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The RAND Corporation: Institutional Evolution, Policy Influence and the Securitization of Knowledge in Post-9/11 America

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The RAND Corporation: Institutional Evolution, Policy Influence and the Securitization of Knowledge in Post-9/11 America

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Abstract

This article examines the RAND Corporation's institutional evolution from its origins as a post-World War II military research project to its transformation into one of the most influential policy think tanks in American history. Tracing RAND's development through the Cold War era of nuclear deterrence and systems analysis to its post-September 11 role as a central node in the American counterterrorism establishment, the article analyses how the organization's institutional structure, funding mechanisms, and proximity to power have shaped the production of knowledge about the Muslim world. The article argues that RAND's operation of Federally Funded Research and Development Centres (FFRDCs), its reliance on government contracts, and the revolving door between RAND and government service have created structural incentives that privilege securitized framings of Islam over nuanced understanding. The 2004 report "The Muslim World After 9/11" is examined as a case study in how institutional constraints and client relationships shape policy analysis. The article concludes that understanding RAND's institutional positionality is essential for critically evaluating its research products and their influence on Western policy toward Muslim societies. This analysis contributes to broader scholarly discussions about the relationship between knowledge production, state power, and the securitization of religious identity in the post-9/11 era.

Keywords: *RAND Corporation, Think Tanks, Securitization, Policy Influence, Post-9/11, Islam, Knowledge Production, Military-Intellectual Complex.*

1. Introduction

The RAND Corporation occupies a unique and influential position at the intersection of scientific expertise, military planning, and policy formulation in the United States. Since its founding in 1948, RAND has shaped American strategic thinking across multiple domains, from nuclear deterrence and systems analysis to counterterrorism and Middle East policy. The organization's institutional evolution from a modest research project born out of post-World War II military anxieties to one of the most influential policy think tanks in American history demonstrates the profound and lasting relationship between knowledge production and state power.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, represented a watershed moment for RAND's institutional role and intellectual orientation. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, RAND emerged as one of the most influential voices in shaping the U.S.

government's understanding of terrorism and appropriate policy responses. The organization's longstanding expertise in security studies, combined with its institutional proximity to policymakers and its capacity to produce timely, policy-relevant research, positioned RAND as an indispensable advisor to government officials at every level. Among RAND's most significant post-9/11 contributions was the 2004 report "The Muslim World After 9/11," a 564-page study commissioned by the United States Air Force that represents one of the most ambitious attempts by a Western strategic institution to map the religious, political, and social terrain of global Islam.

This article examines RAND's institutional evolution and policy influence, arguing that the organization's structural position as a non-profit corporation serving government clients while maintaining claims to intellectual independence has generated persistent tensions that shape its research products. The article analyses how RAND's funding structure, its operation of Federally Funded Research and Development Centres (FFRDCs), and the revolving door between RAND and government service have created incentives for securitized framings of Islam that privilege military and intelligence solutions over political, economic, and educational approaches. Understanding RAND's institutional positionality, the article contends, is essential for critically evaluating its research products and their influence on Western policy toward Muslim societies.

2. The Origins and Evolution of RAND Corporation

2.1 The Post-War Military-Intellectual Complex

The RAND Corporation emerged from the unique historical confluence of military necessity, scientific mobilization, and institutional innovation that characterized the conclusion of World War II. As the Allied victory in 1945 brought an end to the most destructive conflict in human history, American military leaders confronted a paradoxical challenge: how to preserve the unprecedented scientific and intellectual capabilities that had contributed so decisively to victory while avoiding a return to the peacetime neglect that had characterized the interwar period. The Manhattan Project, which had produced the atomic bomb, demonstrated that the systematic application of scientific talent to military problems could produce revolutionary results, and military officials were determined to institutionalize this capacity on a permanent basis.

The immediate impetus for the creation of what would become RAND occurred in September 1945, during a conversation between General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, the commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, and Franklin R. Collbohm, an executive at the Douglas Aircraft Company. Both men shared a deep anxiety about the ongoing demobilization of American military forces and the corresponding dispersal of the scientific brainpower that had been assembled to fight the war. General Arnold, who had witnessed first-hand the transformative impact of scientific advice on military operations, recognized that the United States could ill afford to lose the institutional capacity for long-range strategic thinking that had developed during the war years. The aeronautical engineer Theodore von Kármán, Arnold's chief wartime scientific adviser, had already begun advocating for a permanent organization that would connect operational research with research and development decisions, and his vision would prove instrumental in shaping the contours of the new enterprise.

On October 1, 1945, Project RAND was formally established under a special contract to the Douglas Aircraft Company. The name itself was a practical acronym, suggested by Douglas engineer Arthur Emmons Raymond, standing for "Research and Development." The project's first major report, released in May 1946 under the title

"Preliminary Design of an Experimental World-Circling Spaceship," demonstrated the ambitious scope of RAND's intellectual ambitions. Produced a full decade before the launch of Sputnik, this report established RAND's reputation for long-range technological forecasting and its willingness to explore concepts that many contemporaries dismissed as science fiction.

2.2 The Transition to Independence

The relationship between Project RAND and its parent company, Douglas Aircraft, was productive but not without tensions. Douglas executives recognized that their close association with the project might create conflict-of-interest problems when the company competed for Air Force hardware contracts. Moreover, the intellectual culture of RAND, with its emphasis on long-range strategic thinking and interdisciplinary analysis, was not always comfortable within a corporate environment oriented toward aircraft production and quarterly performance. These concerns, combined with the Ford Foundation's interest in supporting the project's evolution into an independent entity, set the stage for a significant organizational transformation.

In February 1948, the chief of staff of the newly created United States Air Force approved the evolution of Project RAND into a non-profit corporation independent of Douglas Aircraft. The Ford Foundation, which had already demonstrated interest in supporting innovative policy research, provided a \$1 million interest-free loan plus a guarantee on a private bank loan to facilitate the transition. On May 14, 1948, RAND was formally incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of California, and on November 1, 1948, the Project RAND contract was officially transferred from Douglas Aircraft to the newly created RAND Corporation. Franklin Collbohm, who had initially conceived of his role as temporary while he searched for a permanent replacement, became RAND's first president and would serve in that capacity until his retirement in 1967.

The choice of non-profit status was consequential and deliberate. By incorporating as a non-profit rather than remaining a government agency or a for-profit contractor, RAND positioned itself to claim the mantle of objective, scientific analysis untainted by commercial or bureaucratic interests. This organizational form also allowed RAND to accept funding from multiple sources, including the Ford Foundation and other philanthropic organizations, thereby reducing its dependence on any single client while maintaining its primary focus on national security research for the Air Force. The nonprofit structure further enabled RAND to recruit top scientific talent who might have been reluctant to work directly for the military or for a traditional defence contractor, as it offered the prestige of independent research combined with the intellectual excitement of engagement with urgent policy problems.

2.3 The Cold War Golden Age

The intellectual orientation of early RAND was shaped decisively by the Cold War context in which it operated. The breakdown of the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, the emergence of nuclear weapons as the central fact of international politics, and the perceived vulnerability of the continental United States to long-range attack all focused RAND's attention on problems of strategic analysis and nuclear deterrence. The organization's researchers developed what became known as systems analysis, a methodology for comparing the costs and effectiveness of alternative military strategies and weapons systems in quantitative terms. This approach, which sought to bring rational calculation to decisions about nuclear strategy, was both intellectually ambitious and politically consequential, as it shaped the thinking of a generation of

defence officials and influenced the development of the American nuclear arsenal.

The quality of RAND's early personnel was exceptional by any standard. The organization attracted leading figures from mathematics, economics, physics, and engineering, many of whom would go on to win Nobel Prizes or achieve comparable distinction in their fields. Among the notables who worked at RAND during its golden age were Kenneth Arrow, a pioneer of social choice theory and general equilibrium analysis; John Forbes Nash Jr., whose work in game theory would later be celebrated in the film *A Beautiful Mind*; Herbert Simon, a founder of artificial intelligence and organizational theory; and Paul Samuelson, whose *Foundations of Economic Analysis* transformed the field of economics. This concentration of intellectual firepower was not accidental but resulted from deliberate recruitment strategies that targeted the most promising young scholars and offered them unusual freedom to pursue their research interests while contributing to national security.

Nuclear strategy emerged as RAND's signature intellectual domain during the 1950s. Analysts such as Bernard Brodie, who published *The Absolute Weapon* in 1946, articulated the foundational insight that the nuclear age had transformed the nature of warfare: the primary purpose of military force had become deterrence rather than victory, as any large-scale nuclear exchange would be catastrophic for all parties. Albert Wohlstetter's exhaustive studies of Air Force basing policy, which demonstrated the vulnerability of Strategic Air Command bases to surprise attack, led to major revisions in nuclear posture and influenced the development of the intercontinental ballistic missile force. Herman Kahn, whose flamboyant personality and willingness to contemplate scenarios of nuclear war earned him the dubious distinction of being the model for Dr. Strangelove in Stanley Kubrick's classic film, pushed the boundaries of strategic analysis with works such as *On Thermonuclear War*.

RAND's contributions extended beyond nuclear strategy and systems analysis to include foundational work in computer science and communications technology. Researchers such as Paul Baran, studying how communications networks could survive nuclear attack, developed concepts that would prove instrumental in the creation of the Internet. RAND's computer scientists advanced the development of magnetic-core memory, early video recording technology, and digital circuits, contributions that had applications far beyond their original military contexts. The organization's willingness to invest in long-range technological research, free from the immediate pressures of product development, enabled these breakthroughs and demonstrated the value of the independent think tank model.

2.4 The Vietnam Era and Its Aftermath

The Vietnam War marked a period of both influence and controversy for RAND. The organization conducted extensive research on counterinsurgency warfare, the effectiveness of strategic bombing, the political dynamics of South Vietnam, and the prospects for pacification. RAND analysts such as Daniel Ellsberg, who had worked on counterinsurgency studies in Vietnam, became increasingly disillusioned with the war's conduct and with the official justifications for continued American involvement. Ellsberg's decision to leak the Pentagon Papers, the top-secret Defence Department history of decision-making in Vietnam, to the *New York Times* in 1971 brought unwelcome attention to RAND and raised uncomfortable questions about the organization's relationship to government secrecy and public accountability.

The role of RAND in constructing the counterinsurgency doctrine of the Kennedy administration has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Recent research

emphasizes that RAND functioned as a "counterinsurgency laboratory," where analysts developed the concepts and strategies that would guide American efforts in Vietnam, Laos, and elsewhere. The doctrine of counterinsurgency, as articulated by RAND analysts and adopted by the Kennedy administration, emphasized winning the "hearts and minds" of rural populations through a combination of civic action, economic development, and targeted military operations against insurgent infrastructure. This approach represented a departure from the massive retaliation doctrine of the Eisenhower years, but it shared with its predecessor a confidence in the power of systematic analysis to produce effective strategy.

The legacy of RAND's counterinsurgency research is deeply contested. Some scholars argue that RAND provided valuable analysis that was ignored or misused by policymakers, analysing the conclusions of studies on pacification that questioned optimistic assessments of progress. Others contend that RAND's methodological framework was itself flawed, imposing categories and assumptions drawn from Western social science that systematically misrepresented the nature of revolutionary warfare in a non-Western context. The fact that the United States lost the war despite investing enormous resources and analytical effort does not, by itself, demonstrate that RAND's analysis was wrong, but it does raise questions about the adequacy of the entire analytical enterprise.

3. Institutional Structure and Funding

3.1 The Non-profit Model and Its Implications

RAND's legal status as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of California was a deliberate choice with profound implications for the organization's identity and operations. The non-profit structure allowed RAND to accept funding from multiple sources, including philanthropic organizations such as the Ford Foundation, thereby reducing its dependence on any single client while maintaining its primary focus on national security research for the Air Force. The organization's name itself—RAND, a contraction of "research and development"—reflects the utilitarian origins of the project, though in recent years the organization has chosen to refer to itself simply as "RAND" to clearly reflect its non-profit status and distinguish itself from for-profit corporations.

The non-profit model has enabled RAND to attract top scientific talent who might have been reluctant to work directly for the military or for traditional defence contractors. The organization offers the prestige of independent research combined with the intellectual excitement of engagement with urgent policy problems, a combination that has proven attractive to leading figures from mathematics, economics, physics, and engineering. RAND employs approximately 1,900 staff members and maintains an endowment of \$288.7 million as of 2023, providing a financial foundation that supports its operations across multiple research divisions and geographic locations.

A distinctive feature of RAND's institutional structure is the Frederick S. Pardee RAND Graduate School, established in 1970 as the first institution in the United States to offer a Ph.D. in public policy analysis. The graduate school integrates doctoral education directly into RAND's research environment, training a new generation of policy analysts who are socialized into RAND's methodological approaches and institutional culture while they contribute to ongoing research projects. This integration of education and research ensures the reproduction of RAND's distinctive analytical orientation and provides a pipeline of trained analysts who often move between RAND and government service throughout their careers.

3.2 Funding Sources and Financial Structure

RAND's funding structure is characterized by remarkable diversity, encompassing federal government contracts, state and local government agreements, philanthropic foundations, private corporations, universities, international organizations, and to a small extent, foreign governments. In fiscal year 2024, RAND's revenues and other support reached \$514 million, of which \$328 million was provided by the U.S. federal government. This represents approximately 64 percent of total revenues, demonstrating the continued centrality of government funding to RAND's operations while also indicating significant diversification beyond the military focus of the organization's early years.

The significance of this funding structure for RAND's research agenda cannot be overstated. Government contracts, while providing financial stability and ensuring policy relevance, also create potential pressures toward research that serves client interests rather than advancing knowledge independently. RAND addresses this concern through institutional safeguards including rigorous peer review processes, the requirement that all research be guided solely by evidence and data, and the formal policy that the organization does not advocate for specific policies or political outcomes. These safeguards are designed to ensure that RAND's work remains "high-quality, objective, and innovative" regardless of funding source, though critics have questioned whether complete independence is possible given the organization's dependence on government funding.

Philanthropic funding plays an important role in RAND's research portfolio, particularly for projects that are either too new or too urgent to attract traditional client support. The organization's endowment and philanthropic contributions provide flexibility to pursue research on emerging issues before government funding becomes available, and to explore topics that might be politically sensitive or methodologically risky for government-sponsored research. This capacity for independent research is one of the distinctive features of the think tank model and has enabled RAND to produce influential work on topics ranging from health care reform to climate change to gun violence prevention.

3.3 Federally Funded Research and Development Centres

The most distinctive element of RAND's institutional relationship with the U.S. government is its operation of four Federally Funded Research and Development Centres (FFRDCs). These are independent entities that conduct research for the U.S. government and advise government leaders, and they are continually assessed and competed to ensure they remain effective. FFRDCs occupy a unique institutional space: they are not government agencies, but they are funded primarily by government contracts and are dedicated to serving government needs. The FFRDC model was designed to provide the government with access to independent, objective, long-term research capabilities that cannot be maintained within government itself, while avoiding the conflicts of interest that might arise if such research were contracted to for-profit corporations.

The FFRDC structure has profound implications for RAND's policy proximity. Because FFRDCs are dedicated to serving government clients, RAND researchers work alongside government officials, attend classified briefings, and have access to sensitive information that is not available to the general public or to academic researchers. This proximity enables RAND to produce research that is directly relevant to current policy debates and to respond quickly to emerging government needs. However, it also raises

questions about the organization's independence: researchers who work closely with government clients may internalize their clients' assumptions and priorities, and may be reluctant to produce research that challenges those assumptions or criticizes client policies.

4. RAND After September 11: The Counterterrorism Establishment

4.1 The Analytical Challenge

The September 11 attacks presented an immediate and profound analytical challenge to the community of terrorism scholars, both within RAND and across the broader academic and policy worlds. Until that tragic day, the conventional wisdom among terrorism experts—a consensus that RAND researchers had themselves helped to establish—held that terrorists sought publicity and political impact rather than mass casualties, and that simultaneous, highly coordinated attacks on the scale of September 11 were beyond the operational capabilities of most terrorist groups. As Bruce Hoffman, then Vice President for External Affairs at RAND's Washington office and one of the organization's most prominent terrorism analysts, observed, until September 11, no terrorist operation had killed more than 500 persons at one time, and the total number of Americans killed by terrorists either in the United States or abroad since 1968 was perhaps no more than 1,000.

Hoffman's post-September 11 analysis emphasized that the attacks required nothing less than a "re-configuration of both our thinking about terrorism and how we both prepare and organize to counter it." The operational characteristics of the September 11 plot—its ambitious scope and dimensions, its consummate coordination and synchronization, the professionalism and tradecraft that kept so large an operation so secret, and the unswerving dedication and determination of the nineteen hijackers—represented a qualitative leap in terrorist capabilities that demanded correspondingly transformative responses from the American national security establishment. Hoffman argued that the attacks challenged long-held assumptions about terrorist motivations, particularly the observation made famous by RAND's Brian Jenkins in 1975 that "terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead."

Perhaps most fundamentally, Hoffman argued that Osama bin Laden had "re-written the history of both terrorism and probably of the post-Cold War era," casting himself as a David against the American Goliath and demonstrating that a single charismatic leader could challenge the world's sole remaining superpower. This insight—that bin Laden represented not merely a tactical innovator but a strategic actor with a coherent worldview and ambitious political objectives—became central to RAND's subsequent framing of the terrorist threat.

4.2 The RAND Counterterrorism Establishment

The post-September 11 period brought several RAND researchers to prominence within the American counterterrorism establishment, as their expertise became essential to policymakers struggling to understand and respond to the new threat environment. These individuals had been studying terrorism for years, if not decades, before September 11, and their long-term engagement with the phenomenon gave their analyses a depth and credibility that more recent entrants to the field could not match. Brian Michael Jenkins has been arguably the most influential terrorism scholar of his generation. Having served as a senior adviser to the president of the RAND Corporation and formerly chaired the Political Science Department at RAND, Jenkins had been studying terrorism since the early 1970s. His famous 1975 observation that "terrorists

want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening and not a lot of people dead" had shaped counterterrorism thinking for decades, though the September 11 attacks forced a fundamental re-evaluation of that premise. In the post-September 11 period, Jenkins's work focused on the long shadow cast by the attacks, including America's response to terrorism and the growing threat of nuclear terror and its impact on public policy.

Bruce Hoffman, who joined RAND after a distinguished career at the University of St Andrews, held multiple leadership positions within the organization, including Vice President for External Affairs, Director of RAND's Washington, D.C. office, and Acting Director of RAND's Centre for Middle East Public Policy. His influence extended beyond RAND: he was appointed by the U.S. Congress to serve as a commissioner on the Independent Commission to Review the FBI's Post-9/11 Response to Terrorism and Radicalization, serving as a lead author of the commission's final report. He also served as Scholar-in-Residence for Counterterrorism at the Central Intelligence Agency between 2004 and 2006, as an adviser on counterterrorism to the Office of National Security Affairs at the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad in 2004, and as an adviser on counterinsurgency to the Multi-National Forces-Iraq Headquarters, also in Baghdad, from 2004 to 2005. This unprecedented integration of a RAND researcher into the highest levels of government decision-making illustrates the organization's policy proximity and the value that policymakers placed on RAND's analytical capabilities.

5. The "Moderate Muslim" Construction and Its Discontents

The concept of the "moderate Muslim" has been central to RAND's post-September 11 policy recommendations, yet this concept has been subjected to sustained critique for its instrumentalization of Muslim actors and its reliance on problematic assumptions. As Safi notes, the list of "moderate Muslims" provided in the RAND report "surprisingly includes prominent Islam bashers," including Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen, Irshad Manji, and Bassam Tibi. This observation leads Safi to conclude that "ultimately, it is not commitment to democratic values and practices, but proximity to Islam, that sets moderates and radicals in the eyes of the authors of the recent RAND report on moderate Islam." In other words, RAND's definition of "moderate" is not based on political behaviour or commitment to democratic principles but on the degree of distance from Islamic tradition—the further one is from Islam, the more "moderate" one is presumed to be.

This definitional problem has practical policy consequences. If "moderate" is defined to mean "co-opt able"—that is, willing to align with American policy objectives regardless of their own constituencies—then RAND's strategy will systematically exclude the very actors who have genuine popular legitimacy and the capacity for meaningful reform. As the International Crisis Group warned in its 2005 report "Understanding Islamism," defining "moderate" in this way may "prove unable to promote either significant reform in Muslim countries or a substantive modernization of their cultural and ideological outlook." By patronizing "moderates" who lack constituencies, the United States risks "undermining the modernist tendency in Sunni Islamism to the benefit of fundamentalists and jihadis."

Safi further argues that RAND's analysis ignores the role of state repression in creating the conditions for radicalization. He notes that "the use of violence by state security agencies to silence opposition during Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat of Egypt has paved the way to the rise of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s." Similarly, "the

radicalization of politics in Middle Eastern countries like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq was the result of deliberate efforts by Muslim secularists to impose modern practices on Muslim societies," and "the reliance on force and iron fist policies to impose 'modern' institutions and practices by socially 'moderate' but politically radical secularists" has led to "the destruction of public debate, the disappearance of civil society, and the radicalization of politics." By focusing on religious ideology while ignoring the repressive practices of secular authoritarian regimes, RAND's analysis presents a fundamentally incomplete picture of the drivers of political violence.

6. Financial Vulnerability and Research Independence

A final dimension of RAND's credibility concerns its financial structure and the potential for funding pressures to shape research agendas. In 2025 and 2026, RAND faced significant financial challenges, including the closure of two major gun violence research initiatives and the layoff of nearly 200 employees in October 2025. The Gun Policy in America project, which provided what experts called "the most sweeping and reliable synthesis of evidence on the effectiveness of various gun laws," concluded its work as funding became unavailable. The National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research, which had poured at least \$24 million into gun violence research since 2018, also ended.

Andrew Morral, a RAND senior behavioural scientist who co-led both projects, blamed "a combination of factors": federal funding cuts under the Trump administration, increased competition for philanthropic funding, and reluctance among some funders to support gun violence research "amid a more hostile political environment." As Morral noted, "research on gun policy has always been very third-rail-ish. There are very few willing to wade into the trouble they might face for supporting research on this topic." Columbia University epidemiologist Charles Branas called the Gun Policy in America project "almost indispensable," as it mapped the methods researchers were using and developed recommendations so the field could study state gun laws more consistently.

The closure of these initiatives illustrates how RAND's research agenda is vulnerable to political and financial pressures. While RAND's gun violence research did not rely directly on federal funding, the broader organization did; federal cuts forced layoffs that indirectly affected the gun research portfolio. This vulnerability raises questions about the independence of RAND's research on politically sensitive topics. If funding for research that challenges powerful interests can be withdrawn or becomes unavailable, the range of questions that RAND can explore is necessarily constrained. This financial vulnerability is particularly relevant to RAND's research on the Muslim world, which depends heavily on government contracts from the Department of Defence, the State Department, and intelligence agencies. Reports such as "The Muslim World After 9/11" were explicitly conducted for the "Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, US Air Force." When a researcher knows that future contracts depend on satisfying government clients, there are powerful incentives to frame analysis and recommendations in ways that align with client preferences rather than challenging fundamental assumptions. This is not necessarily a matter of conscious bias but rather a structural feature of the contract research organization model: organizations that depend on government funding are unlikely to produce research that fundamentally challenges the policies or assumptions of their government clients.

7. Conclusion

The RAND Corporation's evolution from a modest research project born out of post-World War II military anxieties to one of the most influential policy think tanks in

American history demonstrates the profound and lasting relationship between knowledge production and state power. From its origins in the September 1945 conversation between General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold and Franklin R. Collbohm, through its pioneering work on systems analysis and nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, to its post-September 11 transformation into a central node in the American counterterrorism establishment, RAND has consistently occupied a unique institutional position at the intersection of scientific expertise, military planning, and policy formulation.

The organization's non-profit structure, its operation of Federally Funded Research and Development Centres (FFRDCs), and the revolving door between RAND and government service have enabled it to produce research that is directly incorporated into policy decisions while maintaining the mantle of objective, scientific analysis. However, this proximity to power generates persistent tensions between objectivity and client service, between long-range strategic thinking and immediate policy relevance, and between scientific detachment and ethical engagement. The 2004 report "The Muslim World After 9/11" must be understood within this institutional context: it is not a neutral scholarly treatise but a policy document commissioned by the U.S. Air Force and shaped by the assumptions, priorities, and institutional constraints of the think tank that produced it.

The chapter has also revealed significant limitations in RAND's methodological approach that have real-world consequences for policy effectiveness. The organization's commitment to systems analysis and quantitative methods, while valuable in domains such as nuclear strategy and defense budgeting, has proven inadequate when applied to complex political, cultural, and religious phenomena. RAND's emphasis on rational choice models systematically excludes the very factors that explain the rise of nationalism, religious extremism, and revolutionary violence, as demonstrated by the disastrous consequences of its counterinsurgency research during the Vietnam War and its subsequent influence on counterterrorism policy.

Understanding RAND's history, structure, and limitations is therefore not merely contextual but central to evaluating the validity, ethics, and policy implications of its analysis. The 2004 report "The Muslim World After 9/11" reflects the institutional patterns identified in this article: it securitizes Islam, adopts a state-centric bias, assumes secular normativity, instrumentalizes "moderate Islam," and fails to reflect on Western policy as a driver of radicalization. These features are not accidental but structural, flowing from RAND's institutional position as a defense contractor serving government clients. A critical engagement with RAND's research products must therefore attend not only to their empirical content but also to the institutional conditions under which they were produced.

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