Global Jihad: Al-Qaeda and Its Implications for the Global System

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis Presented to the Department of International Studies

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Abstract

This honors thesis addresses the issue of al-Qaeda’s global jihad and its implications for the world system. My argument goes against the grain of many Western opinions and methodologies by taking a more modest approach by analyzing and exposing the ideologies of the al-Qaeda organization. It is well known to those who watch television or read the news to call al-Qaeda’s actions “terrorist attacks.” Google searches on al-Qaeda result in images of beheadings, suicide attacks and men wearing turbans with guns. However, this thesis is not intended to reiterate those messages or to tell the reader to agree with Western media agenda tactics. It addresses the issues and ideologies that have formed al-Qaeda and why they inflict terror in the name of Islam.

I attempt to set aside Western biases of al-Qaeda and discuss the reasons behind the militants’ various attacks. A main point of discussion within this paper is, “who are the true terrorists?” The United States’ government has declared the “War on Terror” with the foundation that Osama bin Laden and his counterparts are terrorists. However, is the al-Qaeda network a terrorist group or a network of freedom fighters saving their corrupted religion and co-religionists? This thesis attempts to answer these questions by analyzing al-Qaeda’s motivations in the past and present.

I then conclude with my personal recommendations for U.S. foreign policy in an attempt to address the Muslim world more adequately. Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network have attacked America for a simple reason: American imperialism in the Muslim world. To end the War on Terror, the United States must re-evaluate its foreign policy with Israel, remove its troops from Muslim lands and empower the local communities in war-torn countries.

* It is important to note that references to Osama bin Laden have been translated from Arabic to English and therefore the exact translation may have lost some of its authenticity.
Introduction

I shall lead my steed
and hurl us both at the target.
Oh Lord, if my end is nigh,
may my tomb not be draped
in green mantles.
No, let it be the belly of an eagle,
perched up on high with his kin.
So let me be a martyr,
dwelling in a high mountain pass
among a band of knights who,
descend to face armies.
When they leave this world,
they leave trouble behind,
and meet their Day of Judgment,
as told in the Scriptures.¹

-Osama bin Laden

There is no doubt that Islam and Muslim politics play a vital role in current world affairs. Islam and politics seem to be present everywhere in the contemporary world and are often debated and discussed. However, how well do we truly understand this religion and the phenomenon known as Islam? Muslim politics have emerged from a vast range of political agendas, such as transnational militant organizations like al-Qaeda to more traditional Islamic political parties as seen in Saudi Arabia. Generalizations and stereotypes have influenced how people view the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa the past few years. A growing problem is the competing notion amongst Muslims about who speaks in the name of Islam. Islam, unlike other religions, does not have a formal church or hierarchy of religious authority. Do the militants, the Imams², the King of Saudi Arabia, or the everyday people speak for Islam? Although Muslims are many times associated with terrorism in the United States, it is important to understand why militants call for jihad³ in the name of Islam.

² An Imam is an Islamic leader who often takes the role of the worship leader in a community.
³ Jihad literally means "struggle," but there are multiple ways it is interpreted within the Islamic religion.
I wrote this honors thesis to address the transnational militant cell coined as ‘al-Qaeda,’ or القاعدة. Whether we agree with his ideologies or not, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda have changed America. On September 11, 2001 the late al-Qaeda leader instilled fear and introduced the threat of terrorism into the daily lives of Americans, people who travel by planes and buses, or those who enter government establishments. For over a decade, Osama bin Laden evaded the U.S. military, intelligence agencies around the world, and provoked three United States presidents. The intense manhunt for Osama bin Laden came to an end on May 2 when a team of elite U.S. Navy SEALs shot and killed him in his third floor bedroom in his compound in Abottabad, Pakistan.

Even though their chief leader is dead, al-Qaeda still remains an ambiguous organization. The intense hunt for Osama bin Laden has come to an end, but Ayman al-Zawahiri and other prominent leaders have become phantoms that occasionally show up on television as the world awaits another attack. Although the U.S. and its allies have been chasing al-Qaeda for years, their core remains unclear to many. The United States is quick to call Osama bin Laden and his regime “terrorists,” but this does not make us any wiser about the nature of al-Qaeda.

This thesis allows its readers to think about the worldview that makes up the essence of the organization. It is important to understand the motivations of one of the United States’ biggest contemporary enemies, instead of relying on the mass media’s perceptions of terrorism. I seek to present a clear and concise basis of al-Qaeda and analyze why they commit attacks against the West so as to enhance the readers’ understanding of the organization as an entity. This analysis assumes the reader has a general knowledge of Islam, and therefore focuses on the components that are directly related to al-Qaeda and their motivations. In the end, I attempt to
make al-Qaeda’s doctrine accessible to all, and therefore unmask one of the world’s contemporary blind spots.
Islam and Jihad

What is Islam? This seems to be a popular topic of debate within current world affairs and Islam is frequently cast in a negative light in the Western sphere. Nevertheless, there are approximately 1.25 billion Muslims in the world today; it is currently one of the fastest growing religions across the globe.⁴ Although often considered a Middle Eastern phenomenon, the four countries with the highest Muslim populations are Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Therefore, it is important to disassociate the idea that the Middle East and the Muslim world are contiguous.

Salafism

Contemporary Islamic radicalism, such as the al-Qaeda organization, is formed around two core concepts: salafism and jihad. Many Islamic radicals today consider themselves as “salafis,” or that they are influenced by salafi teachings. This section discusses what salafi teachings are, how they relate to violent radicalism and how they differ from other Islamic schools of thought. Additionally, jihad is an Islamic concept that is interpreted by militants as a means to justify their violent struggle against the West. One of the key questions to think about in this section is: What is the definition of jihad and how did it pertain to Osama bin Laden’s ideology and al-Qaeda’s motivations today?

Peter Mandaville, a professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University, states, “The term ‘salafi’ refers to the salaf al-salih, or ‘pious ancestors’ – a designation for the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslim scholars.”⁵ Practitioners of salafism are characterized by their strict and exclusive reliance on religious

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⁵ *Ibid*, 245.
sources and teachings from the earliest periods of Islam. The main sources of salafism are the Qur’an⁶ and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad.⁷ A fundamental argument within the salafi school of Islam is that Muslims and Islamic scholars have gradually introduced innovations that have diluted the purity of Islam. Primary attributes and beliefs of this school of thought are *tawhid* (توحید),⁸ a strict reliance on the Qur’an, the rejection of sectarianism⁹ and rejection of *bid’a* (بدعة).¹⁰,¹¹ Salafism was introduced by the nineteenth century religious reformers Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. However, the radical salafiyya movement was converted into political activism and a violent struggle by the Egyptian reformer, Sayyid Qutb.¹² His influence on modern militant Islamism will be discussed more in depth in the next section. However, it is important to note that not all salafists believe in radical politics and violence. All salafists are on the extreme-conservative end of the Islamic spectrum, but it is an ideology, and therefore has different branches within itself.

Salafism and Wahhabism (the school of Islamic jurisprudence in Saudi Arabia), have many times been used interchangeably. Both represent the literalist interpretations of Islam and recognize the dangers posed by *bid’a*, or innovations. Wahhabism was formed by the Islamic revivalist Muhammad Ibn Adbul Wahhab in the eighteenth century.¹³ He was influenced by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya, an Islamic scholar in the 12ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ centuries, whom Osama bin Laden

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⁶ The holy book of Islam sent down from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad.
⁷ These are the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims refer to the Hadith as a source of law and an essential tool to understanding the Qur’an. The two branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi’a, have different Hadith collections.
⁸ This is an Arabic and Islamic word that means absolute oneness, or monotheism. “There is no God but God.”
⁹ Salafists argue there is no such thing as different groups of Muslims or different interpretations. One is either a true Muslim, or not.
¹⁰ *Bid’a* means “innovations” in this context. Salafists believe that Islam has been corrupted by innovations to the religion, which have sacrificed its purity. Various forms of innovations have diluted Islam and have caused Muslims to stray from the straight path of God’s law.
¹¹ Mandaville, 246.
¹² Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian writer, theologian, educator and radical Islamist who was hanged by the Egyptian government in the 1960s because of his activism and violence. He has been a key ideological figure for many contemporary Islamic radicals.
¹³ Mandaville, 247.
consistently referenced in his statements. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda are considered salafi jihadists, which combine political agendas with violent struggles.

Jihad

The term *jihad* (الجهاد) has multiple meanings in Islam and is often associated with terrorism in the West. The Arabic root literally means “struggle,” which has been broken into two categories by Islamic scholars. First, the Greater Jihad (al-jihad al-akbar, الأكبر الجهاد) is referred to as the “inner” or spiritual jihad. Muslims fully submit themselves to God and try to overcome sinful temptations to follow the path of God. The second meaning, the Lesser Jihad (al-jihad al-asghar, الأصغر الجهاد) is a never-ending attempt to reach the Greater Jihad. This is the outward struggle to defend Islam, which can take the form of physical violence to protect the religion. Many radical Islamists, such as al-Qaeda, consider jihad an obligation for all loyal Muslims to protect their religion.

To comprehend jihad as a modern form of warfare, it is first important to understand how it is broken up. Peter Mandaville argues that “classical scholars divided the world into two primary ‘zones’: *dar al-islam* [دار الإسلام] (the domain of Islam) and *dar al-harb* [دار الحرب] (the domain of war).”¹⁴ Militants use these terms to encourage jihad in order to protect their holy lands. The first term, dar al-islam, refers to the land which is regulated by Muslim rulers and therefore where Islamic laws are implemented. Osama bin Laden argued that it is permissible to use force to defend dar al-islam if it is attacked. The second term, dar al-harb, refers to the lands that are not ruled by Muslims. These defensive jihadi tactics have evolved over time. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda’s jihad can be coined as a defensive jihad. This can be categorized as “an Islamic military reaction triggered by an attack by non-Muslims on the Islamic faith, on

Muslims, on Muslim territory, or on all three.” Al-Qaeda has made it clear that their defensive jihad has been formed around their conception that Americans hate Muslims. The organization believes that that their faith, land, existence and people have been attacked by the U.S; therefore a defensive jihad is the necessary step for them to protect their brothers and sisters.

**Sayyid Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood سيد قطب والإخوان المسلمين**

Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian radical who became the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood during its revolutionary phase in the 1950s and 1960s, until he was hanged by the Nasser regime in 1966. Qutb spent some time in Colorado where he went to school to get his teaching degree. After a brief period of time in the United States, Qutb realized the corruption of Western secularism. When he returned to Egypt, he joined the Islamic mobilization and became a prominent figure for radicalism. Qutb wrote many books, most notably *Milestones*, where he argued that Islam had become corrupt and that anything non-Islamic was evil.

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Qutb defined that there is no line between a true Muslim and a non-Muslim. He argued the only true and valid governments were those ruled by strict sharia law,\textsuperscript{18} which caught the attention of many of his readers as compelling. It was this ideology that caught wind in many radical Islamists’ thoughts, including Osama bin Laden. Sayyid Qutb’s writings provided the basis for Islamic radicalism after his death and his interpretations on defensive jihad have set the table for contemporary Islamists. Ayman al-Zawahiri\textsuperscript{19} was also influenced by Qutb’s teachings. He thought regimes had departed from Islam and failed to establish sharia law, and therefore, they were not true Muslim countries, which made them subject to attack.\textsuperscript{20} Qutb’s stance against the corruptions of the world, such as capitalism, secularism, atheism, imperialism and immorality\textsuperscript{21} influenced Osama bin Laden to wage jihad to repair the Muslim world.

\textsuperscript{18} Sharia Law is the religious law of Islam. It is based on the precepts of the Qur’an and the examples and Hadith (sayings and doings) of the Prophet Muhammad.

\textsuperscript{19} Ayman al-Zawahiri is a prominent leader in the al-Qaeda organization. Many believe that with the death of Osama bin Laden, al-Zawahiri will become the successor of al-Qaeda. He will be described in more detail later.


\textsuperscript{21} Mandaville, 251.
Al-Qaeda: The Organization and Its Ideologies

Profiles of Important Figures

The al-Qaeda organization has evolved into many different cells over the course of its formation. However, the following actors have played a vital role in the construction, or ideological aspect of al-Qaeda in current world affairs. If one is to understand al-Qaeda as a phenomenon today, it is imperative distinguish the figures and their strategies that make up the elusive network.

Osama bin Laden: The Face of Al-Qaeda

Osama bin Laden was born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in 1957. His father was a Yemeni immigrant who moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1930 from the city of Hadramawt, Yemen.22 Osama’s father, Muhammad, was a key contributor to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He gained access to King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud’s court, “And the king, trusting his very reliable instincts, made this rough yet imposing man responsible for constructing a number of the buildings with which he filled his domain.”23 Muhammad bin Laden quickly claimed a significant amount of

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23 Kepel, Gilles and Jean-Pierre Milelli, eds. Al Qaeda in Its Own Words. Cambridge, MA, 12.
the Saudi market in the construction business, where Osama would eventually acquire large amounts of money from. His father’s success and contributions to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia would later resemble the first ties to Osama bin Laden’s destiny.

Bin Laden left Riyadh, the capital city of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and later moved to Jeddah where he lived his adolescent life. Even growing up, bin Laden “…opposed his schoolmates on certain points that he considered anti-Islamic and even at that early stage showed an uncommon interest in religion.”

While growing up, an increased openness to Western styles in the Kingdom concerned bin Laden. He felt these lifestyles opposed the Kingdom’s culture and interfered with Islam. Osama studied management at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, when Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian-Jordanian theologian and Islamist, received a teaching post at the university. Bin Laden was deeply influenced by Azzam’s teachings and the two would later play an important role in the Afghan jihad, as well as the formation of al-Qaeda.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, bin Laden saw this as an opportunity to fight in the jihad to protect his fellow Muslims. The Afghan war lasted from 1979 until 1989, where bin Laden “raised money and supplied heavy machinery for the anticomunist mujahideen, or holy warriors, fighting the Soviet invasion.” Osama also funded Abdullah Azzam’s Services Office, which trained foreign Muslims to fight alongside the Afghan mujahideen. By the end of the Afghan jihad, Osama bin Laden had made a name for himself and was seen as a prominent leader of jihad warfare. Hamza Mohammed, a Palestinian volunteer in Afghanistan stated:

“He [bin Laden] was a hero to us because he was always on the front line, always moving ahead of everybody else. He not only gave his money, but he also gave himself. He came

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down from his palace to live with the Afghan peasants and the Arab fighters. He cooked with them, ate with them, dug trenches with them. That was bin Laden's way.”

Bin Laden was seen as a fierce leader for many in the Afghanistan jihad. During the later part of the war, a small, but loyal contingent followed bin Laden. Seen as a financial and military leader, he “forged an alliance with radical Islamist groups in Egypt and elsewhere, organizing al-Qaeda in 1988.” After the Soviets withdrew, Osama bin Laden and many other mujahideen fighters returned to their countries of origin.

During the 1990s, many Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, housed Afghanistan veterans who were unable to return to a civilian lifestyle. Bin Laden thought that he had carried out his duty as a loyal Muslim, but felt that he could no longer live behind the front line. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, he declared that “it was necessary to eliminate the atheist regime in Baghdad.” Bin Laden stated to Prince Sultan, the Saudi Arabian minister of defense, “I am ready to prepare one hundred thousand fighters with good combat capability within three months, you don’t need Americans.” However, Prince Sultan told bin Laden that he did not need him or his mujahideen fighters, and instead called on Western forces under the United States’ leadership. The Saudi royal family’s decision angered bin Laden and triggered a process of radicalization for him and his militant organization. Saudi Arabia became a chief enemy to al-Qaeda and bin Laden because his country relied on infidels (الكافار) to protect the holy lands of Islam, which would make up al-Qaeda’s discourse. Bin Laden became an outspoken critic of the Saudi royal family and fled to Sudan in 1991 when he was only 34. In 1994, Saudi authorities

27 Council on Foreign Relations.
28 Kepel et al., 20.
29 Ibid, 21.
30 Ibid.
31 Lawrence, xiii.
began to realize bin Laden’s radicalism, and proceeded to freeze his financial assets and stripped him of his Saudi nationality. It was in Sudan that bin Laden and al-Qaeda began to plot attacks against the West and its allies because he felt betrayed by his country’s allegiance to the U.S.

Although Osama bin Laden evaded capture from the United States and its allies for over a decade, he was found and murdered in his million dollar compound on May 2, 2011. A team of elite U.S. Navy SEALs and CIA paramilitary officers raided his compound located in Abbottabad, Pakistan. He was believed to have been hiding in this residence for five or six years as he planned missions that would cause mass casualties to the United States’ homeland. After investigations, the CIA concluded that contrary to popular belief and skepticism, bin Laden was largely in control of al-Qaeda’s operations until his death on May 2.

**Ayman Al-Zawahiri: The Lieutenant**

Ayman al-Zawahiri is an Egyptian theologian, militant and physician born in Cairo, Egypt in 1951. According to biographies written about al-Zawahiri, he was an activist from the very start. Stephane Lacroix writes, “Of all the figures of the international jihadist movement, it is Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian, who best illustrates the story of contemporary radical Sunni

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Growing up, Ayman was influenced by the notable Egyptian radical Islamist Sayyid Qutb’s writings. He grew up with a passion to join the radical movement where he was imprisoned after the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Sedat in 1981. After graduating from medical school and becoming an influential actor in the Egyptian jihad, he went to Afghanistan where he met Osama bin Laden during the jihad in the 1980s. Al-Zawahiri and Abdullah Azzam were in a fierce competition to secure their allegiance with bin Laden. According to Stephane Lacroix, “This honeymoon between bin Laden and Zawahiri was short-lived, however, and their interests rapidly diverged.”

In 1998, the two met again and al-Zawahiri signed a joint declaration with bin Laden and other representatives from different radical Islamic movements to create the “World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders.”

Although a licensed surgeon, Ayman al-Zawahiri is known to have a deep knowledge of Islamic history and theology. He is a prominent thinker in the al-Qaeda organizations and plans many of its attacks. Additionally, after September 11, al-Zawahiri gradually took on the status of being the group’s official spokesman. He is the author of the book, *Knights under the Prophet’s Banner*, which outlined al-Qaeda’s strategies after September 11. Despite speculations on his whereabouts, Al-Zawahiri is still believed to be a prominent leader of al-Qaeda’s Pakistani contingent. According to many U.S. intelligence agencies, “Zawahiri functions as al-Qaeda’s most important ideological leader, and perhaps also the main operational leader of the network’s activities.” Many counter-terrorism experts argue that al-Zawahiri is still very instrumental in the tactical planning of al-Qaeda’s operations today.

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33 Stephane Lacroix, *Al-Qaeda in its Own Words*, United States of America, 147.
34 Abdullah Azzam will be mentioned in the next section.
35 Lacroix, 156.
36 Telsik.
With the death of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011, the Western media has reported that the Egyptian Saif al-Adel has been named as the interim military commander of al-Qaeda. During this period, many believe that al-Qaeda is collecting allegiance, or *bay’a* (بيعة), from other al-Qaeda affiliated groups such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The *bay’a* is a religious oath of allegiance by al-Qaeda members which was given to Osama bin Laden. The new successor, which many believe will be Ayman al-Zawahiri, will not be announced until after the al-Qaeda factions are able to come to a consensus.

**Abdullah Azzam: The Imam of Jihad**

“The life of the Muslim umma” is solely dependent on the ink of its scholars and the blood of its martyrs. What is more beautiful than the writing of the umma’s history with both the ink of the scholar and his blood, such that the map of Islamic history becomes colored with two lines: one of them black – that is, what the scholars wrote with the ink of his pen – and the other one red – what the martyr wrote with his blood.”

- Abdullah Azzam

Abdullah Yusuf Mustafa Azzam, known as Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989), was a Palestinian religious scholar who holds an important place in the global context of jihad and

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37 The umma in Islam refers to the Muslim nation, or the community of believers.
38 Mandaville, 247.
radical Islamism. According to Thomas Hegghammer, an expert who specializes in Islamist militancy, “Western analysts have described him as ‘the godfather of jihad,’ while radical Islamists call him ‘the imam of jihad.’”\(^{39}\) During his life, Azzam served as a principle theoretician, inspirational figure, and a key organizer to the Afghan jihad during the 1980s against the Soviet Union. Although Azzam was killed in a bomb that was detonated in Peshwar, Pakistan in November 1989, he had already gained the ranks as one of the most influential icons in the militant Islamist arena. He is a prominent figure in jihad that many believe only Osama bin Laden can be compared to because of his influential writings, his uncontested charisma and his successful pioneering of the Afghan jihad.

Azzam wrote two well-known books that preach the importance of a worldwide jihad: \textit{The Defense of Muslim Territories} and \textit{Join the Caravan}. These books argue for defensive jihad and are considered paramount in understanding Islamic militancy. Azzam was noted as being incredibly intelligent in his youth and pursued studying agriculture after secondary school. In 1963, Abdullah decided to study religion in Syria. He registered at the Islamic law school at Damascus University where he obtained a diploma in sharia studies in 1966.\(^{40}\) During his time in Damascus, Azzam met many Syrian clerics who would rise to become Islamist leaders. He partook in political discussions relating to Islam and eventually became an Islamic teacher after his mentor, Shafiq Asad Abd al-Hadi, passed away. Azzam later joined the Palestinian jihad in 1967 against Israel. While he fought in the jihad, he met many influential Islamists and groups, notably the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Abdullah raised funds, recruited and organized the Islamic effort for the Afghan Arabs in the 1980s. He also emphasized the political rise and importance of Islamism in his works and

\(^{39}\) Thomas Hegghammer, \textit{Al-Qaeda in its Own Words}, 2008, 81.

\(^{40}\) \textit{Ibid}, 83.
teachings. Azzam was a key figure to the formation of al-Qaeda because of his influence on Osama bin Laden during the Afghan jihad. He was bin Laden’s mentor during that period and he “played an instrumental role in shaping Osama bin Laden’s worldview and convincing him that in the Afghan war he had found his calling.”\textsuperscript{41} Abudullah Azzam and Osama bin Laden agreed that jihad is a compulsory part of Islam. However, the two disagreed where the jihad would focus after the Afghan mujahidin defeated the Soviets in 1989. In 1988, bin Laden created the al-Qaeda organization, which challenged Azzam’s authority, since it competed with his Service Bureau. On November 24, 1989 Azzam was killed in a car bomb explosion.\textsuperscript{42} Although there was never any evidence that al-Zawahiri and bin Laden were implicated, some observers singled them out as having been behind the attack.

\textbf{Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi: The Emir of Mesopotamia} أبو مصعب الزرقاوي

Although Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was not a founder of the al-Qaeda organization, he played a major role in assassinations, beheadings and attacks against Americans and Shi’a \((\text{شيعة})\) Muslims in Iraq during the 2000s. After the Afghan jihad and the events of 9/11 came to an end, “The terror campaign led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq from 2003 to 2006 allowed jihadist

\textsuperscript{41} Mandaville, 243.
\textsuperscript{42} Wright
fighters to remain at the forefront of international events by defying U.S. power, and thus to give the entire world the impression that a lasting, if not eternal, jihad had been unleashed.” Zarqawi did not receive any secondary education, nor was he educated in Islamic teachings, but he was known for his brutality and fierceness.

After being jailed in Jordan for carrying arms and false documents, he left for Pakistan after a religious revival in jail and became closely allied with Osama bin Laden. It was in Peshawar, Pakistan where al-Zarqawi adopted the fundamentalist salafist faith, which many experts believe has fueled his radicalism, Shi’a and American hatred, and non-tolerance for moderate Muslim governments. In the early 2000s, Abu Musab ran a training camp for jihadists in Herat, a western Afghanistan city, where he formed the organization \textit{al-Tawhid wal-Jihad} (التوحيد والجهاد), or Monotheism and Jihad.

After spending some time carrying out attacks in Jordan, al-Zarqawi joined the jihad in Iraq to oppose the invading American forces. He made a name for himself and his organization after receiving international attention as a ruthless militant who strongly opposed the U.S. and Western military forces in the Islamic world. On February 5, 2003 U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell recognized al-Zarqawi as an international threat when he addressed the United Nations Security Council, stating, “Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network [al-Tawhid wal-Jihad] headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda lieutenants.” During his three-year reign in Iraq, al-Zarqawi was known for his guerrilla warfare, relentless attacks and the internationally publicized beheading of American contractor Nicholas Berg.

\footnotesize{\bibitem{Kepel_et_al_2005} Kepel et al., 238.\par
\bibitem{Telsik_2006} Telsik, Lee H. "Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi." \textit{Council on Foreign Relations} 8 June 2006.\par
\bibitem{Ibid} \textit{Ibid}, 244.\par
\bibitem{Kepel_et_al_2006} Kepel, et al., 245.}
On October 19, 2004, “through a spokesman and on the internet, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi publicly declared his allegiance to bin Laden and stated that this was the result of eight months of contact between his organization and al-Qaeda.”\(^{47}\) After this allegiance, al-Tawhid wal-Jihad was renamed Qaedat al jihad in Mesopotamia or al-Qaeda in Iraq (القاعدة في العراق). Osama bin Laden coined al-Zarqawi the “Emir of the al-Qaeda organization in the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates.”\(^{48}\) Abu Musab al-Zarqawi continued to plan suicide attacks against Americans and Shi’s Muslims in Iraq, as well as claiming responsibility for attacks on three hotels in Amman, Jordan. According to a report conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations, “On June 7, 2006, U.S. forces in Iraq launched an air strike on a safe house some fifty-five miles north of Baghdad, where Zarqawi was hiding.”\(^{49}\) The attack eliminated al-Zarqawi, but his ideology and leadership are far from extinct in contemporary global jihad.

**Anwar Al-Awlaki: The American Mastermind**

Anwar al-Awlaki is an American citizen and an active al-Qaeda member today. He was born in New Mexico and studied in the United States before returning to his family’s roots in


\(^{49}\) *Ibid*. 
Yemen. Al-Awlaki became an ideological threat to the United States when he began lecturing in online forums praising militancy and jihad. While operating from Yemen, he has “provided a bridge between militants overseas and some radical Muslims based in the US.”

Al-Awlaki has been effective for al-Qaeda because of his knowledge of the United States and its government, including such details as the dates of the Election Day, the Super Bowl, popular newspaper companies, and especially what frightens Americans. He has provided important insights into American cultural values to al-Qaeda leaders, which has been tactically advantageous for the jihadist organization. The U.S. government has connected him to the Fort Hood shooting by Major Nidal Hasan in 2009, claiming that he inspired Hasan to commit the shooting at Fort Hood which al-Awlaki knew was a major military base. Anwar al-Awlaki was also a mentor to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian who attempted to blow up a Detroit bound passenger plane from Yemen on Christmas day in 2009. Like many al-Qaeda leaders, al-Awlaki’s whereabouts are unknown, although he is thought to be hiding in the mountainous regions of Yemen today. He, along with Ayman al-Zawahiri, will surely play a central role in al-Qaeda’s leadership and planning of attacks after Osama bin Laden’s death.

The Organization

Al-Qaeda is an organization that has been very eager to let the United States and its allies know why it opposes them. Since its founding, Osama bin Laden was very clear about his justifications for waging jihad against the U.S. and its sympathizers. In its initial meeting in August 1988 as an organized faction in Peshawar, Pakistan, a member of al-Qaeda described that “al-Qaeda is basically an organized Islamic faction; its goal is to live the word of God, to make

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51 This topic will be discussed later in the analysis.
His religion victorious.” According to *al-Jazeera*, a Qatari news station, “Base Jihad or al-Qaeda Islamic jihadist movement led by Osama bin Laden is planning to adopt the idea of jihad against infidel governments and the liberalization of the Muslim countries of the foreign presence.” Along with its ideologies, it is important to establish that al-Qaeda is a transnational organization that does not work strictly out of Pakistan and Afghanistan today, but around the world.

The fundamental leader of the organization was Osama bin Laden until his death on May 2, 2011. Following bin Laden’s death, Ayman al-Zawahiri is expected to be the next successor of al-Qaeda. Although it is unclear where al-Zawahiri is currently located, he is thought to be hiding in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan or Pakistan. Al-Qaeda central is located in these areas, but there are also prominent affiliate cells around the world that claim to be working with the organization and its leaders.

The first reference to al-Qaeda appeared in a CIA report in 1996; it was used by the State Department for the first time in 1998. They described it not as an organized group, but rather as “an organizational hub, predominantly for like-minded Sunni extremists.” Al-Qaeda today is more of an ideological orientation for radical Islamists who may not be directly connected to the al-Qaeda organization. Jason Burke, a writer on Islamic extremism, concludes that “it is important to avoid seeing al-Qaeda as a coherent and structured terrorist organization with cells everywhere… This would be profoundly to misconceive the nature of modern Islamic militancy.”

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54 Al-Qaeda central and its affiliate cells will be discussed in more depth later in the analysis.
55 Lawrence, 108.
chance that al-Qaeda’s core leadership never conceived the plans. The four contemporary groups of al-Qaeda will be discussed in further detail later in this analysis, but for now, it is important to understand that “al-Qaeda is more than just an organization; it is an ideology and a popular global brand that spins a heroic narrative with an idealized version of Islamic jihad.” Al-Qaeda as an organization has outgrown itself and has nevertheless become an institutional icon and trademark for militants around the world.

**Ideological Orientation**

There are many reasons why militant groups such as al-Qaeda have committed attacks against the West and its allies. According to Peter Mandaville, radical Islamism is defined by two categories:

1) A vision of Islamic political order that rejects the legitimacy of the modern sovereign nation – state and seeks to establish a pan – Islamic polity or renewed caliphate.  

2) An emphasis on violent struggle (jihad) as the primary or even the exclusive legitimate method for the pursuit of political change.

Al-Qaeda’s jihad focuses more on the removal of foreign troops from Muslim territories than on the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. However, in a 2001 statement to the world, bin Laden asserted, “Our concern is that our umma unites either under the Words of the Book of God or His Prophet, and that this nation should establish the righteous caliphate.” Although the Islamic caliphate is not the major force behind their jihad, al-Qaeda believes that unbelief and corruption

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58 A caliphate is a type of Islamic government where there was one ruler over the entire Islamic kingdom. The term “caliphate” is derived from the same Arabic root, “caliph” (righteous leader) and refers to the duration when the 4 rightly guided caliphs ruled the Islamic world. This is important to Islam because after the Prophet Muhammad died, the Islamic world selected a caliph, or predecessor, to Muhammad to lead the Islamic Umma (community of believers). Many militants desire to establish an Islamic caliphate today because they argue that the world and its leaders have become corrupt and therefore its Muslims are straying away from the straight path of Islam. The last Islamic caliphate ended when Turkey became Westernized and its leader, Kemal Ataturk, separated religion from the state.

59 Mandaville, 239.

60 Lawrence, 121.
in the Islamic world have been caused by the absence of an Islamic caliphate. *Al-Jazeera* claimed that the “al-Qaeda Islamic jihadist movement led by Osama bin Laden is planning to adopt the idea of jihad against infidel governments and the liberalization of the Muslim countries of the foreign presence, or Western Governments.”\(^6^1\) Al-Qaeda states that the removal of Western forces in the holy lands of Saudi Arabia and the entire Muslim world is essential. Osama bin Laden demanded in many of his statements that the call for jihad is supplemented by Western forces on Muslim lands, the treatment of Muslims by the West and the infidel (nonbeliever) “puppet” governments the West has installed in the Islamic world.

Global Jihad

“The greatest disaster to befall Muslims since the death of the Prophet Muhammad is the occupation of Saudi Arabia, the cornerstone of the Islamic world.”

- Osama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden referred to the original sources of Islam in his statements to the world in order to inspire Muslims to follow the call to jihad. From these sources, he relied heavily on the Qur’an and the hadith, or the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad. In one of his statements to the world, he declared, “Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian peninsula.” The al-Qaeda organization’s ideologies, backed by the founder Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri’s beliefs, have not been hidden from the world. The two, along with other spokesmen, have demanded the world to wake up and realize who the real terrorists are. The following sections will comprise statements from al-Qaeda outlining their demands from the West and argue that the United States and its allies are the true terrorists.

The Crusaders

“I say that the battle isn’t between the al-Qaeda organization and the global Crusaders. Rather, the battle is between Muslims—the people of Islam and the global Crusaders.”

- Osama bin Laden

For al-Qaeda, the occupation of Western troops in the holy lands of Islam was enough to declare a defensive jihad. To truly understand bin Laden’s call for jihad, one must look back to the first Gulf War when Iraq invaded Kuwait in the early 1990s. Fresh off a victory against the world’s superpower, Osama bin Laden wanted to provide his services to protect Islam from the infidel government of Iraq. However, the Saudi government turned to the United States’ military in the Gulf War, which was a shock and utter disappointment to bin Laden. As a result of the

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62 Lawrence, 23. Osama bin Laden stated this in a 1996 message declaring jihad against the West.
63 From the hadith collection of al-Bukhari, no. 2,932.
64 Lawrence, 108.
American occupation, “The land of Mecca and the birthplace of the Prophet [Muhammad], Saudi Arabia was a symbolic and political oasis for Islamic radicals everywhere.”\textsuperscript{65} For bin Laden and many militants, having non-Arabs protect their holy lands was blasphemy. In Osama’s opinion, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had betrayed its fellow Muslims and had compromised its reputation. According to a U.S. State Department report, “Bin Laden’s terrorism represents an extreme rejection of the increased U.S. strategic and military domination of the Middle East—especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf—that resulted from the Gulf War.”\textsuperscript{66} From this point on, Osama and al-Qaeda could not trust the Saudi Arabian government and referred to the Americans as the Crusaders.

In 1998, Osama bin Laden announced the creation of a World Islamic Front for jihad against the “Crusaders,” which targeted the West and its allies (particularly the United States and Israel). The organization created a solid base for jihad and led to the foundation of al-Qaeda. According to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the three major goals of al-Qaeda were to “overthrow ‘corrupt regimes’ in the Muslim world, establish sharia in these lands, and inflict significant casualties on the ‘Western Crusader’ and get the Crusaders out of the lands of Islam especially from Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine.”\textsuperscript{67} The term “Crusaders”\textsuperscript{68} has a significant symbolic meaning to Muslims and will be referred to frequently in statements by al-Qaeda to justify their jihad against the West.

Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda said they attacked the United States because of American imperialism in the Middle East. Although bin Laden did not argue this exact thought, he

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[65] Jones, 74.
\item[66] U.S. Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), Intelligence Assessment, “\textit{Bin Laden’s Jihad: Political Context},” released by the National Security Archive, August 28, 1998.
\item[68] The term “Crusaders” refers to a time in Islamic history when the West, or European, powers attempted to steal the Muslim lands and threaten the Islamic caliphate. These wars lasted for years and are symbolic in Islamic history.
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describes his jihad as attacking the global unbelief. He saw America and its allies trying to control the Middle East, which also happens to include Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. For this reason, “As long as America seeks to control the Middle East, he and people like him will be its enemy.” A main point of contention for bin Laden in his statements to the world was the amount of foreign military presence in the lands of Islam, mainly by the United States. Imagine what American citizens would do if there were Saudi Arabian military bases located throughout New York, California, Washington D.C., Hawaii, and other places all over U.S. territories. Because of American imperialism, Osama bin Laden argued in 1998, “It is not acceptable in such a struggle as that he [the Crusader] should attack and enter my land and holy sanctuaries, and plunder Muslims’ oil, and then when he encounters any resistance from Muslims, to label them terrorists.” After acknowledging a basic idea of the term “Crusader,” the reader should be able to understand the profound significance of the word when Osama bin Laden or al-Qaeda use it.

Terror for Terror

“Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is Able to give them (believers) victory.”

- Qur’an, 22:39

Al-Qaeda and its mujahidin brothers justify their violence to protect their fellow Muslims. Bin Laden demanded in nearly every statement that the United States and its allies are the true terrorists. He argued the actions America and its allies have taken against Muslims in Iraq, Palestine, Bosnia, Lebanon and Afghanistan, to name a few, have prompted a reaction.

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70 Lawrence, 73.
71 The Noble Qur’an, Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1996.
Let’s start with Iraq. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) developed resolution 661 on August 6, 1990 which imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.\textsuperscript{72} The UNSC developed this resolution in an attempt to halt the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces. However, the resolution killed thousands of innocent Iraqi children. Osama bin Laden cited that “the death of more than 600,000 Iraqi children [died] because of the shortage of food and medicine which resulted from the boycotts and sanctions.”\textsuperscript{73} These economic sanctions devastated a large amount of children in Iraq from 1991 to 1998. A UNICEF report published on April 30, 1998 “cites the following statistics on death: a child dies every 12 minutes; 250 people die a day; 90,000 a year because of sanctions [on Iraq]” and that “estimates range from 500,000 to 1.5 million Iraqi children died as a consequence of sanctions.”\textsuperscript{74} These numbers are alarming and did not go unnoticed by bin Laden and his regime. The United States’ ambassador to the United Nations, Madeline Albright, was questioned about these lethal statistics during a 1996 interview with CBS News’ \textit{60 Minutes}. When she was questioned about the alarming dead toll because of the economic sanctions, Albright responded without hesitation, “We think the price is worth it.”\textsuperscript{75} It is because of these statements and actions that militant groups have desired to attack the United States and its allies.

The Israeli-Palestinian issue has been labeled as a primary accusation against the West by bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Osama stated, “The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you [the United States] are the leaders of its criminals.”\textsuperscript{76} Since its creation in 1948, Muslims have been in a bloody fight with the Israelis over who the rightful owners of the land are. Aside from Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory, they also have taken the holy

\textsuperscript{72} Lawrence, 40.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid}, 40. Osama bin Laden stated this to a reporter in a 1996 interview. The link to the UNSC resolution is http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/11/IMG/NR057511.pdf?OpenElement
\textsuperscript{74} United States District Court for the District of Columbia, “Office of Foreign Assets Control, United States Department of the Treasury v. Voices in the Wilderness,” Case No. 03-CV-1356 (JDB) 21, Kentlaw.edu, 14.
\textsuperscript{75} This statement was made during a May 10, 1996 interview with \textit{60 Minutes}. The link to the statement is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbIX1CP9qr4.
\textsuperscript{76} Lawrence, 162.
al-Aqsa Mosque. The al-Aqsa Mosque has profound significance in Islam because it was here where the prophet Muhammad completed his night journey from al-masjid al-haram\(^{77}\) in Mecca to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven at this holy site where he led the previous prophets of God in a prayer. While in heaven, Muhammad spoke with Allah and they came to the conclusion that Muslims would pray five times a day. Muhammad descended back down to earth and instructed Muslims what Allah had revealed to him. Since this day, the al-Aqsa Mosque has been a prominent location for Muslims and Islam.

According to al-Qaeda and other militants, Israel and the West have been polluting Islamic lands and its holy places of worship for years. These have been chief reasons for the Israeli-Palestinian issue today. Bin Laden argued:

“You [the West, specifically the U.S.] have supported the Jews in their idea that Jerusalem is their eternal capital, and have agreed to move your embassy there. With your help and under your protection, the Israelis are planning to destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque. Under the protection of your weapons, [Ariel] Sharon\(^{78}\) entered the al-Aqsa Mosque, to pollute it as a preparation to capture and destroy it.”\(^{79}\)

Actions taken by the West and Israel have fueled reactions from many Muslims throughout the world.

Al-Qaeda declares that it will stand up for its fellow Muslims and defend their holy lands.

With regards to killing innocent people in Palestine, bin Laden stated, “The whole world has

\(^{77}\) Muslims around the world direct their prayers to the ka’ba located in this holy mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. When a Muslim partakes in hajj, they come to this mosque and walk around it seven times. Hajj is the fifth and final pillar of Islam and every able bodied Muslim is supposed to perform hajj at least once in their life if they can afford it.

\(^{78}\) In September 2000, Ariel Sharon, a former Israeli prime minister, visited the temple mount in Jerusalem, which is the home of al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. He was accompanied by hundreds of Israeli policemen and stated that the complex would remain under Israeli control for eternity. This created large amounts of protests by Muslims and added to the hatred of Israel and the West for many Muslims because al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam.

\(^{79}\) Lawrence, 164.
witnessed Israeli soldiers killing Muhammad al-Durreh\textsuperscript{80} and many others like him.\textsuperscript{81} The murdering of innocent civilians around the Muslim world has prompted al-Qaeda to declare jihad and conclude that the true terrorists are Israel and its Crusader allies. The call to defensive jihad for al-Qaeda has formed from a simple theory: terror for terror. Bin Laden stated, “The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally avenged. You must know that the Palestinians do not cry alone; their women are not widowed alone; their sons are not orphaned alone.”\textsuperscript{82} The U.N. sanctions against Iraq, the innocent people killed in Palestine, the tyranny of the Crusaders and Israel and the unfair treatment of Muslims around the world led to the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States.

\textbf{Events Leading up to 9/11}

\begin{quote}
“It is known that every action has its reaction. If the American presence continues, and that is an action, then it is natural for reactions to continue against this presence. In other words, explosions, and killings of American soldiers, will continue.”\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

- Osama bin Laden

We have already seen some of the primary reasons behind al-Qaeda’s campaign leading up to the September 11 attacks. This section focuses on some of the same issues along with previous warnings by al-Qaeda. Furthermore, it analyzes discussions of some of al-Qaeda’s early attacks.

On June 6, 1982 Israeli forces invaded Lebanon in Operation Peace for Galilee under the command of former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon. The goal of the operation was to

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\textsuperscript{80} On September 30, 2000, Israeli soldiers shot and killed twelve-year-old Muhammad al-Durreh in the streets of Gaza. A French cameraman caught the murder on film and testified in court against the Israeli security forces. However, Israel found no evidence accusing its forces of murder, despite the film caught by the French cameraman. Muhammad al-Durreh and his father were hiding to avoid being shot when the twelve-year-old was murdered and his father was deeply wounded. Here is the link to the story and the murder caught on camera: \url{http://ramallahonline.com/2001/02/mohammed-al-durreh/}.
\textsuperscript{81} Lawrence, 147.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid}, 163.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid}, 52. Osama bin Laden was quoted saying this in an interview with CNN in 1997.
\end{flushright}
eradicate the Israeli rival, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). When Israeli forces entered Beirut, Lebanon, they received a large amount of opposition from the Palestinian militants and “…in the ensuing siege, nearly 20,000 people died, at least half of them civilians.” It was during these events that Osama bin Laden witnessed Beirut’s high rise buildings being bombed and innocent women and children being murdered under the United States’ watch. He recounted these events by affirming that “they started bombing, killing, and wounding many, while others fled in terror. I still remember those distressing scenes: blood, torn limbs, women and children massacred.” In a 2004 statement to the world, bin Laden reflected to these horrific images and stated, “As I looked at those destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me to punish the oppressor in kind by destroying towers in America, so that it would have a taste of its own medicine…” From this event, bin Laden claimed, “In those critical moments, many ideas raged inside me, ideas difficult to describe, but they unleashed a powerful urge to reject injustice and a strong determination to punish the oppressors.” This conflict planted a seed in bin Laden’s ideology that affirmed the tyranny of the United States and its government and would eventually lead to al-Qaeda attacks after 1982.

A Riyadh, Saudi Arabia car explosion on November 13, 1995 marked one of the beginning stages of al-Qaeda resiliency against the U.S. The bomb was detonated at a U.S. training facility where Americans were instructing Saudi forces. The explosion reportedly killed “…six people, including five Americans, and injured about 60 others.” The explosion was

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85 Lawrence, 239.
later tied to al-Qaeda and marked one of its explicit warnings for United States to re-evaluate its occupation on Saudi Arabian soil.

Another milestone attack for militants occurred on June 25, 1996 when an attack on the Khobar Towers military complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia killed 19 Americans and wounded hundreds more.\textsuperscript{89} Although al-Qaeda was initially accused for the bombings, four Afghan jihad veterans proclaimed they were inspired by Osama bin Laden and his ideology. Reflecting on the attacks in Riyadh and Dhahran, Osama bin Laden stated during his declaration of jihad on August 23, 1996 that “the situation in Saudi Arabia has begun to resemble a huge volcano that is about to explode and destroy unbelief and corruption, wherever it comes from.”\textsuperscript{90} Little did the U.S. know the destruction that al-Qaeda would bring in the future.

August 7, 1998 marked the date that Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the al-Qaeda organization truly came into America’s vision. On this day, U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya had been bombed by near-simultaneous truck explosions. “In Nairobi [Kenya], where the US Embassy was located in a congested downtown area, the attack killed 291 persons and wounded about 5,000. The bombing in Dar es Salaam [Tanzania] killed 10 persons and wounded 77.”\textsuperscript{91} After these explosions, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda had caught the attention of the international community and bin Laden was immediately placed on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s top ten most wanted list.

October 12, 2000 ‘sealed the deal’ for al-Qaeda as a strong international presence. While the USS Cole was refueling at the Port of Aden in Yemen, two al-Qaeda operatives rammed the side of the American destroyer and detonated explosives on their small scale boat. The explosion “…ripped a 60-by-40-foot hole in the ship’s hull, trapping the bodies of many of the dead crew

\textsuperscript{90} Lawrence, 27.
members in the wreckage...which killed 17 U.S. sailors and injured 38."\(^{92}\) Al-Qaeda was connected to the attack and Osama bin Laden praised the suicide bombers as heroes of Islam. To reiterate al-Qaeda’s philosophy, bin Laden argued that the U.S. government did not understand what peace is: “America does not understand the language of manners and principles, so we are addressing it using the language it understands.”\(^{93}\) After these attacks, the United States and its allies remained in the lands of Islam, which prompted bin Laden and al-Qaeda to speak America’s language resulting in the onset of September 11, 2001.

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\(^{92}\) Michael, Isikoff, "U.S. failure to retaliate for USS Cole attack rankled then — and now," MSNBC.com.  
\(^{93}\) Lawrence, 165.
The Manhattan Raid: September 11, 2001

“Those who condemn these operations [9/11] have viewed the event in isolation and have failed to connect it to previous events or to the reasons behind it.”

- Osama bin Laden

September 11, 2001 marks an infamous day in United States’ history and a key milestone for al-Qaeda. Bin Laden and his faithful companions devastated the world in less than twenty minutes. Although the death tolls were high, bin Laden stated that the attacks affected the U.S. in many more ways. The assaults on the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon were extremely successful for al-Qaeda because they inflicted fear across the world, bled the American economy and targeted the world’s biggest military power.

The Towers of Freedom

“We love this kind of death for God’s cause as much as you like to live. We have nothing to fear for; it is something we wish for.”

- Osama bin Laden

Osama bin Laden continually praised his students for their attack against the United States. He believed, “God opened the way for these young men to tell America, the head of global unbelief, and its allies, that they are living in falsehood. They sacrificed themselves for ‘There is no god but God [الله إياك]’.” It was nineteen Arab men from four different nationalities who conducted the attacks. Fifteen of the men were from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates, one from Lebanon, and one from Egypt. The Egyptian Muhammad Atta was named the leader of the jihadi mission by Osama bin Laden when the two discussed the plans in 1999. Many of the men who sacrificed themselves on 9/11 were part of an al-Qaeda contingent known as the Hamburg Cell, which was based in Germany. In spite of the two

94 Ibid., 149.
95 Ibid., 56.
96 Ibid., 155.
I want to note there were not Afghans or Pakistanis on those planes.
additional planes in the attacks, one which hit the Pentagon—the military headquarters of the United States—and another which crashed in a Pennsylvania field, this analysis will focus on the World Trade Center’s assault and the aftermath.

At 8:45 a.m. September 11, 2001 American Airlines flight 11 struck the first World Trade Center tower.98 The pilot of the aircraft was Muhammad Atta, the lone Egyptian and the commander of the attacks. Eighteen minutes later, at 9:03 a.m., United Airlines flight 175 crashed into the second tower, which was piloted by UAE national, Marwan al-Shehhi.99 Osama bin Laden praised the attacks saying, “For your information, we agreed with the general commander Muhammed Atta, may God Bless his soul, to carry out all operations within twenty minutes.”100 The al-Qaeda organization was right on target when they devastated America and inflicted fear in the world in such a colossal raid. Bin Laden continued to state that “God has struck America at its Achilles heel and destroyed its greatest building, praise and blessings to Him.”101 Al-Qaeda enjoyed a great victory when the two planes struck and destroyed the Twin Towers.

Osama bin Laden argued the destruction of the towers represented more than the 2,975 people killed on 9/11.102 He proclaimed, “It is that this Western civilization, which is backed by America, has lost its values and appeal. The immense materialistic towers, which preach freedom, human rights, and equality, were destroyed.”103 Al-Qaeda destroyed the symbols of the United States of America, which represent more than the fallen towers. On October 10, 2001 the White House asked the five major U.S. television networks, CNN, Fox, ABC, CBS, and NBC to

99 Ibid.
100 Lawrence, 242.
101 Ibid, 104.
103 Lawrence, 112.
censor al-Qaeda footage, as National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice “urged all the American network chiefs not to screen videos of bin Laden.” Al-Qaeda argued America censored its statements because the “truth started to appear to the American people, and that we aren’t really the terrorists in the way they want to define the term.” Bin Laden stated that the White House was afraid that the American people would realize that Muslims “are being violated in Palestine, in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Sudan, in Somalia, in Kashmir, in the Philippines, and throughout the world, and that this is a reaction from the young men of our umma.” Muslims all around the world have been violated for years and the 9/11 attacks represented their struggle on a global stage.

Al-Qaeda focused on the deaths of innocent children in Iraq, the oppression against Palestinians, the genocide in Bosnia where the Muslims were raped and killed by the Serbians, Muslims in Chechnya being massacred by Russians, the tyranny of the Indians on Muslims in Kashmir and more. Bin Laden argued that although the U.S. may not be directly involved in all of these incidents, they do nothing to stop them from happening. He continued by saying that atrocities have taken place in the lands of Islam and “we do not hear anyone protesting or even lifting a finger to stop it. But when after eighty years the sword comes down on America, the hypocrites rise up to lament these killers who have scorned the blood, honor, and holy places of Muslims.” For these reasons and American involvement in Muslim lands, Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda brothers brought down the sword on America, devastating its people and destroying its towers of freedom, as well as other symbols of the United States.

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105 Lawrence, 112.
106 Ibid, 113.
107 Ibid, 102.
**Economic Effects of 9/11**

“Al-Qaeda spent $500,000 on the September 11 attacks, while America lost more than $500 billion, at the lowest estimate, in the event and its aftermath.”

- Osama bin Laden

Al-Qaeda was able to inflict and ignite fear all across the world after the attacks on the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon and the unsuccessful flight that crashed into a Pennsylvania field. The assaults on September 11 were well executed by al-Qaeda and “the main targets were the symbols of the United States: their economic and military power.” In favor of al-Qaeda, the attacks have done unimaginable damage to America and its allies, bleeding them both economically and militarily.

Bruce Lawrence, a professor of religion at Duke University, describes the monumental impact on the stock market alone during the week of the attacks:

“When the stock markets reopened on September 17, 2001 (the longest closure since the 1929 Great Depression), the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) stock market fell 684 points (7.1 percent) to 8920, its biggest-ever single-day decline. By the end of the week, it had fallen 1369.7 points, or 14.3 percent, its largest one-week point decline in history. US stocks lost $1.2 trillion in value for the week.”

Al-Qaeda has a simple game plan against the U.S.: drain its economy. Therefore, they targeted the stock market because it plays such a vital role in the U.S. and the world’s economy. To see these effects happen after an overall attack that lasted a little over an hour is amazing. For this reason, bin Laden argued that defeating America is not an arduous task.

The United States will never recover from the events that took place on 9/11, both mentally and economically. On October 21, 2001 Osama bin Laden was interviewed by an al-

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110 *Ibid.,* 111.
Jaibe reporter in an undisclosed location south of Kabul, Afghanistan. In the interview, bin Laden claimed, “American studies and analysis have mentioned that 70 percent of the American people are still suffering from depression and psychological trauma as a result of the incident of the two towers, and the attack on the Defense Ministry, the Pentagon.”111 This is exactly what al-Qaeda wanted. The American people were traumatized, which was exemplified through people being afraid to go to work, air travel decreased significantly, hotel and airline companies had to fire thousands of employees and the national debt skyrocketed. Even today the United States is facing economic difficulties from the 9/11 attacks. Jobs have been lost, the federal deficit is ludicrously high and two wars continue the American economy.

The mujahidin used the same techniques against the Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan from 1979-1989. Osama bin Laden claimed in a 2004 interview, “We, alongside the mujahideen, bled Russia for 10 years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat ... So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy.”112 Once again, they have been successful. The national debt of the United States as of April 13, 2011 is $14,293,319,325,647 and increasing quickly.113 The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have punctured a national debt wound that continues to bleed. Although the attacks of September 11, 2001 took place nearly ten years ago, the recession and economic difficulties the United States is currently going through is an economic effect that will continue well into the foreseeable future.

The War on Terror

“Over time it’s going to be important for nations to know they will be held accountable for inactivity...You’re either with us or against us in the fight against terror.”114
- Former U.S. President, George W. Bush

111 ibid, 111.
113 To see what the national debt is at this very moment, check: http://www.usdebtclock.org/
The Muslim world had mixed emotions after George W. Bush declared the United States’ War on Terror in 2001. In Karachi, Pakistan, three people were shot dead and three others were injured by police who attempted to halt protests opposed to former military leader General Pervez Musharraf’s support for the U.S. The military regime immediately announced to Pakistan’s 140 million people that it would support America and its allies in the War on Terror because its country would be in danger if it didn’t. However, thousands were on the street protesting Musharraf’s decision because they believed that the United States was going to attack Afghanistan with no proof. One cleric leading a prayer in a mosque in Islamabad stated over a loudspeaker, “Musharraf, listen. The nation will not accept your decision, and any collaboration with the US is treason.” Meanwhile, a large crowd gathered outside the mosque after prayers chanting, “Afghanistan is the graveyard of the Americans.” So far they have been accurate; Afghanistan is the graveyard of many great empires. The United States’ military has not made any ground besides overthrowing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These protests represent the continued hatred towards America in the Muslim world as Osama bin Laden reaffirmed, “It is no surprise that the Muslim nation in Pakistan will rise up to defend its Islam.” Bin Laden is hated by many in the world, but al-Qaeda’s ideologies against American imperialism in the Muslim world are supported by many other sympathizers.

Just as President George W. Bush made clear in his “you are either with us or against is speech,” Osama bin Laden had informed Muslims that they too are in a similar position in the War on Terror. He argued that after 9/11 received so much international attention, “People have been divided into two camps; those who support the attacks against American arrogance and

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116 Ibid.
117 Lawrence, 101.
tyranny, and those who condemn them.”\textsuperscript{118} This is important for al-Qaeda because after the events of 9/11, the Muslim world had been divided into two camps. The former al-Qaeda leader asserted that it is imperative for Muslims to understand the nature of the struggle and the jihad in order to accurately gauge which side to take. A key point of contention for bin Laden was that this is a war on faith and doctrine, not a war on terror. Bin Laden saw the U.S.’ War on Terror as a war against Islam because neither he, nor other al-Qaeda affiliates view themselves as terrorists. He concluded, “In light of this clear and evident fact Muslims must know where they stand in relation to this war.”\textsuperscript{119} Therefore, the former al-Qaeda commander declared that it is paramount for loyal Muslims to stand together and oppose the war waged against their religion by George Bush Jr. and the West.

The U.S. led War on Terror has gone on for almost ten years now with many lives lost on both ends. The intense bombing campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused a lot of collateral damage. This collateral damage fueled bin Laden’s fire, which has added to a new line of recruits who desire to join al-Qaeda and the jihad. Osama bin Laden proclaimed:

“After the Americans bombed entire villages, for no reason other than to terrify people and make them afraid of hosting Arabs or going near them, their minister of defense got up and said that that was their right, meaning effectively that they had the right to annihilate people so long as they were Muslim and not American.”\textsuperscript{120}

The United States was hunting high value targets in these areas at the cost of many civilian lives. Seumas Milne, author of \textit{The Guardian} newspaper article, “The Innocent dead in a Coward’s

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 134. \\
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 135. \\
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 151.
War,” revealed that by mid-December 2001, at least 3,767 civilians were killed by US bombs.\textsuperscript{121} Michael Mann, a professor of Sociology at the University of California Los Angeles and author of the book, \textit{Incoherent Empire}, notes that during the United States’ bombing of Afghanistan, “Overall civilian losses must have been close to 10,000—triple the deaths inflicted by 9/11.”\textsuperscript{122} Another more recent survey conducted by the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNMA) concluded that from the years 2006-2010, 9,759 civilians died.\textsuperscript{123} These numbers are not all directly related to the United States, but rather show that the War on Terror has come at a bloody price.

Al-Qaeda’s Transformation in the Last Decade

“Al-Qaeda is and will remain the most serious threat to the Homeland.”\textsuperscript{124}
- U.S. Intelligence community

Although its leadership is unclear with Osama bin Laden’s death, the main structure of al-Qaeda apparently continues to survive. However, there has been an evolution in the structure of al-Qaeda throughout the world. While there has not been another devastating attack on U.S. soil since 9/11, al-Qaeda has made several attempts to target the U.S. Despite America’s success to stave off another devastating assault, there have been notable attacks outside the U.S. that have worked favorably for al-Qaeda and its campaign.

The Four Categories of Al-Qaeda’s Organizational Structure

Al-Qaeda’s organizational structure has changed since the beginning of its militancy to its contemporary jihad. The organization has grown rapidly and has been the base for many small-scale cells to merge into. Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman accurately divides al-Qaeda into four categories: al-Qaeda central, affiliate groups, affiliate cells, and the informal network.\textsuperscript{125}

Hoffman argues that al-Qaeda central includes the remnants of the pre-9/11 al-Qaeda organization and the same core leadership, which included the former leader Osama bin Laden and the projected successor Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Since 9/11, al-Qaeda central has been involved with efforts outside of Pakistan, most notably the London attacks in July 2005.\textsuperscript{126} Al-Qaeda central assumed command of these operations because of their relative freedom in Pakistan’s

\textsuperscript{124} Jones, 279. This was statement was made in a 2007 report by the CIA, National Security Agency, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency titled, \textit{The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland}.


\textsuperscript{126} This will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.
Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)\textsuperscript{127} where they were able to conduct assaults such as the 1998 East African embassy bombings and the September 11 attacks. The main distinction between al-Qaeda central and affiliate organizations is that large-scale attacks are entrusted only by al-Qaeda’s core individuals and leadership.

Affiliate groups include established insurgent organizations that cooperate with al-Qaeda central. In the past, these groups have benefited financially from Osama bin Laden, trained at his mujahidin camps, found bin Laden as a source of inspiration and received arms and other support from al-Qaeda central. Some affiliate groups have come from Pakistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Kashmir and most recently, Yemen. Examples of groups in Iraq include al-Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Islam. In addition, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and various Kashmiri Islamic groups, such as Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba have joined al-Qaeda ranks. A recent group that has committed acts under the banner of al-Qaeda is a salafist group formally named the Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The organization merged with al-Qaeda in September 2006 and changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Like many militant Islamist organizations, this group focuses on the overthrow of non-Islamic governments in order to institute an Islamic state. AQIM acquired international attention when it attacked a U.S. contractor bus in December 2006 in Algiers, marking its first attack against a U.S. entity.\textsuperscript{128}

Affiliate cells are small, dispersed groups of militants who have some sort of direct connection to al-Qaeda central.\textsuperscript{129} They are not large insurgent organizations looking to establish an Islamic caliphate or overthrow their governments, but instead are small radicalizing groups.

An example of an affiliate cell is the Hamburg cell that offered assistance and executed the

\textsuperscript{127} These will be discussed in more detail later in the analysis.
\textsuperscript{128} United States Department of State, \textit{Country Reports on Terrorism 2006}, Washington D.C.
\textsuperscript{129} Hoffman, 285-89.
September 11 attacks against the United States. This small cell consisted of Muhammad Atta, Marwan al Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah, who were three of the 9/11 pilots. Individuals in the affiliate cells usually have some jihad experience and many times have traveled to Pakistan to receive training from jihad camps there.

The informal network includes individuals who are not connected to al-Qaeda central, but have joined the jihad because of their outrage by Western attacks in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, and other areas. These networks do not receive any direct support from al-Qaeda and are often considered amateurs. An example of an informal network includes the attempted June 2007 attack in New York. Four men were charged for plotting and attempting to blow up fuel tanks, terminal buildings and fuel lines beneath John F. Kennedy International Airport. They had no direct connections with al-Qaeda central but were prepared to conduct attacks in support of it.\textsuperscript{130}

A successful plot from an informal network was the cell that conducted the Madrid train bombings in March 2004. This cell emerged from a loose association of Islamic extremists, though they did not have any tangible links to al-Qaeda central. Documents show that the Madrid attacks were carried out because of the attackers’ opposition to Spain’s involvement in the Iraq War. A 2003 al-Qaeda Internet strategy reports that “in order to force the Spanish government to withdraw from Iraq, the resistance should deal painful blows to its forces.”\textsuperscript{131} This cell was inspired by the statements and actions of Osama bin Laden and therefore felt it was their duty to oppose Spain’s involvement in Iraq. Aside from killing hundreds of people and wounding thousands more, the attacks led to Spain’s eventual strong opposition to the Iraq War and the withdrawal of its troops.

\textsuperscript{130} New York Police Department, \textit{Threat Analysis: JFK Airport/ Pipeline Plot}, New York, NY: June 2, 2007.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)

“The Americans should know that they are not welcome in this region and they are not very popular.”132

- General Yahya al-Saleh

According to U.S. policy makers, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has emerged as one of its top contemporary foreign policy concerns. Today, about half the prisoners in the United States’ high security prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba are from Yemen.133 The last two attempted attacks within the United States have originated from Yemen. While U.S. policy makers have been concerned about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Yemen has become a vital threat to the United States and its allies. Because of political instability and an overwhelming number of its population living in poverty, the Arabian Gulf’s poorest country has become a hotbed for militancy groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Although many people believe that the al-Qaeda network based in Afghanistan and Pakistan is the most dangerous threat, AQAP has become a crucial player in conducting international attacks. Edmund Hall, a former U.S. Ambassador to Yemen, stated, “In many ways they [AQAP] are the most pressing threat against the U.S. homeland.”134 He makes a compelling argument because AQAP has claimed responsibility for the attempted Christmas day suicide bombing on the Detroit bound aircraft, as well as the October 23 thwarted attacks on two cargo planes aimed for the United States.135 Hall continued to assert that “there are around 100 hardcore inner circle combatants, about a thousand who are not the inner circle members, but can be relied upon to conduct acts if needed, and an even larger circle of people who are

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132 60 Minutes: Al-Qaeda in Yemen, CBSNews.com, 16 Jan. 2011. 60 Minutes. General Yahya al-Saleh is the Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s nephew and the head of Yemen’s counter-terrorism team. He said this in an interview with 60 Minutes with a smirk on his face. The link to the video is: http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7253227n and he says this statement at 22:14.
134 Ibid.
135 These will be discussed in more detail later in the analysis.
ideologically sympathetic to the organization."\textsuperscript{136} Many people are sympathetic to the organization because they oppose American involvement in the wars and are tired of seeing Westerners impose on their land.

Aside from overwhelming support for al-Qaeda, Yemen is a perfect place for militants to settle. Many of the mujahidin fighters settled in Yemen after the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union. Yemen has poor border security, which makes it easy to smuggle arms and humans in and out of the country. It also has thousands of miles of desert that is unmonitored by the government and aside from the major cities like the capital Sana’a, the government’s presence is rarely felt. Because of a lack of government involvement, most of the country’s deserts are ruled by local tribes, which are many times responsive to al-Qaeda’s ideologies.

AQAP is believed to be harboring many high level al-Qaeda operatives like American born Anwar al-Awlaki and the Saudi Ibrahim al-Asiri, the group’s sophisticated bomb maker. Al-Awlaki has a knack for recruiting new talent into al-Qaeda and inciting radicalism in many others. He has been connected to the Christmas day bombing attempt in 2009, the Fort Hood shooting in 2009 and most likely the cargo jets bombing attempt in 2010. Although an American by birth, the United States’ military has given the okay to assassinate him because of his effectiveness to incite radicalism in young Muslims.

Another issue of concern for the U.S. regarding AQAP is the highly sophisticated bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri. Former U.S. ambassador to Yemen, Edmund Hall, claimed, “Al-Asiri is the bomb maker. He's apparently a very creative type who is adept at seeing chinks in our armor and challenging them.”\textsuperscript{137} His handiwork has not yet succeeded in carrying out an attack against the United States, although he has proven on two occasions that his work is deceptive. He is the

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{60 Minutes.}
bomb maker of the Christmas day bomber and the bombs that were on the cargo jets headed to the United States.\textsuperscript{138} He uses PETN (Pentaerythritol tetranitrate) in his work, which has effectively proved twice that it can get past international security personnel. Both of these individuals have played an imperative role in creating a new and emerging global threat in Yemen, which many policy makers argue is the United States’ number one threat to homeland security today.

**Events in the 2000s**

In the wake of September 2001, the winds of Islamic extremism spread throughout the world. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda showed the international community they could devastate the United States on American soil, which prompted militants around the world to join the jihad. The dynamics of al-Qaeda changed after 9/11 when small cells began carrying out attacks to defend Islam from the tyranny of the United States.

**The Madrid Bombings: 2004**

“My message to you concerns inciting and continuing to urge for jihad to repulse the grand plots that have been hatched against our nation…”\textsuperscript{139} - Osama bin Laden

Throughout the entirety of Osama bin Laden’s messages, he urged his fellow Muslims to partake in jihad against the Crusader alliance. He felt that Muslims continued to fail their religion by not providing support against the Americans and its corrupt and tyrannical government. On March 11, 2004 however, he inspired a group of men to commit deadly assaults in Madrid, Spain.

In the middle of morning rush-hour train traffic, “coordinated attacks on four morning-rush commuter trains killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,800."\textsuperscript{140} Osama bin Laden and

\textsuperscript{138} These events will be analyzed and discussed later in the analysis.

\textsuperscript{139} Lawrence, 214. Osama bin Laden said this in a January 2004 audiotape.
the al-Qaeda network had found their calling. The former leader of al-Qaeda preached to people all over the world to take a stand and fight in the jihad and he touched the lives of the men who committed these attacks. 21 people were found guilty and cited their attacks as opposition to Spain’s involvement in the wars. Although the members responsible were not part of al-Qaeda central, they were an affiliate cell that was inspired by bin Laden. The attacks injured many and killed hundreds, but the biggest success for al-Qaeda was Spain’s eventual withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The bombings took place three days before the new Spanish elections, and the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party won the election because of their strong opposition to Spain’s involvement in the Iraq War.

After the attacks, bin Laden made a statement praising them and offered Europe a peace treaty. He said in an April 15, 2004 statement, “I present to them [the people of Europe] this peace proposal, which is essentially a commitment to cease operations against any state that pledges not to attack Muslims or intervene in their affairs, including the American conspiracy against the great Islamic world.” None of the European countries would agree with the peace proposal except Spain, who immediately withdrew their troops from Iraq.

The London Bombings: 2005

“Because you have killed, we must kill. Your innocents are not less innocent than ours.”

- Osama bin Laden

On July 7, 2005 four coordinated suicide attacks struck central London killing 52 people and injuring more than 770. The attacks targeted three underground trains during morning rush-hour and another one targeted a double-decker bus. The attackers were British citizens

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141 Lawrence, 135.
142 Ibid, xix.
Mohammad Sidique Khan, Hasib Hussain, Germaine Lindsay and Shehzad Tanweer. All of the men were considered clean skins (people without a criminal record) by the authorities except Germaine Lindsay. Although he did not have a criminal record, he had caught the attention of authorities by promoting al-Qaeda and its ideologies in school. Recruiting clean skins has been a new tactic for al-Qaeda because it allows the militants to go unnoticed by authorities, especially international and border security, such as TSA.

In a video recorded by Mohammad Sidique Khan before the attacks took place on July 7, he stated, “We are at war and I am a soldier.”\footnote{The YouTube video clip can be found at:\url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPd1rbPz7_U&NR=1}} He declared in the video that it is his duty as a Muslim to protect his people from the oppression of Western governments and Israel. Khan, like bin Laden, argued the West does not understand the language of peace. He stated, “Therefore I am going to talk to you in a language that you understand. Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} Like other attacks that al-Qaeda has participated in, the London bombings on July 7, 2005 have the same message to the people: Remove your troops from the holy lands and stop killing our Muslim men, women and children.

These aggressions were executed by an affiliate cell of al-Qaeda. Mohammad Sidique Khan, who was widely believed to be the superior of the group, visited Pakistan from November 2004 to February 2005 along with fellow suicide bomber Shehzad Tanweer. While in Pakistan, a friend of Khan reported that he “had undergone training for explosives at terror camps in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.”\footnote{Bryan Ross, "London Bombers Tied to Al Qaeda Plot in Pakistan," \textit{ABC News}, 14 July 2005.} Although Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda offered a peace proposal on April 15, 2004 to the people of Europe, not a single country responded except Spain. The bombings of July 7, 2005 were another response from al-Qaeda to get worldwide attention to support its jihad against the West and Israel.
Christmas Day Bombing Attempt: 2009

“We have given an oath to God to continue in the struggle as long as we have blood coursing through our veins or a seeing eye, and we beg of God to accept and to grant a good outcome for us and for all the Muslims.”  

- Osama bin Laden

The Nigerian al-Qaeda operative, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, was responsible for attempting to detonate a bomb aboard Detroit-bound Northwest flight 253 on Christmas day, 2009. The plane was on a transatlantic flight from Amsterdam to Detroit when the 24-year-old attempted to detonate a bomb that caught his groin on fire. After interrogations by the FBI, Abdulmutallab “admitted he had been trained and was instructed in the plot by al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen.”  

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula took responsibility for the attack which attempted to blow up the passenger plane that held around 300 people.

Abdulmutallab claimed he had ties with Anwar al-Awlaki, the American Internet preacher of jihad. Al-Awlaki preaches the importance of finding the true Islam and opposes America and its allies. Al-Qaeda has emerged as a transnational threat in Yemen and is actively recruiting students to join the jihad. Abdulmutallab studied Arabic in Sana’a, Yemen where he attended al-Awlaki’s lectures which preach radical Islam. After dropping out of school, Abdulmutallab became interested in militant Islam and “travelled to Hadramawt, a poor eastern [Yemeni] province that is an al-Qaeda stronghold.”

Many wonder how Abdulmutallab even boarded the plane on December 25 because his father alerted the CIA that his son was a threat. Although the United States and its allies have spent billions of dollars combating al-Qaeda, threats still are easy to come by. U.S. President Barack Obama stated, “When our government has information on a known extremist, and that

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147 Lawrence, 41. Osama bin Laden said this in a November 1996 interview to incite jihad.
149 Along with inspiring and mentoring Abdulmutallab, al-Awlaki has incited radicalism in others, including some of the 9/11 hijackers, and Nadal Hasan, as discussed earlier.
150 Dan McDougall, "Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab: one boy’s journey to jihad." The Sunday Times. 3 Jan. 2010
information is not shared and acted upon as it should have been, a systemic failure has occurred and I consider that totally unacceptable.”  

Indeed, al-Qaeda was very close to committing another successful act against the United States on December 2009 because of the U.S. government’s security failures.

**Printers from Yemen: 2010**

“We have struck three blows at your airplanes in a single year. And God willing, we will continue to strike our blows against American interests and the interests of America's allies.”

- AQAP

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was very close to executing another bombing attempt on October 29, 2010. The group sent two bombs that were disguised as printers aimed for two Chicago synagogues. The bombing attempt was disrupted when a Saudi citizen, who was an ex-al-Qaeda operative, tipped off Saudi authorities of the plot. The tip came from Saudi national Jabir al-Fayfi, who was held for years in the United States’ military prison in Guantanamo Bay for allegations that he fought and trained with al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001. After being released from Guantanamo in 2007, al-Fayfi returned to Saudi Arabia, then shortly after joined AQAP in Yemen. After realizing that Islamic militancy was not for him, he alerted Saudi Arabian officials and helped foil the plot.

The first bomb was found in a London airport, where it was hidden inside a printer cartridge from Yemen. The second bomb, also concealed inside a printer cartridge, was found in Dubai. Both packages contained the highly explosive material Pentaerythritol tetranitrate, or

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152 Brian Murphy, et. al, "Saudis warned U.S. 3 weeks before cargo bomb attempt," [msnbc.com](https://www.msnbc.com), 6 Nov, 2010. Militants in the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula organization stated this on an Internet forum. The three blows they are talking about are the failed December 25, 2009 plot, the failed plot of detonating printers aboard a cargo plane and a UPS plane that caught fire in Dubai in September 2010. Contrary to what the militants stated, the plane in Dubai was believed to be an accident by investigators and not a target of an al-Qaeda plot.

PETN, which is extremely difficult for security personnel to detect.\textsuperscript{154} The same explosive material was used in the Christmas day bombing attempt in 2009 by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. Because PETN is hard to detect and very effective, Hans Michels, an explosives expert at Imperial College in London, stated, “If you can lay your hands on a reliable source, it would be the explosive of choice. A little more than 100g of PETN could destroy a car.”\textsuperscript{155} After the investigation, German officials commented on the mail bombs from Yemen saying that they “contained 10.58 ounces (300 grams) and 15.11 ounces (400 grams) of the explosive PETN — enough to cause ‘significant’ damage to the planes.”\textsuperscript{156} Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the underwear suicide bomber on the Detroit bound plane, carried only 80 grams of the explosive material.

Although the plot was thwarted because of al-Fayfi’s tip-off, the October 29 bombing attempts revealed yet another chink in the armor for international security forces. Had the plot not been foiled, the bombs would have blown up midair somewhere on the East Coast of the U.S. The printers from Yemen have posed yet another threat and a near successful plot against the United States at the hands of al-Qaeda. AQAP, al-Qaeda central’s affiliate in Yemen, vowed on an Islamic extremist website to “continue attacking the US and its allies.”\textsuperscript{157}

**Concluding Thoughts**

“Do not expect anything from us but jihad, resistance, and revenge. Is it in any way rational to expect that after American has attacked us for more than half a century, that we will then leave her to live in security and peace?”\textsuperscript{158}

- Osama bin Laden

\textsuperscript{154} ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ian Sample, "PETN - hard to detect and just 100g can destroy a car," Guardian.co.uk, 27 Dec, 2009.
\textsuperscript{156} Al-Haj.
\textsuperscript{157} BBC News, "Yemen mail bomb 'could have detonated over eastern US'." BBC, 10 Nov. 2010.
\textsuperscript{158} Lawrence, 164.
The United States continues to fight a bloody and economically-draining War on Terror. Although U.S. Special Forces committed a daring raid that saw the demise of Osama bin Laden, the war against al-Qaeda will go on. This section discusses current U.S. foreign policy initiatives for al-Qaeda, analyzes what Osama bin Laden’s death means for the future of Islamic militancy, and my recommendations for the future.

**United States Foreign Policy: Addressing Al-Qaeda**

“So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future.”

- United States President Barack Obama

In a March 27, 2009 speech to the American people and the January 25, 2011 State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama stated his goals to combat al-Qaeda. He described the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, although causing numerous American and NATO casualties, worthwhile in its quest to defeat al-Qaeda. In many of his statements, the President outlined the necessary steps for the United States to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in the future.

**Afghanistan**

“Our purpose is clear: By preventing the Taliban from reestablishing a stranglehold over the Afghan people, we will deny al Qaeda the safe haven that served as a launching pad for 9/11.”

- United States President Barack Obama

The United States and its allies have continued to take the fight against al-Qaeda abroad into Afghanistan. The U.S.’ efforts in Afghanistan have led to a decreased number of Afghani citizens under the Afghani-Taliban and al-Qaeda rule. America has sought to establish a democracy in Afghanistan and create a country that rules by policies of better governance and

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less corruption. Because Afghanistan has been a war-torn country for decades, the American government is working towards strengthening the capacity of the Afghani citizens and building a stronger relationship between the two countries. After years of American aid and troops in the region, President Obama declared in his January 25, 2011 State of the Union address, that “this year, we will work with nearly 50 countries to begin a transition to an Afghan lead.” The United States plans to initiate the withdrawal of its troops in July 2011.

President Obama fears that if the United States lets up its occupation in Afghanistan, then al-Qaeda and its allies will take over the region and have free reign to plot and conduct attacks against the U.S. such as the one on 9/11. In a 2009 comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Barack Obama declared, “If the Afghan government falls to the Taliban -- or allows al-Qaeda to go unchallenged -- that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can.” President Obama and his advisors argue in order to protect the American homeland, Afghanistan must establish a strong central government that combats corruption and institutes effective governance. However, al-Qaeda central has been able to effectively and freely move throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has led to a comprehensive effort by U.S. foreign policy to address the Pakistani government.

Along with financial benefits, the United States and its allies are working towards building up the Afghan military. After the deployment of 17,000 more American troops in 2009, President Obama and his administration are committed to begin the removal of U.S. soldiers in July, 2011. With the Iraq war slowing down, the U.S. has given an oath to give the necessary resources to Afghanistan. In order to start removing American troops and handing power over to the Afghans, the U.S. has dedicated many of its soldiers to train the Afghan military. The U.S.

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161 Ibid.
President stated in 2009 that “we will accelerate our efforts to build an Afghan army of 134,000 and a police force of 82,000 so that we can meet these goals by 2011.” Despite the growing military and the U.S. presence in the country, al-Qaeda still exists. Many of the Afghans in the military are sympathetic to al-Qaeda, but are in the armed forces because of a lack of job opportunities, which poses a threat to the security of Afghanistan after American forces leave.

**Pakistan**

Al-Qaeda and its leaders, which included Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, have been able to move at free will across the borders of Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The FATA have been advantageous for al-Qaeda because the regions are largely autonomous from the Government of Pakistan. President Obama describes these areas as the most dangerous place in the world for Americans because al-Qaeda and other militants “have used this mountainous terrain as a safe haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks, and to send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan.” For the U.S. to defeat al-Qaeda, President Obama and his administration have called for international support, especially from Pakistan, to deny a safe haven for militants. He argues that al-Qaeda central is not strictly a U.S. threat, but an international threat that has plotted attacks against the U.S., London, Bali, Kenya, Tanzania and many other countries.

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163 The Pakistani FATA is made up of seven tribal districts that are semi-autonomous from the Pakistani government. The Governor of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa rules over the provinces and exercises authority according to tribal practices. The areas were imperative for British colonialism in the 1800s and 1900s until the annexation of Pakistan in 1948. England controlled the area because it was advantageous for them to defend their interests in India from Russia’s expansion in central Asia. The British appointed leaders to rule the areas, which were never very successful. When England left the area and lost its hold over India, the FATA ruled in the same fashion and agreed allegiance to Pakistan when it became a state. Since then, the FATA has been allowed its semi-autonomous relations from the government of Pakistan, which is engraved in the nation’s constitution. Source: http://fata.gov.pk/

164 Ibid.
Pakistan and the FATA

Source: State.gov

Source: longwarjournal.com
A key element to the United States’ foreign policy addressing al-Qaeda is to gain the support of Afghanistan, and especially Pakistan. President Obama has reminded Pakistanis that al-Qaeda is a threat to their security and their country. Throughout the years, al-Qaeda has attacked fellow Muslims, blown up buildings in Pakistan and has threatened the stability of the nation as a whole. He mentioned in a 2009 address that “al-Qaeda and other violent extremists have killed several thousand Pakistanis since 9/11. They've killed many Pakistani soldiers and police. They assassinated Benazir Bhutto.” In an attempt to gain international support, President Obama argues that al-Qaeda threatens not only the security of the United States, but also the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

President Obama has asked Congress to pass a “bipartisan bill co-sponsored by John Kerry and Richard Lugar that authorizes $1.5 billion in direct support to the Pakistani people every year over the next five years.” In order to effectively address al-Qaeda, the Obama administration is focusing on reviving the economic development in Pakistan to avoid youth joining the insurgency. The Kerry-Lugar bill focuses on building schools, roads and hospitals for the next five years in order to promote economic development and democracy. The idea behind this bill is to rally the support of the Pakistani government so they will eliminate the safe havens for al-Qaeda in the FATA. The United States will focus its military, training and tools to Pakistan so that it can route al-Qaeda and other militants in its country. However, after years of mixed results and allegations of corruption, the United States has made it clear that it will not provide anymore blank checks to Pakistan. Instead, the U.S. will assist the country financially by continuing to work with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

\[\textsuperscript{165} ibid.\]

\[\textsuperscript{166} ibid.\]
argues that “a campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone.” For this reason, the U.S. has focused its new campaign on giving financial assistance to Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to solidify their own governments and economies to effectively combat and eradicate al-Qaeda themselves.

Although the United States has adopted new and improved strategies, the War on Terror is far from over. The United States and its allies can only do so much, and the rest depends on Afghanistan and Pakistan doing their part in the future. Pakistan’s premier intelligence agency, the Inter-Services-Intelligence (ISI), has been accused of helping militant commanders in the past. Although Pakistan denies such accusations, Matt Waldman, an Afghanistan analyst, stated in a report that the ISI and Taliban relationship “goes far beyond just limited or occasional support. These are very significant levels of support being provided by the ISI.”

He spoke with nine top-level Afghan Taliban commanders who admitted to receiving funding from the ISI. The report claims the ISI even tipped Taliban commanders when American bombing campaigns were going to take place. Many experts accuse Pakistan of working with the Taliban because the United States is supposed to start leaving Afghanistan in July, 2011. Therefore, Pakistan is trying to reassert its influence in the region, which makes trusting Pakistan to combat militants a hard pill to swallow for the U.S.

The U.S. violated Pakistan’s sovereignty when it conducted the Osama bin Laden raid. The U.S. government presumed that it could not trust the ISI or Pakistan’s government with the highly classified operation because of the ISI’s ostensibly evident history of past corruption and untrustworthiness. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.S. Navy Admiral Michael Mullen visited Islamabad, Pakistan to repair the relations between the two countries on May 27,

\[167\] Ibid.
\[168\] BBC News: South Asia, "Pakistani agents 'funding and training Afghan Taliban'," BBC, 13 June 2010.
2011. Tension was vividly apparent during the meeting, but Pakistani officials vowed to intensify operations against al-Qaeda and other militant networks operating Pakistani borders. This was an important step forward for the U.S.-Pakistani alliance to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda. General Mullen asserted during the meeting, “Now is not the time for retreat or for recrimination. Now is the time for action and closer cooperation, not less.” While Pakistan and the United States are working rigorously to clear up their tensions, the ISI must prove that it is capable of combating militants before the U.S. entrusts it with sensitive information about operations on Pakistani soil.

**Counteracting Radicalism in Yemen**

“The other leaders of AQAP are predominantly Yemenis and Saudis, and their worldview and focus is on the peninsula. Al-Awlaki brings a world view and focus that brings it back here to the U.S. homeland.”

- An anonymous senior U.S. counter-terrorism official

While al-Qaeda central is still the vanguard of jihad, CIA officials have recognized AQAP as the biggest threat to the U.S. homeland today. A top U.S. senior official, who spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of intelligence matters, stated that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is “on the upswing. The relative concern ratios are changing. We're more concerned now about AQAP than we were before.” Despite the United States’ increasing concerns with AQAP, officials have done very little militarily in Yemen to address the issue. As of now, the lack of a U.S. military presence in Yemen is a political decision. Despite largely failing, the Yemeni government decided that they would combat AQAP themselves in order to appease Muslim sensitivities towards America. General Yahya al-Saleh, the man in charge of running Yemen’s counter-terrorism unit, stated in an interview with CBS News’ *60 minutes*, that,

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170 I discuss this in further detail later in the analysis.


“The Americans should know that they are not welcome in this region and they are not very popular.” In an attempt to avoid American xenophobia in the region, the United States will rely on clandestine operations with occasional drone surveillance and attacks.

Currently, the United States and Britain are funding Yemen’s counter-terrorism unit to combat al-Qaeda indirectly. The United States has promised the Yemeni government an increase in aid in the future with the country’s word to withstand the militancy. General al-Saleh stated, “Before we used to conduct operations and we [would] find difficulty [in] dealing with terrorists especially as we have [a] lack of training and [a] lack of equipment. So after the cooperation with the United States we limited our injuries and our casualties.”

On January 2, 2010 President Obama asked General David Petraeus, the current commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, to announce in 2010 that the United States would “more than double the $70 million in security aid it sent to Yemen in 2009 to help fight Al Qaeda.” The United States’ foreign policy towards Yemen consists of a lot of military aid as well as development assistance in its to attempt to offset the ongoing protests. A senior U.S. military commander stated in 2010 that “the United States development assistance over the next three years to Yemen is projected to be about $120 million.”

While the U.S. is pouring millions of dollars into the Yemeni government, intense street protests have begun, demanding President Saleh to step down.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has been in power since 1978, has promised not to run in the next election. This may raise concerns for the United States’ agenda to counter radicalism in Yemen. U.S. Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, when recently questioned about how the U.S. sees cooperation with a new Yemeni government if President Saleh were to step down,

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176 Ibid.
responded by acknowledging the good relationship the U.S. has had with Saleh combating al-Qaeda. He claimed, “He’s [Saleh] been an important ally in the counterterrorism arena. But clearly, there's a lot of unhappiness inside Yemen. And I think we will basically just continue to watch the situation. We haven't done any post-Saleh planning, if you will.”

For now, the U.S. can only hope that all of its economic and military aid poured into Yemen will combat al-Qaeda.

The last thing the Obama administration wants is another bleeding war that will turn Yemenis against America, which is exactly what al-Qaeda desires and Osama bin Laden had wanted. Al-Qaeda wants to bleed America’s economy like they did to the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. In addition, the organization wants to continue to fuel hatred towards Americans, which should lead to more recruits who will want to join the ranks of al-Qaeda. For now, most of the U.S.’ operations in Yemen are classified, but we know it is relying on drones and clandestine operations to target al-Qaeda operatives. In an attempt to counter al-Qaeda in Yemen and militants in Somalia, President Obama concludes, “I have no intention of sending U.S. boots on the ground in these regions.”

His administration believes the help of international partners will be sustainable in Yemen for the foreseeable future.

A ‘PlayStation’ Mentality: U.S. Drone Attacks in Pakistan

“Because operators are based thousands of miles away from the battlefield, and undertake operations entirely through computer screens and remote audio-feed, there is a risk of developing a ‘PlayStation’ mentality to killing.”

- Philip Alston, a representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or drones, have caused a tremendous amount of disagreement amongst nations because of their violation of human rights. The United States has used drones as an effective means to disrupt and dismantle al-Qaeda in Pakistan, Afghanistan,

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177 CNN, "Yemen battles al Qaeda as president clings to power," CNN World, 27 Mar, 2011.
Iraq, and Yemen. UAVs are effective for the U.S. military because they are able to access areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan that are not accessible for regular military operations. These small planes are not physically piloted by a human, but instead by a CIA employee who is hundreds or even thousands of miles from the battle-field. The United States’ military praises the use of drones as an effective means to kill al-Qaeda and Taliban members, particularly in the FATA regions of Pakistan. The U.S. military is not physically allowed on Pakistani soil because of sovereignty issues; therefore drones have been able to target high value leaders who are hiding in remote areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

UAVs are able to provide the United States’ military with picture images on areas that are of strategic interest. The drone can gather surveillance information, let the military know where insurgents ostensibly are and provide useful information on the geography of the region. A New American Foundation survey conducted by Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, “The Year of the Drone,” states that as of May 17, 2011 there have been “242 reported drone strikes in northwest Pakistan, including 29 in 2011, from 2004 to the present have killed approximately between 1,483 and 2,364 individuals, of whom around 1,190 to 1,893 were described as militants in reliable press accounts.”\textsuperscript{180} The United States has increased its number of drone attacks each year, which have scared militants away from meeting each other in open spaces. According to “The Year of the Drone,” the United States has already had 29 drone strikes as of May 17, 2011 and conducted 118 attacks in 2010, compared to 53 in 2009, 33 in 2008, and 9 from the years 2004-2007.\textsuperscript{181} Aslam Wazir, a shopkeeper from Mir Ali, the second-largest town in North Waziristan, Pakistan claims, “After the great increase in American drone attacks, we could see very few fighters, particularly foreign militants. Previously, they used to roam around in large

\textsuperscript{180} Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Year of the Drone." New America Foundation (2011)

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
numbers fearlessly.”\textsuperscript{182} With drones becoming an everyday sighting for people living in the FATA regions of Pakistan, militants have decreased their willingness to travel freely.

P.W. Singer, a former coordinator for the Defense Policy Task Force under President Obama, argues that drones are effective because “they can fly for greater distances for longer periods of time. They can operate over territory where the enemy doesn't know they’re there. They’re very quiet, they’re very lethal. So they’ve been very useful in the strikes against adversaries like al-Qaeda.”\textsuperscript{183} Although UAVs have been effective in targeting and killing top al-Qaeda officials, many argue whether the price is worth the blood that has been shed.

Albeit the United States’ firm stance favoring drone attacks in the FATA region of Pakistan, many countries, as well as the United Nations, strongly condemn the attacks. Philip Alston, a United Nations Human Rights Council representative, condemns drone attacks because an “ill-defined license to kill without accountability is not an entitlement which the United States or other states can have without doing grave damage to the rules designed to protect the right to life and prevent extrajudicial executions.”\textsuperscript{184} Statements like these are very common among Pakistanis who argue that the U.S. is targeting and killing anybody whom they perceive is a member of al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

On March 17, 2011 a drone attack reportedly killed 40 people in the Pakistani region of North Waziristan. Although this area is heavily numbered by militants, local tribesmen stated that the targeted meeting was about a land dispute that killed many of the elderly tribesmen. The report claimed that “one missile was fired at a car carrying suspected militants. Local tribesmen

\textsuperscript{182} Raza Khan, "Air strikes by drones effective in Waziristan," The Washington Times [Islamabad, Pakistan], 16 Jan, 2011.
\textsuperscript{184} Savage.
say the drones then fired another three missiles at their meeting, or *jirga*. Collateral damage caused by drone attacks has aggravated American xenophobia in the region. Pakistan, along with the United Nations, have strongly condemned these attacks and asked the U.S. to limit its drone interventions. However, the United States continues its UAV campaign even though it is facing strong protests from Pakistani citizens.

### Drone Attack Popularity in Pakistan (2010)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>Are necessary</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kill too many innocent people</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are being done</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Without gov’t approval</td>
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Source: PEW Research Survey  

* Statistics based on 35% of Pakistanis who have heard about the attacks  
Table created by John Adamson

A July 29, 2010 PEW Research Center survey conducted in Pakistan recorded the lack of enthusiasm for drone strikes in the FATA. The survey claims that about 35% of Pakistanis have heard about the drone strikes and “nearly all (93%) of those who are familiar with the strikes say they are a bad thing.” The majority of the people surveyed claimed drone attacks were not necessary for their safety and “nine-in-ten think these attacks kill too many innocent people.” Despite the overwhelming unpopularity among many nations including Pakistan, United States will continue to conduct drone attacks in the FATA region of Pakistan because of their success killing militants, even at the price of collateral damage.

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187 Ibid.
Recommendations for U.S. Foreign Policy

“So the situation is straightforward: America won’t be able to leave this ordeal unless it pulls out of the Arabian Peninsula, and it ceases its meddling in Palestine, and throughout the Islamic world.”

- Osama bin Laden

The United States today faces many difficult decisions addressing al-Qaeda. Many Americans feel skeptical about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq because there has been very little success to show for the American invasions. The War on Terror is far from over if the United States maintains the same foreign policy initiatives as it has since 2001. It is time to re-evaluate foreign policy for the Arab world in Washington, which must be made before the American economy collapses due to the inconceivable amount of debt the U.S. faces today. To end the War on Terror, the United States must re-evaluate its foreign policy with Israel, remove its troops from Muslim lands and empower the local communities in war-torn countries.

The United States surely does not want to abandon the Israelis, although it should strongly reconsider its current foreign policy with the nation. Currently, America and its allies occupy Islam’s three holiest sites: Jerusalem, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. The al-Qaeda network does not hate the American people, but rather the United States’ foreign policy and actions against Muslims in the past and present. One of their main points of contention is the United States’ support for Israel against the Palestinians. Michael Scheuer, a retired senior CIA analyst and the former creator and advisor of the agency’s Osama bin Laden unit, argues, “No one wants to abandon the Israelis. But I think the perception is, and I think it's probably an accurate perception, that the tail is leading the dog - that we are giving the Israelis carte blanche ability to exercise whatever they want to do in their area.”

Many Muslims around the world

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188 Lawrence, 127.
view the United States as a colonial power that is spreading its influence into the Arab world. America is using Israel as a surrogate in the region and is funding and supporting the Israeli campaign against the Palestinians.

Osama bin Laden stated in many of his speeches that Israel is the head of an anti-Muslim regime that is backed by the United States. Jerusalem is Islam’s third holiest site and since the creation of the nation, the Jews and Palestinians have fought a long and bloody battle over who rightfully owns the land. Osama bin Laden was asked about his beliefs against the United States and its occupation of the holy lands of Islam, as well as America’s support for Israel by a Pakistani journalist in 2001. He quickly asked the Pakistani how he would feel if Indian forces barged in and occupied Pakistani lands. Shortly after, bin Laden replied, “The Israeli forces are occupying our land and the American forces are sitting on our territory. We no longer have any choice but jihad.” The Israelis have exercised brutal military tactics against the Palestinians over the course of the war. Israel’s brutality, as well as the occupation of Jerusalem, has fueled the fire of retaliation for al-Qaeda and other militant networks.

The United States should continue to proactively support a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine. While such disputes take years to solve, the U.S. needs to pressure Israel into a successful final settlement with Palestine because if the United States continues to provide aid to Israel, then it will continue to be a target for al-Qaeda and other militant networks. In addition, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has been a longstanding catalyst for turmoil in the Middle East between Muslims and Jews. If Israel does not agree to a settlement, then the United States should impose economic sanctions until it agrees and the same is true for Palestine. Israel needs the United States as an ally in the Middle East and the United States needs Israel. However, without

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190 Pakistan and India have fought a long and bloody war over which country rightfully owns Kashmir, a region located between India and Pakistan.
191 Lawrence, 141.
a peaceful settlement on the Israeli-Palestinians issue, both countries will continue to be a target for future attacks by militant networks, as well as prolong peace in the Middle East. I believe that the U.S. should continue to support Israel, but it is imperative for the Jewish nation to negotiate a peace treaty with Palestine to end the conflict. This will appease Islamic militants, provide peace in the region, and therefore al-Qaeda will not have a solid argument against American imperialism through its proxy Israel.

President Obama made a monumental speech on May 19, 2011 that outlined the current U.S. foreign policy addressing the Middle East and North Africa. In his speech, he called for a more viable Palestine and a secure Israel. He made a controversial statement when he claimed that “the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states.” This speech took a large step forward in order to more adequately address the Israeli-Palestinian issue so that Palestine can govern itself and become a sovereign state, and Israel can be secure from Palestinian attacks. The United States is doing its part, but the rest is up to the two countries that have fought a long and bloody war. The U.S. must pressure the two to come to an agreement and move forward on the conflict, otherwise America should impose strong economic sanctions on both countries to pressure a long overdue peace treaty.

The United States and its NATO allies must remove their active troops from Muslim lands. This is absolutely essential to the security of America and its allies. The War on Terror will never end if we do not leave Muslim lands. The U.S. is at war with militant organizations, not a country. It is impossible to defeat the central government of an organization that does not follow the rules of war, nor possess a country, or even borders for that matter. Policy makers in Washington have tough decisions to make, but with the United States’ debt growing, there is not

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an end in sight. America must re-evaluate its foreign policy priorities and vision unless it wants to end up the like former Soviet Union.

Osama bin Laden stated numerous time that al-Qaeda is not a terrorist organization. One of his central arguments was that,

“We are only defending ourselves against the United States. This is a defensive jihad to protect our land and our people. That’s why I have said that if we don’t have security, neither will the Americans. It’s a very simple equation that any American child could understand: live and let others live.”

In order for the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War to end, America must bring its troops home. Michael Scheuer acknowledges that it is tough to get out of the wars at the moment. However, his discord is that “it’s not a choice between war and peace. It’s a choice between war and endless war.” The United States has encroached in Muslim affairs for years and now we are paying the consequences and will continue to pay unless we remove our troops.

Islamic radicalism has gained a lot of popularity over the course of the last couple years and al-Qaeda has served as an ideological yardstick for many militant organizations. Osama bin Laden’s genius lied in his ability to target certain aspects of United States foreign policy that are widely hated amongst the Muslim world. Therefore, one of his biggest complaints was American imperialism on Muslim lands. In order to successfully defeat and dismantle al-Qaeda, the United States must get out of the wars and remove its troops from Muslim soil. As long as the United States and its allies attempt to control the Middle East, al-Qaeda and similar militant organizations will continue to be their enemies. Osama bin Laden was very precise about explaining to America why he waged jihad against it. It has everything to do with United States’

\[\text{\textit{ibid}, 141.}\]
\[\text{\textit{Leung}.}\]
foreign policy and actions in the region. If America does not remove its troops and refine its policies in the Muslim world, it is guaranteed that another catastrophic strike far more powerful than 9/11 will occur in the future.

In Afghanistan as well as Pakistan, the key to defeating al-Qaeda is through the local population. The United States has focused their efforts so heavily on rebuilding a central government in Afghanistan that it has completely overlooked the most essential element to countering the militancy: engagement with the local population and providing them with better opportunities for better livelihoods. I agree that there needs to be a strong central government in Afghanistan, but efforts to empower the tribes in conflicted areas need to be improved.

First and foremost, corruption needs to be addressed and eliminated. Afghanistan has been known for past corruption in its government. Corrupt government officials, including those who are involved in the drug trade, must be removed from their duties and prosecuted. The United States’ coordinator for counternarcotics and justice reform in Afghanistan stated that “a lot of intelligence…indicated that senior Afghan officials were deeply involved in the narcotics trade.”195 The United States needs to pressure the Afghani government to crack down on corruption; otherwise it needs to find a new government that will. With U.S. troops set to begin leaving in July 2011, it is imperative that a corruption free government is in place when foreign forces leave.

In Pakistan, the ISI has been accused for helping militants. Although Pakistan refutes these claims, many people question how Osama bin Laden could live so close to the ISI’s military academy in a million dollar compound with high walls topped with barbed wire. Hasan Askari Rizvi, a military analyst in Lahore, Pakistan states,

“If Bin Laden’s presence was not known to Pakistan’s security agencies when he was located close to important military installation, it will be viewed as their incompetence or overconfidence. If they knew about his presence but did not take action, this will raise questions about the agenda of Pakistan’s security agencies for fighting terrorism.”

This issue has made many policy makers wonder if the ISI is incompetent, or is acting as a double agent. However, the issue of sovereignty is a key constituent when dealing with Pakistan. The U.S. violated Pakistan’s sovereignty by conducting the bin Laden raid on Pakistani soil ostensibly without their knowledge. Although many people in the United States remain skeptical, this intelligence failure is an opportunity for Pakistan to step it up and prove to the U.S. that it wants to continue its good relations and help combat al-Qaeda and other militants in the area. The meeting between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Admiral Michael Mullan and the Government of Pakistan was a significant step in the right direction to combat al-Qaeda and slowly gain Pakistan’s trust.

After battling corruption, the United States needs to focus on a bottom-up approach as well as the current top-down approach. U.S. troops in Afghanistan are seemingly in a never ending war because of their inability to hold a territory after battling insurgent groups. The United States and NATO are ineffective in holding down these areas because they do not have the support of the local tribes. Part of the bottom-up strategy is gaining the trust of the local tribesmen and providing them with security and economic aid. Militants have been able to move freely through many of Afghanistan’s border regions into Pakistan because the tribes do not trust the United States and do not have the security to defend themselves from the militants. Security in Afghanistan cannot come from foreign armies. If the U.S. wants to defeat al-Qaeda and the

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Taliban, the security must come from tribal Afghans and Pakistanis. The war in Afghanistan, if winnable at all, will be won in the rural areas, not in the cities.

Another key to defeating al-Qaeda is destroying their safe havens in Pakistan. The FATA in Pakistan provides a safe area and a sanctuary for al-Qaeda militants. Seth Jones, author of *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, claims, “Government institutions in the tribal areas are weak, and social and economic conditions are amongst the bleakest in the world.” The United States needs to help these areas economically and decrease the relentless drone strikes that have killed numerous innocent civilians. The tribesmen in the FATA, as do Pakistanis throughout the country, strongly condemn drone strikes because the U.S. has killed many innocent Pakistanis who had nothing to do with the militancy. The people in the FATA play an essential role to the militants because they allow them to move freely around their mountainous regions. The U.S. needs to ally with the tribes by giving them economic and military aid, which would present a huge step forward in the War on Terror and gaining the Pakistanis’ trust.

Although removing U.S. troops from Afghanistan is ideal to protect the United States’ security in the future, it seems that the U.S. is stuck in the region. We must learn from the former Soviet Union’s mistakes and go forward. The only way forward is the bottom-up approach to win the hearts of the local population because both the militants and the U.S. need the local tribes to win the war. The U.S.’ mistake in Afghanistan has been its attempt to create a nation-state with a strong central government that does not truly have the support of the majority of Afghans. Yet, a strong central government is the West’s view of a strong nation-state and does not reflect the same view on how other countries perceive a successful and effective government. In Afghanistan, empowering local tribes to create their own legitimate institutions whereby they

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197 Jones, 322.
create their own rule of law is paramount. After the communities are empowered with economic and financial aid provided by the U.S. and its NATO allies, the FATA and tribal regions of Afghanistan will not be under resourced or intimidated by al-Qaeda or the Taliban in the future.

The death of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011 is a great symbolic victory for the American government and its allies. However, his death does not present any positive impact for the War on Terror and the battle against al-Qaeda and other militant groups. Counter-terrorism experts are predicting who will be the next leader to take the helm of al-Qaeda, which most conclude will be the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri. Despite their efforts to read into the situation, it would not be responsible of me to pretend that I know who the new leader will be, and more so, I am not convinced on how much of a difference it will make, given the apparent decentralization of al-Qaeda today. After the former al-Qaeda leader’s demise, militants have claimed on jihadist forums that the jihad has outlived Osama bin Laden. Abu Musab Abdul-Wadud, the head of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, stated in an audio message, “Today is not a day of crying, although the likes of him [bin Laden] are worthy of tears, but it is a day to reaffirm the allegiance and the covenant with God the Almighty; a day to pledge retaliation and to insist on victory… We are all Osama.”198 The underlying issue is that many Americans have been swayed by a lot of the rhetoric around the bin Laden’s death and believe that his demise marks an important milestone in combating al-Qaeda—which is unlikely the case.

The way forward against the War on Terror lies in the United States’ ability to engage with the Muslim world in the future. Through responsible engagement, I believe that it is necessary for the U.S. government to support the requests for change from the people in Arab countries. In Egypt, Tunisia and even Yemen, mostly peaceful protests have answered the

population’s calls for their oppressive governments to leave. It is important to acknowledge that in the past couple of years, peaceful protests have far exceeded the success for change in the Arab world than has Islamic militancy. The United States must invest in the people’s interests in the Arab and Muslim world and not solely focus on combating militants. People in the Muslim world want to have representative governments and they have been able to do that without the help of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda—and even the U.S. The U.S. must contribute to supporting the general population’s interests, even if it means opposing their governments, not only because these are the ideals which the U.S. stands for, but also because the U.S. needs the support of Muslim peoples worldwide to dismantle the networks of Islamic militancy. To end the War on Terror, the United States must re-evaluate its foreign policy with Israel, remove its troops from Muslim lands and empower the local communities in war-torn countries.
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