

## CHAPTER 6

# The Policy Challenge for the Trump Administration

President John F. Kennedy once used a metaphor of an aircraft carrier to describe the U.S. government—a mammoth creature that only with difficulty and time can be moved into a very different direction. Its inertia is enormous. Almost every subject in the president's in-box, such as counterterrorism, involves a broad range of government responsibilities and authorities, all subject to the slowness of obtaining analysis, opinions, and decisions from different offices and agencies.

For years, the dominant issue in U.S. foreign policy was the Cold War. After it ended, the debate shifted to how America would interact with other countries in a globalizing world. In recent years, the liberal world order that has held sway over international affairs for the past seven decades has been fragmenting under the pressure of systemic economic stresses, growing tribalism and nationalism, and a general loss of confidence in established international and national institutions.

The newly elected Trump administration faced the question that all new administrations face, whether it wished to continue to uphold this relatively liberal order, which had helped to maintain a comparatively stable international system in the face of challenges from regional powers and other potential threats, or whether it will pursue a different role for the United States than as a guarantor of the system it helped to found and sustain.

The end of the Cold War obviously put a new light on this choice and the attack on 9/11 added a significant new complexity.

After 9/11 and up to the present, the terrorist challenge moved to the forefront of U.S. security concerns. There are both strategic and tactical considerations involved. At the strategic level, the primary question is whether contemporary terrorism with radical Islamic underpinnings is an existential threat or only one of the bundles of

problems that face the United States. Even if not initially developed and fully articulated, this is eventually a necessary strategic judgment that inevitably affects U.S. foreign policy in today's world.

It is a key determinant of military policy, deployment, and tactics. International coordination, with allies, friends, and even others, must take account of the priority given to the various terrorism threats. The persistent question about if and when and how we should use military force around the world has taken on new complexity. Operational questions such as intelligence sharing, sanctions policy, and how to support friendly foreign forces will be formed with the terrorist challenge in mind in addition to more traditional considerations. And this judgment is challenge. The question about if and when and how we should military force and other tools is a key determinant for dealing with terrorist attacks and the longer-term allocation of resources and the budget.

As a result of the determination of the Bush administration following the attack on 9/11, the United States embarked on high-priority political and military involvement in the Middle East, encapsulated in the Global War on Terror. The introduction of large U.S. armies in Afghanistan and Iraq and prolonged occupation marked an escalation of U.S. policy in the area and reordering of U.S. global policy. The Bush administration moderated this view and pulled back in its last years, and the Obama administration consciously attempted to dial down the gravity of the threat and the resulting military involvement. Hence, the shift from "boots on the ground" to training local government and allied forces and also to special operations and drones.

The view of the terrorist challenge also influenced broader international relations as the US Government in 2011 organized a global alliance to deal with the threat, later renamed the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Other countries joined us in the military effort on the ground, and a larger number expanded bilateral political and especially intelligence cooperation. Terrorism as a threat and counterterrorism as policy and operations moved up the priority scale for many countries, led by the United States.

This process can be seen clearly in the growth path for counterterrorism policy and programs and the effect on budgets. Civilian department budgets, including the new Department of Homeland Affairs but especially the intelligence organizations like the CIA and the FBI, were dramatically expanded. As of August 2016, the United States had already appropriated, spent, or taken on obligations to spend more than \$3.6 trillion in current dollars on the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria and on Homeland Security (2001 through fiscal year 2016). For the fiscal year 2017 budget sent to Congress, the Obama administration proposed \$65 billion for the Defense and State Department spending, and \$37 billion for DHS.

Nevertheless, those expenses were dwarfed by the costs of the military operations in the Middle East. The Defense Department's Overseas Contingency budget, that is annual operating expenses for Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen, was approximately \$90 billion. That figure is "over budget," or additional, to DoD's formal annual budget of \$560 billion, which finances the whole DoD establishment, much of which is now CT oriented.

The arrival of the Trump administration appeared to coincide with possible turning points in the long military campaign against ISIS. Long-standing air and ground operations using local forces against ISIS began to bear fruit and by mid-year the Islamic Caliphate had lost almost all its territory as well as its "capital city" of Raqqa in Syria and Mosul, Iraq's second largest city.

Nevertheless, many believe U.S. policy in Syria has failed, and there is widespread difference of opinion whether the Trump administration—or any administration—can make things better. Some of the options officials and other are considering might well make things worse. ISIS is likely to continue to exist in one form or another. As an article in *Foreign Policy* magazine suggested:

The United States will soon reach a crossroads in its struggle against terrorism. The international coalition fighting the Islamic State (also known as ISIS) has driven the group out of much of the territory it once held and, sooner or later, will militarily defeat it by destroying its core in Iraq and Syria. But military victory over ISIS will not end the global war on terrorism that the United States has waged since 9/11. Some of ISIS' provinces may outlive its core. Remnants of the caliphate may morph into an insurgency. Al Qaeda and its affiliates will still pose a threat. Moreover, the conditions that breed jihadist organizations will likely persist across the greater Middle East. So the United States must decide what strategy to pursue in the next stage of the war on terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

Foreign policy in general and terrorism in particular were mentioned in the 2016 presidential campaign but not with much in the way of specifics. During the presidential campaign, candidate Donald Trump called for sweeping changes in U.S. counterterrorism strategy and promised to "defeat the ideology of radical Islamic terrorism."

For some time before the campaign, there had been a dispute over terminology. From the beginning of his presidential campaign,

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<sup>1</sup> Feaver, Peter D. and Brands, Hal. *Trump and Terrorism*. Foreign Affairs, March-April, 2017. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2017-02-13/trump-and-terrorism> (accessed May 8, 2017).

Mr. Trump repeatedly warned about “a major threat from radical Islamic terrorism.” The question about how to identify the threat already had become a controversial issue in itself, with mainly conservative and vocally strong anti-Muslim critics arguing that the appropriate term was “radical Islamic terrorism” and implying that the Obama administration was weak or worse for not using it. The Obama administration used the much less specific term “violent extremism” out of concern that the radical Islamic phrase alienated millions of moderate peaceful Muslims.

In his “America First” inaugural speech, President Trump promised to “unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.” An early action taken by the Trump administration was to implement the campaign promise to rename the terrorists as “radical Islamic terrorists,” thereby replacing more general Obama administration terminology. This move, however, created a bit of confusion as the new National Security Advisor, General H.R. McMaster, was widely reported to have instructed the NSC staff that the term “radical Islamic terrorism” was not helpful and should not be used. However, only a few days later, President Trump deliberately used the term in public. Authoritative guidance on this question remained lacking, and the matter appeared to recede into the background as the days passed.

The idea that the conflict with “radical Islamic terrorism” is all-consuming and existential; the willingness to cut transactional deals with any actor with whom the United States shares even the most passing interests; the aspiration to get other countries to do more in the world, including Russia, all were concepts in candidate Trump’s comments on the subject.

As the previously quoted *Foreign Affairs* article put it:

He faces a broad range of choices. At one extreme, Washington could abandon its military commitments in the greater Middle East on the assumption that it is U.S. interference that provokes terrorism in the first place. At the other, it could adopt a heavy-footprint surge strategy that would involve using overwhelming military force to destroy globally capable terrorist organizations and attempt to politically transform the societies that produce them.<sup>2</sup>

“Fighting political Islam” is a theme that could imply making a significant change. There are a number of people, inside and outside the government, who favor a more aggressive approach to

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

political Islam. Even here, however, Trump's response may differentiate between the foreign policy side, where so far there has been little in the way of clear ideas of what to do, and domestically, where the White House issued executive orders to impose much greater barriers for Muslim immigrants and refugees and even visitors from some Muslim countries.

Obviously there is a continuum between the three broad policy options: slimming down the Obama legacy, strengthening it in various and more robust ways, or devising and implementing radical new programs.

However, whether or not the Trump administration views terrorism as an existential threat in itself, it has become clear that it cannot be separated from other foreign policy concerns. The relationships with Russia and China—preceded by comments by candidate Trump—quickly became priority matters in themselves and were joined by North Korea and its nuclear activities. The complicated relationship with Iran continues. More pertinently these relationships became involved with counterterrorism policy in the Middle East, especially following a Syrian government poison gas attack in April 2016, followed by the launching of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles against a Syrian air force base.

Earlier, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on February 16, 2017:

Terrorism emanating from the Middle East and North Africa is a direct and immediate threat to Europe and to us all. [...] We recognize as well that the imposition of stability has taken on new forms that we must now address, for example, in this cyber domain. In response to these threats, NATO is reinforcing deterrence and defense, and adapting to more directly address terrorist threats along our southern flank from the Mediterranean to Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

Gradual or evolutionary change in CT policy has been the norm to date in the four decades of CT effort. Policy evolved in the last years of the Bush administration and the Obama administration, demonstrating a fair degree of continuity. Some programs were expanded or intensified, but the only major change was the withdrawal—over a period of years—of the large American military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, although significant forces from Iraq and air, remained

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<sup>3</sup> Defense Department. *Press Conference by Secretary Jim Mattis*. NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, February 16, 2017. <https://www.defense.gov/DesktopModules/ArticleCS/Print.aspx?PortalId=1&ModuleId=1144&Article=1085679> (accessed May 8, 2017).



FIGURE 6.1 April 12, 2017: President Donald J. Trump and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg hold a news conference following meetings at the White House. (Courtesy of Department of Defense, NATO.)

engaged in the region. President Trump reversed the trend somewhat in the summer of 2017 by sending several thousand more troops into Afghanistan to provide support and training for the Afghan Army, which has been losing men and ground to the Taliban.

As noted earlier, candidate and now President Trump has promised a more aggressive approach, to win the war against Islamic terrorism, to defeat—indeed smash—ISIS and the other movements (Figure 6.1). The details on how he intends to do this, not surprisingly, were not immediately available as the administration took office. However, there were three general areas identified where significant change was promised:

1. Identification and definition of the threat
2. Immigration and border policy
3. Role of the military

## THE EARLY DAYS—STRATEGIC AND RHETORICAL

Upon assuming office President Trump clearly now “owned the problem” and quickly called for a new plan from his military advisors, while continuing for the moment with the range of policies and programs

he inherited from Obama, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. With regard specifically to ISIS, President Trump issued a memorandum on January 28, 2017, outlining an aggressive plan:<sup>4</sup>

Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISIS, is not the only threat from radical Islamic terrorism that the United States faces, but it is among the most vicious and aggressive. [...] If ISIS is left in power, the threat that it poses will only grow. We know it has attempted to develop chemical weapons capability. It continues to radicalize our own citizens, and its attacks against our allies and partners continue to mount. The United States must take decisive action to defeat ISIS.

1. Development of a new plan to defeat ISIS (the Plan) shall commence immediately.
2. The Plan shall include:
  - a. a comprehensive strategy and plans for the defeat of ISIS;
  - b. recommended changes to any United States rules of engagement and other United States policy restrictions that exceed the requirements of international law regarding the use of force against ISIS;
  - c. public diplomacy, information operations, and cyber strategies to isolate and delegitimize ISIS and its radical Islamist ideology;
  - d. identification of new coalition partners in the fight against ISIS and policies to empower coalition partners to fight ISIS and its affiliates;
  - e. mechanisms to cut off or seize ISIS's financial support, including financial transfers, money laundering, oil revenue, human trafficking, sales of looted art and historical artifacts, and other revenue sources; and
  - f. a detailed strategy to robustly fund the Plan.

With regard to border and immigration matters, the administration moved quickly in a matter of days after the inauguration to issue an executive order closing down entry into the United States from seven Middle Eastern countries. This attempt ran into serious judicial and practical problems, was blocked in courts, and had to be withdrawn. It was replaced within a month by a revised version, but the process remained mired in judicial review, opposition, and bureaucratic complexities. The message here was that the Trump administration does intend to strengthen entry procedures as part of its CT program but will have to engage with the courts and Congress to achieve much change, much less a complete

<sup>4</sup> The White House. *Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*. January 28, 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/28/plan-defeat-islamic-state-iraq> (accessed May 8, 2017).

reversal of existing policy. The campaign promise to “build a wall on the Mexican border” was repeatedly expressed as a policy objective but little movement was noted and key members of Congress declined to approve the necessary funding in the Trump administration’s first budget request.

The administration’s intentions were expressed by DHS Secretary John F. Kelly for a House Committee on Homeland Security on February 7, 2017<sup>5</sup>:

Within DHS and our Federal, State, local, and international partners, we must expand our vetting of those seeking to enter our country—particularly of those individuals from high-risk countries—including refugees. We currently lack a comprehensive strategy with uniform screening standards to prevent terrorists from entering the country. Unfortunately, our country has recently admitted some foreign nationals without an adequate understanding of their allegiances and intentions.

Others, including officials in the Obama administration who worked on the issue, however, said the screening of refugees takes up to 2 years, is very rigorous, and that no attacks had been conducted by immigrants from the banned countries.

Later, on April 20, Secretary Kelly gave a speech in which he painted a situation of serious, continuing threat, claiming that the United States is as vulnerable to an attack today as it was the morning of September 11, 2001. He said information in the press about national security is misleading or flat-out wrong, offering a false sense of security.<sup>6</sup>

The Trump administration will be making its own judgments about the desired long-term role of the military in its CT policy. However, indications were contained in President Trump’s initial budget proposals released on March 16, 2017, which called for a \$54 billion increase in the DoD budget—bringing it to \$639 billion. Congress was poised to add even more. But this represents still an important increase in the budget for Homeland Security, much of it destined for border security.

When combined with a drastic cut of one-third in State Department funds for security and economic assistance, the shift in emphasis toward a more “hard power” approach to the challenge of terrorism appears

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<sup>5</sup> DHS Secretary John F. Kelly. *Ending the Crisis: America’s Borders and the Path to Security*. Written testimony to the House Committee on Homeland Security. February 7, 2017. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/02/07/written-testimony-dhs-secretary-john-f-kelly-house-committee-homeland-security> (accessed May 8, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> DHS Secretary John F. Kelly. *Home and Away: DHS and the Threats to America*. Remarks delivered at George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security, Washington, DC. April 18, 2017. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/04/18/home-and-away-dhs-and-threats-america>. Also see *New York Times*, April 21, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/21/opinion/fearmongering-at-homeland-security> (accessed May 8, 2017).

likely. An expanded role for the military in counterterrorism was a reflection of the Trump administration's general intention to prioritize the role of the military in U.S. foreign policy in general.

Reflecting this perspective but using a platform created by previous administrations, the Trump administration convoked the Global Coalition Working to Defeat ISIS on March 22–23, 2017.<sup>7</sup> At the conference, the Trump administration reiterated its intended focus on defeating the Islamic State as its top priority at the 2-day strategy session. Initiated during the Obama administration, the 67 nation alliance was focused on military programs and created a network of subsidiary working groups. It was never very formal, however, and countries participated with greatly varying degrees of enthusiasm, although the number of participants grew.

The Trump administration used the conference to make one specific addition to the U.S. position: that other countries will be expected to contribute more to stabilize Iraq and Syria once the militants are expelled. (In addition to this coalition, the Obama administration created the Global Anti-Terrorist Coalition of 21 nations, plus the European Union, which is focused more on multilateral antiterrorism cooperation. It also has a system of committees and working groups that meet periodically.)

This position was emphasized by Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson at the NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on March 31, 2017:

On fighting terrorism, NATO can and should do more. Fighting terrorism is the top national security priority for the United States, as it should be for all of us.<sup>8</sup>

## THE FIRST YEAR—TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL

While the Department of Defense and presumably other agencies work to prepare a new strategic plan and the White House to officially promulgate it, the Trump White House began to expand the delegation of authority to the Pentagon, especially to the regional combatant commanders, to approve antiterrorist operations in order to step up the war on the so-called Islamic State. In his final days in office, President Obama sought to lock in procedures and rules governing targeted killings and drone strikes.

<sup>7</sup> *The Global Coalition against Daesh*. <http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/mission-en/> (accessed May 8, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> State Department. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. *Remarks at NATO Ministerial Meeting*, Brussels, Belgium, March 31, 2017. <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/03/269339.htm> (accessed May 8, 2017).

Media reports in mid-March stated that President Trump was pushing to roll back some of these checks. Specifically, the objective is to make it easier for the Pentagon to launch counterterrorism strikes anywhere in the world by lowering the threshold on acceptance of civilian casualties and by authorizing designated military commanders to conduct such attacks without the need to obtain White House or NSC approval.

A dramatic product of this new policy was the dropping of the so-called ‘Mother of All Bombs’ in Afghanistan on April 13, 2017. The 21,600-pound bomb was dropped on an ISIS network of caves and tunnels in the eastern province of Afghanistan. The bomb is the largest nonnuclear bomb in the U.S. arsenal, but the decision to use it at this time and place was a tactical decision that, according to press reports, no longer required White House authorization—as had been the situation in the Obama administration—in accordance with the new Trump administration guidelines for military action.

In addition, expanded support for the U.S. military in Yemen and Somalia was announced. Whether these changes represent a modification in tactics rather than in strategy is yet to be made clear. As described in *Foreign Policy* magazine, President Trump signed off on “a new front:”

... President Trump has signed off on a Pentagon proposal to allow the head of the U.S. Africa Command to launch an offensive campaign against the al-Shabab militant group in Somalia, U.S. officials said on Thursday, clearing the way for more airstrikes, and potentially a more active presence of U.S. Special Operations Forces on the ground.

“It remains to be seen how active American forces will be in Somalia, where dozens of U.S. commandos already operate,” *Foreign Policy Magazine’s* Paul McLeary reported. But the order fits with an increasingly forward-leaning posture in Yemen, where Trump also recently signed an order allowing for more U.S. military action. Earlier, Africa Command head Gen. Thomas Waldhauser said, “I think the combatant commanders, myself included, are more than capable of making judgments and determinations on some of these targets.” Giving his commanders the ability to launch offensive strikes would allow them “to prosecute targets in a more rapid fashion.”<sup>9</sup>

In a parallel move to the granting of expanded operational authority to the military, President Donald Trump in mid-March, according to a news report, granted the CIA authority to conduct lethal drone strikes, rolling back the limits his predecessor Barack Obama imposed on the

<sup>9</sup> McLeary, Paul. Trump’s promises to defeat ISIS Quickly Run into Syria Buzzsaw. *Foreign Policy*, March 3, 2017. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/03/trumps-promises-to-defeat-isis-quickly-run-into-syria-buzzsaw-russia-terrorism/> (accessed May 8, 2017).

spy agency's paramilitary operations. This decision strengthens trends in CIA and other intelligence operations. According to press reports in September, the CIA was seeking to loosen restrictions on using drone strikes in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup>

And as part of the bigger picture, the Trump administration's senior military advisors were reportedly proposing to dismantle key Obama-era limits on drone strikes and commando raids outside conventional battlefields. The proposed changes were described as laying the groundwork for possible counterterrorism missions in countries where Islamic militants are active but the United States has not previously tried to kill or capture them.<sup>11</sup>

Just as the U.S. military had shifted its strategy from "boots on the ground" to target-specific kills, the U.S. intelligence community, through both SOF raids and drone strikes, seems to have done likewise. Specifically, traditional resources once used to recruit and penetrate terrorist organizations, called "humint," seem to have been reduced, while targeting and drone killing have been significantly bolstered. As with the military, this seems to indicate some confusion regarding whether certain programs are tactical or strategic in regard to the terrorist target.

Traditional humint collection techniques would emphasize development and recruitment of individuals involved in terrorist organizations, usually in the support apparatus rather than front-line cadre. These individuals would be used to identify long-term planning, intentions, and funding and support channels. When intelligence agencies gain knowledge of the structural details of an organization, that organization becomes vulnerable and more susceptible to actions to destroy its capabilities to function effectively. That is a strategic use of human intelligence. Killing "leadership" is a tactical approach, as replacements can emerge. However, the structure of a terrorist organization is one of a kind and its destruction is strategic.

Other programs and questions will certainly surface as the Trump administration draws up and promulgates its CT policy. Two major areas are alliance arrangements and the Countering Violent Extremism program.

Since initiated in the Bush administration, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is not a soft alternative to counterterrorism but an essential toolkit to complement federal and state efforts to prevent

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<sup>10</sup> Schmitt, Eric and Rosenthal, Matthew. C.I.A. Wants Authority to Conduct Drone Strikes in Afghanistan for the First Time. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/15/us/politics/cia-drone-strike-authority-afghanistan.html> (accessed September 16, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Savage, Charles and Schmitt, Eric. Trump Likely to Ease Limits on Terror War: Broader Use of Drones and Comandos. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/21/us/politics/trump-drone-strikes-commando-raids-rules.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-> (accessed September 22, 2016).

radicalization of individuals and their possible resulting violence. The CVE approach sees communities as the first line of defense against violent extremism; thus enabling and incentivizing them to become more active in the CVE space is in the local and national interest, as well as foreign allies' best interest. Results, not surprisingly, are hard to quantify and the Trump administration began a formal review in early March.

Similar evolutionary behavior was noted with respect to sanctions when on February 3, 2017, the Treasury Department said it was applying sanctions on 25 individuals and companies connected to Iran's mission program and those providing support to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Quds force as punishment for the country's launch of a ballistic missile.<sup>12</sup>

### LOOKING AHEAD

However, whether terrorism is existential or "merely" serious, major problems of this magnitude and complexity are rarely, if ever, completely resolved or "solved." What governments generally do is manage them with varying degrees of success. Even the more concrete challenge of the USSR took 45 years to resolve, and the ongoing "Drug War" is now in



FIGURE 6.2 January 27, 2017: President Donald J. Trump swears in retired Marine Corps general James Mattis as the 26th Secretary of Defense during a ceremony in the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon. (Courtesy of Department of Defense/Air Force Staff Sgt. Jette Carr.)

<sup>12</sup> Liptak, Kevin. *Treasury slaps sanctions on Iran after ballistic missile launch*. CNN. February 3, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/03/politics/treasury-department-announcing-sanctions-against-iran-friday-morning/> (accessed May 8, 2017).

the its 30th year with absolutely no sign of “victory.” It is at least possible that President Trump could end up preserving, or being forced by circumstances to preserve, major parts of the Obama approach, at least when it comes to using military force.

The outlines of the probable counterterrorism strategy under U.S. President Donald Trump have emerged. Judging from initial actions and statements—with due caution for rhetoric—a more intense campaign against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups could develop but the core of Washington’s strategy, relying on local forces to do the brunt of the fighting, will likely remain unchanged. Early in the administration, on Monday, February 27, 2017, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis (Figure 6.2) briefed White House strategists on his 30-day strategic review of the fight against terrorism and signaled this approach. Based on Pentagon statements and leaked information, the options he outlined represent more an intensification of current efforts rather than a seismic shift in strategy. U.S. policy in Syria appears to be basically the same as under the Obama administration, although perhaps with more troops—focus on fighting ISIS while keeping Assad’s Syrian regime at a distance and warily watching Iran and Syria. However, details had not been released as of the administration’s first months and press leaks and President Trump’s statements later in the year indicated that the White House wanted to take a more aggressive stance against Iran, especially regarding what President Trump considered a flawed nuclear treaty.<sup>13</sup>

The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, of any new president in fact, raises a number of critically important issues about the future of U.S. government counterterrorism policy. Among these are hotly contested aspects of national security law, including the extent of government surveillance and secrecy, the use of drones for targeted killings, the detention and interrogation of suspected terrorists, immigration and refugee policies, and the deployment of U.S. forces in various roles across the Middle East. The stakes could not be higher: in the balance hang national security, democratic accountability, the rule of law, civil liberties, and the very nature of the republic.

There are a number of general “lessons learned” for fighting terrorism that are accepted by almost all counterterrorism practitioners and observers. These include the need for continuing strengthening international cooperation, intelligence gathering and sharing (both domestically and internationally), and continued use and refinement of the practical measures tool kit, such as the Antiterrorism

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<sup>13</sup> DeYoung, Kevin. *Anti-ISIS strategy looks like Obama’s*. Washington Post. June 29, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-plan-to-defeat-isis-looks-very-much-like-obamas-approach/2017/06/28/d43aa1b6-5c30-11e7-a9f6-7c3296387341\\_story.html?hpid=hp\\_rhp-top-table-main\\_ussyria-735pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-plan-to-defeat-isis-looks-very-much-like-obamas-approach/2017/06/28/d43aa1b6-5c30-11e7-a9f6-7c3296387341_story.html?hpid=hp_rhp-top-table-main_ussyria-735pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory) (accessed May 8, 2017).

Assistance Program to help train foreign civilian law enforcement officials and domestic training programs for U.S. law enforcement. CVE outreach to local communities, especially Muslim communities, without alienating them by harsh rhetoric, was widely accepted as a necessary element of CT policy.

Other elements include Countering Terrorism Financing efforts, along with continuing improvement of aviation security equipment and procedures, maintaining export control and other sanctions, and strengthening immigration and visa entry programs. The general agreement on these programs within the executive branch, Congress, and our allies serves as the benchmark for existing policy responses and therefore the operational starting line for the Trump Administration.

However, the Trump administration assumed office with strong views about the terrorist challenge expressed during the presidential campaign but without a counterterrorism program in hand. There were two general theses: that Islamic terrorism must be absolutely defeated and that the Obama administration policy and programs have been insufficient. Since the inauguration some changes have been announced and some have been implemented, notably with respect to the activism of the military. Presumably more will be announced over time and eventually a coherent strategy will emerge—the Trump CT doctrine. As the Trump administration CT policy emerges, the old saying will apply, “God is in the details.”

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