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**Choose Your Battlefield And Kill With A Borrowed Sword: Al Qaida's Catalyst Strategy**

**ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS)**

Al Qaida has designed a strategy that the author describes as "catalyst warfare." The US must understand catalyst warfare strategy in order to determine and counter Al Qaeda's future objectives.

**SUBJECT TERMS (KEY WORDS ON WHICH TO PERFORM SEARCH)**

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CHOOSE YOUR BATTLEFIELD AND KILL WITH A BORROWED SWORD:
AL QAIDA’S CATALYST STRATEGY

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Executive Summary

Title: Choose Your Battlefield and Kill With a Borrowed Sword: Al Qaida’s Catalyst Strategy

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Thesis: Al Qaida has designed a strategy that the author describes as “catalyst warfare.” Al Qaida, the catalyst in the Long War, intends to use this strategy to build an Islamic Vanguard (army) that will begin the expansion of an Islamic Caliphate.

Discussion: Catalyst Warfare is a strategy in which one force provokes or speeds significant change or action to an opposing force by creating conditions that cause the opposing force to collide with a non-engaged force (neutral, or enemy or allied). The reactant forces change from their original compositions in ways that are favorable to the provoking force. In Catalyst strategy, the provoker’s composition is left unchanged while the opposing force and the force it collides with are altered from their original composition. U.S. strategists must understand both the nature of the war they are currently fighting, and the enemy and his strategy. By understanding al Qaida’s catalyst strategy, the U.S. can determine the enemy’s future objectives. By understanding his objectives (ends), strategists can determine the ways and means he envisions to attain it. By understanding his ways and means, the US can design a counterstrategy to defeat him.

Conclusion: The U.S. has misunderstood the nature of the war al Qaida is waging and, as a result, has been unable to design an effective counter strategy. The U.S. must understand catalyst warfare strategy in order to determine and counter al Qaida’s future objectives.
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I would also like to thank my wife Dawn, and my three children, Shawn, Caroline and Emma, for their patience, support and understanding throughout this academic year.
When confronted with a strategic problem, strategists must first make an assessment of the situation confronting them. Without a basic understanding of the situation, decision-making and action are likely to be seriously flawed. The development of strategy demands a certain discipline to study and understand the dynamics of the situation and think through the implications of potential actions. While it is often possible to recover from a tactical error or defeat, the consequences of a serious misstep at the strategic level can be catastrophic.

Sayf Adel, Al Qaida Military Commander, and former Col in the Egyptian Special Forces, June 8-15 July 2005

I. Understanding the Problem and the Enemy

After the attacks on September 11th, 2001, US strategists did not frame the problem confronting them properly and failed to answer the question, “why did Al Qaida attack the U.S.?” Al Qaida was viewed as merely a regional terrorist organization that the US would quickly punish instead of an intelligent, capable enemy with a comprehensive strategy that if “put into motion,” could possibly begin to achieve its “political goal” of rebuilding the Islamic Caliphate. Explanations of why al Qaida attacked the US were not given the necessary in-depth analysis or debate among US military and political leaders. Al Qaida’s political goal continues to bleed the US, both in dollars and lives in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Al Qaida cannot be defeated until US policy-makers and strategists fully understand their strategic design. This essay will explain al Qaida’s “catalyst strategy” in order to forecast future wars and areas of conflict and offer recommendations on how to design a counter strategy.
II. Al Qaida’s Ends, Ways and Means

The value of the objective, in turn, is a major indicator of the resources—the means—that both sides will likely commit and sacrifices they will make to achieve it. An understanding of both ends and means is required in order to develop an effective military strategy.

MCDP-1 Strategy, 20 June 1997

The most important thing that was missed by the terrorism experts, who were studying Al Qaeda’s methods instead of its ends, is that it had a much more sophisticated understanding of the Islamic world than did the left-wing movements in the 1970s and 1980s… therefore, even as Al Qaeda attacked embassies and warships, the political leadership turned to the terrorism experts who focused on its operational and tactical techniques, rather than on the vision…

George Friedman, America’s Secret War: Inside the Hidden Worldwide Struggle Between America and its Enemies 2004

In order to design a strategy to defeat al Qaida, the US must come to understand the enemy’s ends: their objective, end state, and criteria for success; their ways: center of gravity, decisive points, and strategic design; and their means: capabilities, resources, and force composition. Al Qaida attacked the United States in order to draw the U.S. military into a prolonged, unconventional war in Afghanistan where it could be defeated. Al Qaida’s strategic objective, ends, is to achieve a new Islamic Caliphate that regains the lost territory of the great Islamic dynasties of the past.\(^5\) Their ways to achieve their strategic goal was to attack the U.S. (“the far enemy”),\(^6\) thereby prompting the US to invade Afghanistan. Through the US invasion, al Qaida intends to inspire, recruit, and receive Islamic fighters, their means, from around the Muslim world, and to radicalize, train, and employ them against the US military. After soundly defeating the US military, al Qaida intends to send these fighters back to their countries of origin as a catalyst towards their strategic objective, building the Islamic Caliphate.\(^7\) Al Qaida’s objective may sound delusional at first glance, but after examining Osama Bin-Laden’s 1998 legal pronouncement (Fatwa) below,\(^8\) which also served as al Qaeda’s declaration of war on the US, it is difficult to dispute that some objectives listed within it have not only occurred, but have in fact exceeded their original end-state:
To kill Americans and their allies – civilians and military- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it… …to comply with God’s order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it. [sic] We also call on Muslim *ulema*, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan’s U.S. troops and the devil’s supporters allying with them, and to their money wherever and whenever they find it… …and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson.

Osama Bin Laden’s Fatwa, Feb 23, 1998

Although mostly underground, Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) still maintains operational influence in the region, launching attacks against Iraq’s leadership, while the Taliban and Taliban splinter groups, with the help of Al Qaeda, are gaining a significant power base within Afghanistan and Pakistan. Throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, al Qaida continues to erode traditional tribal and state leadership structures, aiming to unify the Muslim people under a radicalized pan-Islamic Caliphate. At home, US military leaders’ continued requests for troop surges in Afghanistan are deteriorating America’s will to endure the “Long War,” while NATO and coalition partners question the validity of future military commitments to Afghanistan, wondering if the volatile country can be saved.

III. Al Qaida’s Strategic Design

[A designer is] an emerging synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic, objective economist and evolutionary strategist.

Buckminster Fuller 1895-1983

A journey can only be charted with a destination in mind, and a strategy can be plotted only with goals in mind.

General Albert Wedemeyer USA– Designer of the WWII Victory Plan

The 9/11 attacks on America demonstrated strategic design and operational art at the highest level. Without a military or professional war college, missiles, warplanes, satellites, or warships, a small group of al Qaeda planners designed an attack unparalleled in its asymmetry in ancient or modern warfare. The al Qaida strategists, living in austere conditions, designed an operational plan that struck at the very heart of the US, boldly focusing on a massive physical
and psychological strike with three key objectives. America’s government, economy, and military were all to be attacked within minutes of each other. Though their true strategic objective is still debated among US military and political leaders,\(^{10}\) al Qaida strategists would not have devoted the level of time and the detailed planning needed to achieve one of the greatest disproportional attacks in history without having a clear strategic goal, an objective that was nested within their operational design. Sean Costigan and David Gold in *Terrornomics* wrote that “deploying the complex organizational structure necessary to carry out [the 9/11 plans] [could have taken] several years.”\(^{11}\) Considering the depth of detail and time that al Qaida’s strategists committed to the 9/11 attacks, US strategists can presume that al Qaida understood that by killing thousands of Americans they would ignite a fierce response that would certainly involve American military forces being deployed to Afghanistan. If this presumption is correct, then US planners must ask themselves: why would al Qaeda want the US Military to invade Afghanistan? The answer is found in the emergence of modern and medieval Jihad strategy and the men who wrote on the subject.

**IV. The Beginning of the Catalyst Strategy – Building the Vanguard**

The prominent Jihadist and theorist, Sayyid Qutb, wrote in *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones)\(^{12}\) that in order to restore Islam on earth and free all Muslims from their ignorance of *al-Jahiliyah*, “divine guidance,” a “vanguard” must be formed which should model itself after the original companions of Muhammad, the Salafists.\(^{13}\) Qutb’s theory manifested itself in the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and several other Islamic fundamentalist groups throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. He argued that the formation of a Muslim “vanguard,” fighting through persuasion (preaching and adherence to Sharia)\(^{14}\) and force of arms, could abolish the existing political power structures that rested upon
a “complex yet interrelated ideological, racial, class, social and economic support” system.\textsuperscript{15}

Qutb believed that without this structure, the Egyptian government could not survive. He, and a significant number of his followers, believed that the abolishment of apostate power structures would ultimately occur within each Muslim state if the right “conditions” existed and the people could be enlisted in the effort. He referred to the Egyptian government as the “internal enemy” or the “near enemy” and Western governments as the “external enemy,” or the “far enemy.”\textsuperscript{16}

Qutb studied earlier Islamic scholarship, theology, and social science to aid him in the study, refinement, and formation of his modern Jihad strategy. It is the fourteenth century scholar Ibn Khaldûn, who has been overlooked by US strategists and historians as an important influence on Qutb and other Jihad theorists.\textsuperscript{17} Ibn Khaldûn was a theologian, lawyer, military strategist, and social scientist, and is considered by many Western scholars to be among the founders of the social sciences. In his book \textit{Muqaddimah}, completed in 1377, Khaldûn wrote theories on philosophy, history, sociology, demography, historiography, and culture, but it was his theories on “social cohesion,” “group solidarity,” (\textit{asabiyah})\textsuperscript{18} and “tribalism” that resonated with Qutb and still resonates with al Qaida strategists today.

Khaldûn argued that “social cohesion arises spontaneously in tribes and other small kinship groups and that it can be intensified and enlarged by religious ideology”\textsuperscript{19} and that this “cohesion carries within it psychological, sociological, economic, and political seeds that can bring the kinship group to power, while also becoming its downfall.”\textsuperscript{20} It was Qutb’s examination of early Islamic social science scholarship, such as Khaldûn’s, that shaped his belief that, if planted properly, the social seeds of cohesion, solidarity, and tribalism would take root in the people of Egypt. If given the right inspiration or catalyst, the people would be prompted to rise up and overthrow the apostate rulers (\textit{kifr}).
Dr. Ayman Zawahiri, a follower of the Muslim Brotherhood and later the second in command of al Qaida, had witnessed firsthand the power of enlisting Muslim youth to overthrow the “near enemy” with the Anwar Sadat assassination in Egypt. He wrote, “Qutb’s call for faith in Allah’s Oneness, for submission to His sole authority and sovereignty [Hakimiyya], was the spark that enflamed the Islamic revolution against Islam’s enemies throughout the world.” 21 After Zawahiri’s imprisonment and torture for charges associated with the Sadat assassination, he became disillusioned with the failure to defeat the “near enemy” and aimed his sights on serving in the Jihad in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion in 1979.

Zawahiri concluded that creating an Islamic Emirate in Egypt could only be achieved by destroying the “far enemy” (Western powers) first. 22 Zawahiri’s involvement and interaction with other Jihadists in the Soviet-Afghan War helped him build upon Qutb and other Jihadists’ theories for achieving an Islamic caliphate. 23 The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan became the unintentional catalyst that drew thousands of Jihadists, support personnel, and Salafi ideologists together in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Mujahedeen 24 fighting in Afghanistan were inspired by their success in guerrilla warfare against the powerful Red Army and began to openly discuss strategies that might bring about the overthrow of the governments within their own countries after they had defeated the Soviets. Zawahiri stated in his book, Knights Under The Prophet’s Banner, that the Afghan Soviet War “…gave young Muslim Mujahedeen-Arabs, Pakistanis, Turks, and Muslims from Central and East Asia a great opportunity to get acquainted with each other on the land of Afghan jihad through their comradeship-at-arms against the enemies of Islam.” “Mujahideen [sic] young men and jihadist movements came to know each other closely, exchanged expertise, and learned to understand their brothers’ [sic] problems.” 25 Like
Qutb, Zawahiri and other Jihadist leaders understood the importance of social cohesion and group solidarity to enlist Muslims to support and defend Afghanistan.

Zawahiri witnessed how untrained and uneducated Mujahedeen could rise up, unify, and fight against a superior conventional force, all the while being guided towards the true path of Islam by Salafists. He believed Afghanistan could become the “base” upon which to build the vanguard necessary to fight the global Jihad. By the mid-1990s, Zawahiri and several other al Qaida leaders focused their sights on destroying the last remaining superpower, the US. It is not surprising that he built upon the ideas of Ibn Khaldûn, Qutb, and the orator-political scientist, Vladimir Lenin, developing all three men’s social theories to design a strategy for al Qaida. Tjis detailed below in the 2008 Department of Defense Transnational Security Issues Report:

Zawahiri’s strategic thinking and understanding of asymmetrical warfare and revolutionary violence is heavily indebted to vanguardism [sic], a Leninist theory of revolution, which posits that a small, revolutionary elite uses violence to rouse the people to fight against the government. The inevitable government crackdown will further fuel popular discontent and increase support for the vanguard…”

[This method, Zawahiri wrote] was our means of raising the awareness of the Ummah (Islamic nation) and awakening it.

The exoneration: A Treatise Exonerating the Community of the Pen and the Sword Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, March 2008

Zawahiri offered a new strategy in order to accomplish the goal of recreating the Caliphate. Khalid Sheik Mohammed is generally credited with the operational planning for 9/11, but it was Zawahiri who was the strategic level planner of al Qaida’s first theater-level attacks: the Dar és Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi bombings on August 7, 1998. In regard to 9/11, “Osama bin-Laden may have given his blessings to the mission, subsidized it and provided the engineering analysis for it, but its strategic diabolic planning must have been conceived by the brilliant and methodical Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri.” Zawahiri understood that in order to build a
Caliphate, al Qaida had to remove the ruling regimes in the Muslim world, and to overthrow the ruling regimes in each Muslim country, they would first have to defeat the Western nations that supported them, especially the US and Great Britain, the “far enemy.”

In order to defeat the Western nations, al Qaida required a strategy that could defeat US military power first. This would require the help of the Muslim people around the globe and over a long period of time. Zawahiri and others within al Qaida’s senior leadership realized that the US had the ability to deploy and fund large numbers of well-trained and well-equipped forces for a protracted conflict. However, considering past experiences in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia, American financial and political will had its limits.28 Thus, al Qaida had to design a strategy that emphasized wearing down US political will over a prolonged period of time and exploiting the Muslim vanguard that would be created by the mere presence of US troops in Muslim lands. All that remained was the catalyst necessary to draw US forces into Afghanistan.

Kill With a Borrowed Sword: When you do not have the means to attack your enemy directly, then attack using the strength of another (in a situation where using one's own strength is not favorable). Trick an ally into attacking him, bribe an official to turn traitor, or use the enemy's own strength against him.

Sun Zi, The Art of War Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE)

We planned for this stage and prepared ourselves for it before the start of the US offensive. The real war has started now. These cities will be catastrophic for those who are now making them bases for attacking us.

Zawahiri interview with Al-Majallah Newspaper, Dec 16-22, 2001

V. Science, Zawahiri and Catalyst Warfare Strategy

The American political scientist, and authority on ancient Greek politics and literature, Richard Ned Lebow, wrote: “All the underlining structural systemic, and unit-culture factors favoring a certain kind of action and outcome might well be present in a given situation, but
absent a specific catalyst of action the outcome may still not occur.”29 “An anarchic interstate structure, a heavily militarized multi-polar state system, and a militaristic and aggressive unit culture all are important, but in themselves may not be enough to complete a causal analysis explaining major actions.”31 An understanding of science is required to design a catalyst.

Zawahiri’s writings on Jihad strategy make many references to the sciences. Zawahiri wrote “Scientific knowledge is neither Western or Eastern, but the property of mankind and it rotates among them in time and place.”32 “Jihad,” required a “scientific, confrontational rationale,”” 33 meaning that Zawahiri built his strategy on Jihad from supporting scientific evidence, reason, or logic. As an example, when talking about the plan to assassinate a US President, Zawahiri wrote a “daring plan” must be “based on careful reconnaissance and “scientific” analysis of the realistic information.” 34

In science, catalysis is the process of which the rate of a chemical reaction is either increased or decreased by means of a chemical substance known as a catalyst. Unlike other elements that participate in the chemical reaction, a catalyst is not consumed by the reaction itself. Catalysis is also defined as “something that causes activity between two or more persons or forces without itself being affected.”35 People, as well as chemicals, can be catalysts. Those catalysts that speed the reaction are called “positive catalysts” and those that slow down the reaction are called “negative catalysts” or “inhibitors.”36 Substances that enhance the activity of catalysts are called “promoters” and substances that deactivate catalysts are called “catalytic poisons.” Though one tends to think of catalysis as taking place only in a laboratory, as defined, it can take place anywhere, even the battlefield.
During the Soviet-Afghan War, Zawahiri had served alongside the tribes of Afghanistan and Pakistan, most notably the Pashtuns, from 1979 to 1989. He learned first hand about the Pashtun tribal system and therefore understood the role of social cohesion and group solidarity. He, more than any other al Qaida leader, had a better understanding of the Pashtuns “anarchic interstate structure,” which was contained within a “multi polar state system” (tribal) that was extremely “aggressive and militaristic” in its “unit culture.” Through his experience Zawahiri devised a workable strategy that, in its design contained catalytic promoters, the US and the Pashtuns. The catalyst for global Muslim action would be the 9/11 attacks, which would provoke the US to send its armed forces into Afghanistan among the Pashtun tribes, changing both the Pashtuns and the US in the process. Once US forces were inside Pashtun lands, their very presence would cause the Pashtun tribes to rally together to expel the invader. In doing so, the “positive catalyst,” the one that favors al Qaida, would be started.

Carl Conetta, in his article *Dislocating Alcyoneus*, writes, “Al Qaeda's terrorist violence is neither "nihilistic," as some have asserted, nor is it narrowly instrumental, instead, it is catalytic -- meaning that it aims to provoke a wider conflict and mobilize a larger constituency. As Osama bin Laden freely admits: "We are seeking to incite the Islamic nation to rise up to liberate its land and to conduct jihad for the sake of God." The US strategists’ lack of cultural understanding on this problem was highlighted by the quick decision to ally with the Northern Alliance (mostly Tajik) in 2001, isolating hundreds of Pashtun tribes and driving them into the Taliban-al Qaida camp against the US – Tajik force simply out of tribal alliance with other Pashtuns. This lack of cultural awareness continues to degrade the effectiveness of US military operations in the region today. As Dr. David Rapoport points out in *Terrorism: Critical Concepts In Political Science*:
September 11 was above all a provocation-albeit a provocation of gigantic proportions. Its purpose was to provoke a similarly gigantic repression of the Afghan civilian population [Pashtuns] and to build universal solidarity among Muslims in reaction to the victimization and suffering of their Afghan brothers. In this second act of the terrorists’ drama, the roles are reversed: the attacker becomes passive, and he himself is attacked, while the original victim of terrorism becomes the prime mover… “collateral damage”- the trap [could close] the third act, that of solidarity [among the Pashtuns]…. The terrorist actor would then have attempted to become the “catalyst” of a mass movement.

Figure 1. Catalyst Strategy:

In recent battles in Afghanistan (March 2010), US forces have unintentionally contributed to the perceived repression of Afghan civilian populations, with the unfortunate deaths of twenty-seven Afghan civilians in Uruzgan and Dai Kondi Provinces and another twenty-eight civilians reported killed in “Operation Moshtarak” in Marjah. Both cases demonstrate the difficulty in countering the catalyst strategy by using conventional approaches. The unintended outcome of large conventional operations are: greater probability of civilian casualties, restrictive rules of engagement, increased risks, and the inability to promote a positive counter-insurgency message to the people.

Al Qaeda’s end, the achievement of a new Islamic Caliphate, is slowly being achieved, one village at a time, through al Qaeda’s ways, the “Far Enemy” (US) occupying Afghan villages where the probability of Afghan deaths increase with the increase of conventional US forces and their lack of cultural understanding. The perception of US forces fighting the “Afghan people”
create the means, inspired Afghans (mostly Pashtuns) who are recruited, radicalized, trained, and employed against the US military, thereby creating Zawahiri’s “Vanguard.”

David Kilcullen in The Accidental Guerrilla rightly addresses al Qaida’s ways; local people who are “accidentally” co-opted into joining the insurgency. Critical thinkers who are focused on al Qaida’s “end” could argue Pashtun tribesmen (the means) are not accidental at all. Instead, they are “the means” planned by an intelligent adversary to achieve his “end.” “When you do not have the means to attack your enemy directly, then attack using the strength of another,” or in the author’s words, “when you don’t have an army, build one out of the Pashtuns you know and want to recruit.” Al Qaida understands “Badal” (revenge killings) and its role in Pashtun culture and society and they are using with amazing skill towards their end.

VI. US and al Qaida Strategic Mistakes

In 2001, al Qaida planned to fight a large conventional army and not the small, unconventional force they encountered. Therefore, their catalyst strategy was ineffective, contributing to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of uncommitted Pashtun tribes and the disorganization of al Qaida leadership and resulted in their quick retreat into Pakistan safe areas. It became extremely difficult for al Qaida to coordinate their efforts against a force that was small in number, mounted on mules, and able to drop laser-guided munitions from unseen aircraft. Figure 2. Al Qaida designed the right plan, but was presented with the wrong enemy. The Soviet Army was the last experience al Qaida leadership (formerly Mujahedeen) had in fighting a conventional force. The Soviet Army acted predictably and became wedded to the primitive road network and built up areas, attacking slowly and methodically from two main routes in the northern part of the country. Figure 3.
Figure 2 - US Invasion of Afghanistan Oct 2001

Because US strategists did not identify al Qaida’s end, means and ways, they lost the opportunity to seize the initiative in Afghanistan, compounding the mistake by quickly shifting priority to Iraq. This gave al Qaida two enormous strategic gains: the ability to regroup and rebuild their splintered command and control structure and more devastating, geographically expanding al Qaida’s reach, through an unintended catalyst, one country away from their “geographical” objectives, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Simply stated, al Qaida is not finished in Iraq.
and will re-emerge when the time is right. From a geo-strategic standpoint, the US Military had moved the battlefield closer to al Qaida’s original objectives as outlined in the first Fatwa,

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [Jerusalem] and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip.

Osama Bin Laden’s Fatwa - 1998

Fortunately for the US, al Qaida’s command and control, pushed into the mountains of Pakistan, had been severely degraded and proved unable to move the right leaders into the right places effectively. However, with American attention centered on Iraq, al Qaida refocused their operations on social cohesion, group solidarity, and tribalism, this time in an arena that they
knew much better and was logistically easier to support. The US is now witnessing the gradual movement of al Qaida towards this most important geographic center evidenced by recent al Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula operations in Yemen.  

VII. Future Catalysts and Counter Strategy

Similar to the diverse properties of the elements found in the periodic table, cultures throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia make up a vast array of heterogeneous social groups with their own religious backgrounds and historical narratives. Strategists have to recognize that cultures almost always react differently to a certain catalyst depending on their individual “properties,” such as their social structure, history, identity, language, etc. Yet, because their members comprise practically every Muslim group in the world, al Qaida has an enormous advantage over the US. They understand the intricacies of these cultural dynamics and how to apply the right catalyst with the right elements in order to get the desired reaction or “product.”

US strategists must become informed through the study of social science and receive guidance from the diverse cultures that live in the areas in which they operate. They must consider physical and economic environments, social and political structures, beliefs and symbols. Using this approach, strategists can examine those countries that have the key elements already present that make them vulnerable to a catalytic event and may be able to more accurately predict reactions that will occur. Through these models, strategists can work towards finding those catalytic poisons that would diminish the enemy’s intended reaction or desired endstate. When regions are found to contain the necessary elements that favor a positive catalyst for the enemy, a closer analysis must occur.
The countries ripest for future catalysts today are: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Yemen. All three countries contain “solidarity groups,” “ethnic divisions” and a history of “tribalism.” These combined with the geographic and ethnographic essentials (bases, sanctuaries in remote mountain regions, separate concentrated groups of isolated cultures) are all outside the reach of government influence. They all have a history of civil war within or bordering their own countries, highlighted by communal conflicts that are still fresh in the memories of the various ethnic groups and tribes. They have faced-off against conventional forces that are backed by “apostate” governments that stand against “traditional Islamic social norms,” structures, and tribal law. The sociological, economical, and political seeds are only lacking the right catalyst to see their people spontaneously arise and form into a vanguard. Al Qaida also shares a history with the various tribes and ethnicities from these three countries and has fought along side them against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Finally, al Qaida currently uses black market economies in all three countries to assist it in funding its war in Afghanistan, funneling money, weapons, drugs, and fighters into the regions that they are trying to influence.

VIII. Conclusion

Al Qaida has most certainly planned for more catalyst reactions to overwhelm the US. Yearly, al Qaida splinter groups in different regions of the world are expanding outward, confident of victory against the far enemy, the US. Al Qaida is a capable organization that has crafted a strategy that, if not countered, will alter the character of the Muslim world in the near future. In order to defeat catalyst warfare the US must understand the social science of war. In this fashion, the US can begin to design strategies that counter al Qaida’s catalysts, ultimately defeating it and its end.
Notes

3 Ibid., 58.
4 Ibid., 59.

6 The term used by Jihadists to refer to the US and Western allies as opposed to “Near Enemy,” used to describe local Muslim regimes that oppose Islamic Fundamentalism., Fawaz A. Gerges, uses the term in his book The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.
7 Laura Mansfield, His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri, (Old Tappan: TLG Publications, 2006), 255.
8 Marvin E. Gettleman, Stuart Schaar, The Middle East and Islamic World Reader (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 325.
9 Bin Laden is generally cited in the World Islamic Front Against Jews and Crusaders statement however, Lawrence Wright in The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Div., Random House, 2006), lists Zawahiri as the co-author and states that Zawahiri is considered the author (ergo he is the intellectual behind AQ). A reproduction of the text on the Federation of American Scientists website lists multiple authors: http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm
11 Sean S. Costigan and David Gold, Terrornomics (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), 197.
14 Sharia: Forming the basis of moral and social wellbeing. Derived from the Quran and Hadith, both collectively known as Sharia, the “Islamic Way”. Michael D. Coogan, The Illustrated Guide to World Religions (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110.
20 Ibid.
22 Reza Aslan, How to win a Cosmic War God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror: (New York: Random House 2009), 117.
25 Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri, as translated by Laura Mansfield, His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri (US: TLG Publications 2006), 38.


34 Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, as translated by Laura Mansfield, His Own Words: Translation and Analysis of the Writings of Dr. Ayman Al Zawahiri, (US: TLG Publications 2006), 84.


36 Ibid

37 Ibid

38 Nihilistic: Nihilism – rejecting all philosophical or ethical principles. The doctrine or program of a 19th Century and early 20th Century Russian revolutionary group which rejected all forms of tradition and authoritarianism in politics, religion, morals and art. The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language, Encyclopedic Edition., 678.

39 Carl Conetta, Dislocating Alcyoneus, Project on Defense Alternatives Briefing Memo # 23, (25 June, 2002)

40 Moshtarak is a Dari word for working together – “joint.” Marjah, a predominantly Pashtun area does not use the word Moshtarak in their vocabulary. Tajiks, the historical enemies of the Pashtuns, use Moshtarak in their vocabulary.

41 Stefan H. Verstappen, The Thirty-Six Strategies of Ancient China (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, Inc. 1999), 15.


44 Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber, Operational Culture for the Warfighter, Principles and Applications (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press 2008), 25.


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