Beyond al-Qaeda

PART 1

The Global Jihadist Movement

Angel Rabasa
Peter Chalk
Kim Cragin
Sara A. Daly
Heather S. Gregg
Theodore W. Karasik
Kevin A. O'Brien
William Rosenau

RAND
PROJECT AIR FORCE
This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

Jump down to document ▼

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

Purchase this document
Browse Books & Publications
Make a charitable contribution

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org
Explore RAND Project AIR FORCE
View document details

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents.
This product is part of the RAND Corporation monograph series. RAND monographs present major research findings that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors. All RAND monographs undergo rigorous peer review to ensure high standards for research quality and objectivity.
The research described in this report was sponsored by the United States Air Force under Contract F49642-01-C-0003. Further information may be obtained from the Strategic Planning Division, Directorate of Plans, Hq USAF.
Five years after September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks and the U.S. response—now called the global war on terrorism—have changed the world, and the terrorist enterprise that we know as al-Qaeda has changed with it. The current status of al-Qaeda’s network remains unclear, but it is certain that it and other terrorist groups continue to threaten the lives and well-being of Americans, at home and abroad, and the security of our friends and allies. This continuing danger leads to ongoing U.S. and international efforts to monitor, disrupt, and dismantle terrorist groups before they can cause large-scale destruction to our people or our interests.

The objective of this RAND Corporation study, undertaken as part of a project entitled “Beyond al-Qaeda: Countering Future Terrorist and Other Nontraditional Threats to U.S. Security,” is to understand the shape of future threats to the United States and U.S. security interests from terrorist and other extremist organizations. We do this through analyses that draw together the various threat strands that are informing current U.S. thinking in the war on terror. The study looks specifically at four sources of threats:

1. **Al-Qaeda.** We examine how al-Qaeda has changed since September 11, the loss of its operating base in Afghanistan, and the death or capture of key operatives; and we assess what forms the al-Qaeda threat to the United States and U.S. interests takes now and might take in the future.
2. **Terrorist groups that may not be formally part of al-Qaeda but that have assimilated al-Qaeda’s worldview and concept of mass-casualty terrorist attacks.** This, we believe, is where the center of gravity of the current global terrorist threat lies.

3. **Violent Islamist and non-Islamist terrorist and insurgent groups and other nontraditional threats with no known links to al-Qaeda.** These groups threaten U.S. regional interests, friends, and allies.

4. **The nexus between terrorism and organized crime.** In each case, we examine how the presence of these threats affects U.S. security interests, and we identify distinct strategies that the United States and the U.S. Air Force may take to neutralize or mitigate each of these threats.

The results of the study are reported in two volumes. This book is the first of the two; the second, by Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Sara A. Daly, Heather S. Gregg, Theodore W. Karasik, Kevin A. O’Brien, and William Rosenau, is entitled *Beyond al-Qaeda: Part 2, The Outer Rings of the Terrorist Universe*.

This research builds on previous RAND Project AIR FORCE work on counterterrorism, notably the following:

This research was sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, U.S. Air Force (A3/5), and conducted in the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE. Research for this project was completed in September 2004. This book should be of value to the national security community and to interested members of the general public, especially those with an interest in combating the blight of international terrorism.

**RAND Project AIR FORCE**

RAND Project AIR FORCE, a division of the RAND Corporation, is the U.S. Air Force’s federally funded research and development center for studies and analyses. PAF provides the Air Force with independent analyses of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future aerospace forces. Research is conducted in four programs: Aerospace Force Development; Manpower, Personnel, and Training; Resource Management; and Strategy and Doctrine.

Additional information about PAF is available on our Web site at [http://www.rand.org/paf](http://www.rand.org/paf).
Contents

Preface ............................................................................. iii
Figures ............................................................................. xi
Tables ............................................................................. xiii
Summary .......................................................................... xv
Acknowledgments ................................................................ xxxv
Abbreviations .................................................................. xxxvii

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction ....................................................................... 1
Roadmap to the Book ................................................................. 2

CHAPTER TWO
Al-Qaeda’s Ideology and Propaganda ................................. 7
Ideology ............................................................................. 7
Themes ............................................................................. 12
Propaganda ........................................................................ 14

CHAPTER THREE
Strategy, Structure, and Operational Evolution .................. 23
Strategy ............................................................................ 23
Structure ............................................................................. 26
   Al-Qaeda’s Structure Before September 11 ....................... 27
   Al-Qaeda’s Structure After September 11 ....................... 29
Operational Evolution ............................................................ 34
   Hard Versus Soft Targets ................................................. 36
Mass-Casualty Versus Smaller, More Frequent Attacks .......................... 38
Focus on Economic Impact .................................................................. 39
Efficient Use of Loose Networks ...................................................... 40
New Sanctuaries ................................................................................. 41
Unconventional Weapons ..................................................................... 44
MANPADS Acquisition ...................................................................... 48
Recruitment of Western Converts ..................................................... 51

CHAPTER FOUR
Al-Qaeda’s Finances ........................................................................... 57
Resource Structures and Networks .................................................... 57
Future Financial Prospects ................................................................. 59

CHAPTER FIVE
Al-Qaeda’s Operational Planning Cycle ............................................. 63
Post-9/11 Planning Trends ...................................................................... 66
Iraq in al-Qaeda’s Strategic Agenda .................................................... 68

CHAPTER SIX
The al-Qaeda Nebula ............................................................................ 73

CHAPTER SEVEN
South Asian Clusters ........................................................................... 81
Kashmir ................................................................................................. 81
Laskar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, and Harakat-ul-Mujahideen .......... 81
Assessment and Future Outlook .......................................................... 90
Pakistan ................................................................................................. 91
Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan and Laskar-e-Jhangvi ....................................... 91
Assessment and Future Outlook .......................................................... 96
Bangladesh .......................................................................................... 98
Harakat-ul-Jihad-Islami Bangladesh ................................................... 98
Assessment and Future Outlook .......................................................... 103
CHAPTER EIGHT
The Caucasus and Central Asia .................................................... 105
Chechnya ................................................................................. 105
Chechen Jihadists (Basayev Faction) ......................................... 105
Assessment and Future Outlook ............................................... 111
Uzbekistan .............................................................................. 112
The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan ........................................ 112
Assessment and Future Outlook ............................................... 116

CHAPTER NINE
The North and East African Clusters ........................................... 119
North Africa ............................................................................. 119
Morocco: The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and Salafiya
   Jihadia ............................................................................... 119
GICM and SJ: Assessment and Future Outlook ......................... 123
Algeria: The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and the
   Dhamat Houmet Daawa Salafia ........................................... 125
DHDS: Assessment and Future Outlook ................................... 126
Libya: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group ....................................... 127
LIFG: Assessment and Future Outlook ..................................... 128
Tunisia: Tunisian Combatant Group ......................................... 129
TCG: Assessment and Future Outlook ..................................... 130
East Africa .............................................................................. 131
Somalia: Al-Itihaad al-Islami (AIAI) and the “New” Somali Jihadi
   Network .......................................................................... 131
The Somali Jihadi Network: Assessment and Future Outlook ...... 133

CHAPTER TEN
The Al-Zarqawi Network: Jordanian and Iraqi Jihadis ............... 135
Jordan ..................................................................................... 135
Jordanian Network: Assessment and Future Outlook ................ 137
Iraq ....................................................................................... 138
Ansar al-Islam, al-Tawhid wa’l-Jihad–Tanzim Qa’dat al-Jihad fi
   Bilad al-Rafidayn, and the Mujahideen Shura Council ............. 138
Jihadist Groups in Iraq: Assessment and Outlook .................... 143
CHAPTER ELEVEN
The Southeast Asian Cluster .................................................. 147
Jemaah Islamiyah and Its Offshoots ........................................ 147
JI and Local Islamist Groups in Southeast Asia ...................... 154
JI: Assessment and Future Outlook ...................................... 156

CHAPTER TWELVE
Conclusions and Recommendations ..................................... 159
New Approaches to Combating the Global Jihadist Movement .... 159
Countering al-Qaeda Through Political Warfare ...................... 159
Attack the Ideology .......................................................... 160
Break the Links Between the Global and Local Jihads ........... 161
Deny Sanctuaries ............................................................ 163
Strengthen the Capabilities of Frontline States to Confront Local Jihad Threats ......................................................... 164
Implications for the U.S. Air Force ...................................... 166

Bibliography ......................................................................... 173
Figures

6.1. The Terrorist Nebula and Regional Clusters ..................... 80
7.1. South and Central Asian Clusters ................................ 82
9.1. North and East African Clusters ................................. 120
11.1. Southeast Asian Cluster ........................................... 149
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.1</td>
<td>Associations Between Major Jihadist Clusters Worldwide and al-Qaeda</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Jihadists Killed in Iraq, October 2004–March 2005</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Associations Between Major Jihadist Clusters and al-Qaeda</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Major Suicide Attacks Carried Out by Chechen Militants, 2000–2004</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Terrorist Events in Indonesia Since Bali I</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Al-Qaeda

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 as well as geographic scope, in that it targets the United States and its allies across the globe and pursues broad geopolitical aims.

Although the U.S.-led global war on terrorism 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 world, largely self-sustaining, and constantly adopting new and innovative terrorism tactics. Despite intense government countermeasures, it seems able to mount devastating operations from the air, land, and sea, such as the USS Cole operation in October 2000, the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Madrid railway bombing in March 2004, the Sinai resort bombings of October 2004, and the London bombings of July 2005. The United States itself continues to be threatened
by large-scale attacks. Countering al-Qaeda is thus likely to preoc-
cupy U.S. national security institutions for at least the remainder of
the decade, and probably longer.

Although al-Qaeda clearly still exists, as we have seen with the
recent discovery of detailed surveillance reports of a multitude of
targets in the United States, the group has been substantially tran-
formed. Since September 11, al-Qaeda has gone through several
phases: from a well-structured terrorist organization with headquarters
in Afghanistan, to the hunted remnants of bin Laden’s inner circle
during and after Operation Enduring Freedom, to a disaggregated and
atomized enterprise with reduced command and control but a contin-
ued capability to operate. Moreover, al-Qaeda still serves as the source
of motivation and inspiration for regional terrorist groups that are not
formally affiliated with it but that share its ideology of global jihad and
its concept of operations.

Strategy
Al-Qaeda’s strategy flows logically from its ideology. To outsiders,
those within the network may appear irrational—motivated by insane
hatreds, grossly unrealistic in their goals, and willing to kill innocent
men, women, and children to achieve their ends. In reality, al-Qaeda,
like other terrorist groups, acts in a largely rational manner in the sense
that it weighs ends and means, considers alternative approaches, and
calculates costs and benefits. Although the movement may emphasize
flawed precepts, it makes logical assumptions on the basis of these pre-
cepts.1 Among the central strategic priorities of al-Qaeda, mobilizing
Muslims for a global jihad against the West and toppling “apostate”
regimes, particularly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, remain para-
mount objectives.

Other objectives include creating an Islamic government accord-
ing to its own ultra-orthodox interpretation of Hanbali Sunni Islam
and isolating the majority of Sunni Muslims who follow other schools
of Islam, not to mention the Shi’ites. For al-Qaeda and the groups
that share its ideology, governments in the Middle East primarily exist

1 For more on al-Qaeda as a rational actor, see Doran (2002).
because of U.S. support; their destruction thus is contingent on removing that support. Al-Qaeda has sought to achieve this objective by pressuring the United States to withdraw from the Middle East through the perpetration of increasingly costly acts of terror. Al-Qaeda anticipated U.S. retaliation and hoped that this retaliation could be presented in the Muslim world as a war against Islam that would advance its propaganda and recruitment efforts. (See pp. 23–33.)

**Ideology**

Ideology is central to understanding and prevailing over al-Qaeda and the phenomenon of global jihad. On a purely material level, terrorist organizations are almost always outmatched by the government forces that they oppose. If a terrorist group is to survive, it must at the very least have the ability to replace fallen converts with fresh recruits. To a certain extent, the execution of successful operations helps to serve this purpose, both by building morale within the group and by demonstrating to potential converts that the organization is operationally dynamic. But terrorist attacks, while necessary, are not sufficient to sustain a movement operating against a determined adversary. Militant extremists also require the revolutionary “software” that helps convince militants—whose underground “lifestyle” characteristically tends to be marked by physical danger, isolation from loved ones, and psychological stress—that their mission is worth the sacrifices.

At its core, al-Qaeda’s ideology is profoundly internationalist, attempting to contextualize local conflicts as part of a broader global struggle against “apostasy” and “the infidel.” In essence, al-Qaeda’s ideology is a version of the ideology that a previous RAND study has described as “neo-fundamentalism” or “radical fundamentalism,” i.e., an extremist Islamic fundamentalist set of beliefs that borrows many of the characteristics of European fascism and Marxism-Leninism, or

---


3 See Rabasa et al. (2004).