



Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 1, The Global Jihadist Movement

Book Author(s): Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Sara A. Daly, Heather S. Gregg, Theodore W. Karasik, Kevin A. O'Brien and William Rosenau

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Introduction

Defeating the global jihadist movement—which we define as al-Qaeda and the universe of jihadist groups that are associated with or inspired by al-Qaeda—is the most pressing security challenge facing the United States today. The global jihadist movement can be distinguished from traditional or local jihads, which are armed campaigns conducted by Islamist groups against local adversaries with usually limited aims and geographic scope, in that it targets the United States and its allies across the globe and pursues broad geopolitical aims.

Although the U.S. campaign against al-Qaeda and the global jihadist movement campaign has had some notable successes, such as the destruction of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan, the elimination of many of the group's leaders, and the growing resolve of many countries to take action against al-Qaeda and its associates, no informed observers believe that al-Qaeda will be eliminated anytime soon. Indeed, in some respects al-Qaeda has metastasized into an even more formidable adversary—dispersed across the global South, Western Europe, and North America, largely self-sustaining, and despite intense government countermeasures, able to mount devastating operations, such as the railway bombing that killed nearly 200 people in Madrid on March 11, 2004, and the London bombings of July 7, 2005. The United States itself continues to be threatened by large-scale attacks, as suggested by heightened security alerts and reports of plans to attack financial

targets in New York and Washington.¹ Countering al-Qaeda is thus likely to preoccupy U.S. national security institutions for at least the remainder of the decade, and perhaps longer.

To help planners anticipate the movement's evolution, anticipate future methods of terrorist operation, and develop an effective counter-strategy, this study explores some of the most salient aspects associated with terrorist phenomena across the world and their implications for the security of the United States and its friends and allies. The global terrorist threat represented by al-Qaeda and its associated groups is the subject of this volume. It should be noted, however, that this study is not intended to be comprehensive. Journalists, analysts, politicians, and scholars have written or uttered literally millions of words on international terrorism, particularly since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and it is impossible for a single monograph to capture the entire essence of these assessments, much less definitively map the full complexity of an entity that has developed over a 20-year period into the world's first truly global terrorist movement.

Roadmap to the Book

The results of the study are reported in two volumes: The subject of the first is al-Qaeda and what we refer to as the "al-Qaeda nebula," an ecosystem of terrorist groups around the world that have internalized the al-Qaeda worldview and its methodology of mass-casualty terrorist attacks. The second volume (*Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 2, The Outer Rings of the Terrorist Universe*)² deals with terrorist phenomena outside the al-Qaeda ideological orbit: Islamic and non-Islamic terrorist and insurgent groups with local agendas and the more diffuse threat posed by violent anti-globalization movements. We include them in this study because

¹ In August 2004, antiterror raids in Pakistan yielded computer disks and other information sources suggesting that terrorists linked to al-Qaeda had carried out extensive surveillance of the World Bank headquarters in Washington, the New York Stock Exchange, and the Citigroup Center in New York. Dan Eggen and John Mintz, "Alerts Issued for District, N.Y.," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 2004.

² Rabasa et al. (2005).

although most of these groups do not threaten the United States directly, they threaten U.S. interests and the stability of friends and allies. Indeed, some of these groups—such as Lebanese Hezbollah—could under certain conditions evolve into global threats. In our analysis of these groups, therefore, we look for indicators of their future evolution. In the second volume, we also analyze the nexus between terrorism, insurgency, and crime. This is a critical aspect of the whole problem of international terrorism because in many cases terrorist groups cannot sustain themselves and survive without the income and resources that they derive from criminal activity. Although terrorism and organized crime are different phenomena, the important fact is that terrorist and criminal networks overlap and cooperate in some enterprises. The phenomenon of the synergy of terrorism and organized crime is growing because similar conditions give rise to both and because terrorists and organized criminals use similar approaches to promote their operations.

This volume traces the evolution of al-Qaeda and maps out the contours of the terrorist nebula. Chapters One through Five consider five broad themes:

- al-Qaeda's ideology
- al-Qaeda's strategy, structure, and evolving operational dynamic
- al-Qaeda's finances
- al-Qaeda's planning cycle
- al-Qaeda's relationship with groups within its ideological orbit, and the threat posed by these latter entities.

Violence is al-Qaeda's *raison d'être*. Unlike Hezbollah or Hamas, which have a territorial focus, a mass base, and a political platform, and which cultivate support through the provision of social services, al-Qaeda is a purely ideological and terrorist group that attracts adherents by means of its violent anti-Western agenda and its elite status at the apex of the global jihadist movement.

Al-Qaeda's ideology is what binds together the group's increasingly atomized network. In this part of the study we discuss the implications of this development for understanding the evolving phenom-

enon of global terrorism. We also consider the interrelated issues of al-Qaeda's strategy, structure, and operational evolution—before and after September 11—and how they have shaped the network's overall attack profile and operational tempo. These topics include al-Qaeda's use of new sanctuaries and the emerging role of urban training grounds; the group's interest in chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons, and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS); the use of converts; the changes in al-Qaeda's finances to more covert ways of raising and transferring funds and to an increased reliance on criminal activity; and its role in the ongoing insurgency in Iraq. The section concludes with an examination of those entities that have been fully co-opted into the inner circle of Osama bin Laden's group and that are generally considered to be an integral component of his broader jihadist movement.

Chapters Six through Eleven examine the contours of the al-Qaeda nebula, the far larger category of terrorist systems that, while not institutionally part of al-Qaeda, have already established contacts with bin Laden's network or have assimilated its ideology and methodology. Like the astronomical phenomenon, this nebula is a cloud-like mass that upon examination reveals itself to be made up of many distinct components. These groups will be subdivided into regional clusters and discussed in terms of (1) their historical links to al-Qaeda; (2) the extent to which their relationship with al-Qaeda has affected their overall operational agendas and attack tempos; and (3) how those groups are likely to evolve over the short to medium term.

Finally, some words about terminology are in order. What is known as al-Qaeda (typically translated from Arabic as "the base") has in fact always assumed a variety of different forms. In this book, *al-Qaeda* will be used to describe three distinct facets of a single phenomenon. First, in its pre-September 11 form, al-Qaeda refers to the terrorist entity that coalesced around Osama bin Laden in Sudan and Afghanistan in the mid to late 1990s. Second, in the post-September 11 environment, al-Qaeda is the label applied to the remnants of bin Laden's inner circle, which at the time of this writing (August 2004) is reportedly in hiding in the remote Pakistani tribal areas along the

Afghan border. Finally, al-Qaeda is used to refer to the broader, globally dispersed terrorist “nebula” that continues to receive ideological inspiration from bin Laden and his inner circle.

Although we will continue to use the al-Qaeda label in the context of this broader movement, a term that we believe more accurately describes the Islamic extremist threat facing the United States today is the *global jihadist movement*, as defined above. Although al-Qaeda in its post-9/11 incarnation clearly still exists, as we have seen with the discovery of detailed surveillance reports of a multitude of targets in the United States, the threat has extended beyond this smaller, albeit highly lethal group. To put the matter succinctly, “[e]ver since its fame began to spread through the embittered Muslim world, al-Qaeda has been at once an organisation of Islamic extremists and an ideology of Islamic extremism.”³

Despite the evolution of this broader movement, the United States and other countries engaged in the war on terrorism have continued to refer to the perpetrators carrying out terrorist attacks against their interests as “al-Qaeda,” when in fact it is unclear to what degree al-Qaeda (defined in this context as the remnants of bin Laden’s inner circle) has had command and control over terrorist operations since September 11. More likely, as we have seen with the attacks in Bali in October 2002, in Morocco in May 2003, and in Spain in March 2004, these operations are actually conducted by a combination of local jihadists who received al-Qaeda training and may retain some ties to al-Qaeda leadership, and other jihadists who have no organizational ties to al-Qaeda at all, but share its apocalyptic vision.

³ “Plots, Alarms and Arrests,” *The Economist*, August 14, 2004.

