. can effectively “Stigmatize the extremists and their war”⁵⁸ Terrorist organizations benefit from the anonymity of their specific beliefs. They do not provide specific stances intentionally to make it easier to project your own opinions onto them, making you more likely to support or join them. It can be more appealing to join or fund an organization if you believe they hold the same stance as you, however, when it is exposed that they differ, funding and support can dry up. Jihadist groups especially have to walk a tightrope of being appealing in the eyes of funding and possible recruits, while also advocating for radical religious purity.⁵⁹ Just as differences in ideology within the PFLOAG, as well as with the rest of the Omanis were exploited by Sultan Qaboos, the U.S. can find these weaknesses and work on them to weaken the coherence of the group and isolate them from their benefactors.

Conclusion

An entire generation has grown into adulthood in the post-9/11 world. As they have grown and evolved and developed, they have done so under the shadow of the War on Terror.

⁵⁸ Habeck. *Knowing the Enemy*, 174 Mary Habeck. *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*. Yale University Press, 2006. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1npq1n>: 174.

⁵⁹Habeck. *Knowing the Enemy*, 167.

America waded into the longest war of its history over two decades ago and there is no obvious and satisfying end in sight.

Loss aversion theory states that we as humans are less likely to quit something we have dedicated a lot of time and effort to, especially when we are losing. Humans do not always get up from the game of poker when they are down a significant portion of money because they do not want to admit that they have lost and have the perception that they can get it back.

America is capable of operating at such a high capacity, with so much potential at its disposal. However, it must beware of becoming complacent and comfortable in its counter and anti-terrorism strategy, as well as avoid remaining in a rut where policy is concerned. New ideas need to be considered for a truly effective, sustainable, and proactive counterterrorism strategy. While the Dhofar Campaign is by no means a perfect blueprint to be applied in the modern day with factors that cannot be replicated.⁶⁰ However, the lessons to be learned from this campaign can certainly serve as a framework for both short and long-term approaches to combat terrorism in a more effective way.

⁶⁰ Hughes, "A 'Model Campaign' Reappraised."

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