

## Al-Qaeda

Arabic name, meaning >the base= (alternative spelling, Al Qa`ida; full name Al Qa`ida al Sulbah, >the solid base= ), for the Islamic fundamentalist organisation led by Osama bin Laden, dedicated to fighting regimes and groups regarded as enemies of \*Islam. Its tactics include guerrilla operations, such as against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and \*terrorism directed at civilian and government targets, such as the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. It targets primarily western nations, such as the United States, perceived as engaged in \*imperialism or \*neocolonialism against Muslim nations. Secondly, it targets pro-US Muslim governments, such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt, as >apostate regimes.= Finally it targets rival Muslim groups and secularised Muslim elites. It seeks to restore a pan-Islamic state based on Sunni Muslim precepts. It has developed the first truly multinational terrorist network with a proven global span of operations.

## History

Al-Qaeda was formed in 1987-1988 by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist in Jordan=s Muslim Brotherhood. Azzam entered Pakistan in 1979 to aid the Afghan resistance. After Osama bin Laden joined Azzam they founded the Maktab al Khidamat (MAK) or >Services Office= in 1984, which later became al-Qaeda, to recruit Arabs and other Sunni Muslims to fight the Soviets. After the Soviets withdrew, MAK sought to maintain unity among the veterans who shared an Islamic fundamentalist political program and commitment to violent means to achieve it. Azzam envisioned al-Qaeda becoming a future >quick reaction force= to aid oppressed Muslims worldwide. His deputy, Osama bin Laden, instead wanted to use al-Qaeda to target the United States, as the principal enemy of Islam, and US aligned Muslim regimes. Azzam opposed these goals believing that terrorism would be ineffective against the United States or against repressive Muslim regimes, whose retribution would only harm Islamist movements. Also conservative regimes in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms had given MAK material and moral aid without which al-Qaeda could not pursue the more limited future mission that Azzam contemplated. This disagreement was due to members of the Jihad Group of Egypt, Ayman al Zawahiri and Muhammad Atef, who joined MAK in 1985 and converted bin Laden to their more radical views. After Azzam was assassinated by a bombing in 1989 bin Laden assumed full control of al-Qaeda.

Although the United States supported various mujahideen (holy warrior) groups through the CIA

or through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), there is little evidence the CIA created al-Qaeda or backed Osama bin Laden. During the war mujahideen groups received support from rival state sponsors: Iran supported the Islamic Party of Gulbiddin Hikmatyar while the Persian Gulf states backed the Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi. The United States supported groups led by native Afghans having a nationalistic agenda whereas Saudi Arabia funded fundamentalist groups such as MAK whose ranks included large numbers of Arab volunteers. Bin Laden denied that he or his group ever received US aid and claims that he has always opposed the United States for supporting Israel. Al-Qaeda commenced operations against US forces following its intervention in Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War.

### Ideology and Program

Al-Qaeda is an Islamic fundamentalist group. Such movements hold certain common beliefs: Islam and its laws have comprehensive solutions for all economic, social, diplomatic, criminal and civil problems. Islamic law is perfect, immutable and organic, not requiring reform. The current Muslim world, with its mixture of traditional Muslim and western laws and institutions, and division of the historic caliphate (Islamic empire) into several \*nation-states, deviates from true Islam. Finally, the duty of  Jihad (holy war) permits violence to rid Muslim lands of un-Islamic laws, institutions, rulers and foreign powers. As a salafist (purist) group al-Qaeda rejects reformism or dialogue in favor of revolutionary violence to establish Islamic rule.

Al-Qaeda follows the Wahhabi interpretation of the Hanbali Sunni school of law favoring literalist interpretations of the Koran and received traditions but rejecting rationalism, mysticism, and anything not part of primordial Islam. It is close to other Sunni salafist groups such as the Islamic Group of Egypt, the Egyptian Jihad Group and others. Despite Wahhabi scruples rejecting Shi'ite Islam as heresy, al-Qaeda has not shunned contact with Lebanon's Hezbollah or with Iranian operatives. Al-Qaeda seeks not so much to establish Islamic rule within one existing Muslim nation-state but rather to overthrow the nation-state system in favor of one caliphate embracing all Muslim nations.

The ideology and program of al-Qaeda are found in several documents, the foremost being the ten volume Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad (1996) a compendium of military tactics and strategy used in the Afghan war. Other documents include the Encyclopedia's companion volume Declaration of Jihad against the Country's Tyrants (Military Series) devoted to terrorist tactics. Originally written in Arabic,

they incorporate material culled from US and British military manuals and were secretly circulated among al-Qaeda trainees but not intended for open distribution. In 1999 copies seized by Jordanian police were given to western intelligence agencies which prepared English translations now publicly available under the name The Al Qaeda Training Manual. Other public documents include the several fatwas, or Islamic religious judicial decrees, issued by al-Qaeda.

On 23 February 1998 one such fatwa was faxed to the London Arabic language newspaper, Al Quds Al Arabi, signed by bin Laden and three others, declaring it >the religious duty of every individual Muslim to kill Americans everywhere, whether soldiers or civilians, to free the holy cities of Islam from the presence of foreign, non-Muslim troops.= Such fatwas may only be issued by Muslim religious figures of known piety, probity and scholarship in Islamic jurisprudence. Although bin Laden himself is not recognised by reputable Muslim religious leaders as being such a scholar nonetheless these statements struck a resonant chord among Muslims throughout the world of all social classes who often have blamed the problems of their nations on the United States.

These fatwas identify the general objective of countering US power but not the concrete steps to achieve this. Intermediate range goals are found in the Encyclopedia: Radicalisation of Islamic groups throughout the world; overthrowing of >apostate= Muslim governments; support for Muslim insurgents in countries around the world; destroying Israel; destroying the United States; and finally, restoration of the Islamic caliphate uniting all Muslim nations. More practical, concrete steps to attain these goals are given in the Al Qaeda Training Manual: Surveillance of targets; kidnaping enemy personnel and stealing documents, secrets and arms; assassinating enemy personnel and tourists; freeing imprisoned fellow combatants; spreading provocative propaganda to incite people against the enemy; and also, bombing the enemies= places of socialising and entertainment, embassies, vital economic centres, and key bridges and tunnels in major urban areas. Other documents indicate al-Qaeda=s desire to obtain or else develop \*weapons of mass destruction.

Given these goals, how should al-Qaeda be classified along the spectrum of Islamic fundamentalist groups? Specialists on Islamic extremist groups sort them into one of four categories: 1. Revolutionary groups using violence selectively to target non-Muslims; 2. Ideological groups using violence as one of several tactics alongside ordinary political activism or providing social services to their Muslim constituencies, 3. Utopian groups seeking to overthrow the existing political order through unrestrained violence, and 4. Apocalyptic groups seeking to destroy not only their enemies= political order but also their social, economic and cultural institutions, including civilian as well as political and military targets

(Magnus Ranstorp, cited in Gunaratna 2002:92-93). Al-Qaeda is most likely an apocalyptic group and so would be more likely to use weapons of mass destruction or mass casualty terrorism to achieve its ultimate objective.

Al-Qaeda has tried to obtain weapons of mass destruction either by buying ready made weapons or by obtaining the materials and technology to assemble them on its own. US troops occupying al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan found chemical reagents, potassium iodide pills (used to counteract radiation poisoning), numerous notebooks with crude schematics for producing \*chemical weapons and radiation dispersal bombs, and also videotapes of experiments testing poisonous gases on dogs. Concerns over al-Qaeda seeking weapons of mass destruction may be misplaced. After losing its camps in Afghanistan al-Qaeda has lacked the needed sanctuary and security to develop biological or chemical weapons. However it has already developed great expertise in using explosives and creativity in turning western technology into mass casualty weapons, as in seizing the four airliners used as flying bombs in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Rather than expecting al-Qaeda to imitate an Aum Shinrikyo poison gas attack it is more likely it will continue using massive bombs, a tactic that has proven effective, easily implemented, and relatively inexpensive.

### Leadership

Osama bin Laden is al-Qaeda's Emir, or >commander.= Muhammad Atef headed its military committee and masterminded the 1998 US Embassy bombings but died in US air raids in November 2001. Ayman al Zawahiri, an Egyptian doctor who led the Jihad Group, is bin Laden's personal physician and chief counsel and heads the Islamic study committee. Another al-Qaeda figure, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 11 September 2001 attacks, was captured by Pakistani forces on 1 March 2003 and remanded to US investigators.

Osama bin Laden, born in Riyadh in 1957, was one of fifty-two children of Muhammad bin Laden, a Yemeni contractor who amassed a fortune of about US\$5 billion. Osama bin Laden helped run the family business and inherited about US\$25 million from his father. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan on 11 January 1979 bin Laden left his family business to help the mujahideen. While in Pakistan in 1979-1984 he funded Afghan fighters and built shelters for refugees. In 1984-1989 inside Afghanistan he built roads and shelters for the mujahideen and later participated in actual combat. Together with Abdullah Azzam, he helped organise the MAK, opening offices throughout the world wherever Muslims

could be recruited. After the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989 the mujahideen attacked the heavily defended city of Jalalabad. Bin Laden, who led an assault on the airport, was wounded by shrapnel and many of his Arab volunteers were killed. After this he returned to Saudi Arabia and resumed work in the family business.

The deployment of US forces against Iraq in 1990-1991, and particularly the stationing of non-Muslim US troops in Saudi Arabia, outraged bin Laden. He viewed the Saudi royal family's permission to station American troops in Arabia as treachery to Islam because the government of Arabia was also the >Protector of the Two Holy Places,= namely the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which non-Muslims are forbidden to enter but which now in effect were also under US military protection. He moved to Sudan in April 1991, ostensibly so his construction business could help develop a destitute Muslim nation, however by 1994 the governments of Egypt, Algeria and Yemen were accusing him of supporting Islamic fundamentalists seeking to overthrow them. After learning of bin Laden's involvement with domestic opposition groups the Saudi government revoked his passport and Saudi citizenship in 1994 and his family has reportedly disowned him. Al-Qaeda supplied the Stinger missiles used by Somali militias against US helicopters in the autumn of 1993. Although bin Laden initially had good relations with the National Islamic Front ruling Sudan by 1996 he was asked to leave, due to pressure from Egypt, whose President, Hosni Mubarak, survived an al-Qaeda sponsored assassination attempt during his 26 June 1995 visit to Ethiopia.

Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan although his exact movements from 1996 onward remain a mystery. His base outside Jalalabad held about 600 of his followers who were estimated to number around 10,000 or more in over twenty-five countries. He developed close relations with the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, whose forces seized Kabul in September 1996. Bin Laden contributed over 5,000 trained men to fight alongside Taliban forces which seized all but ten percent of Afghanistan by late 1999. On 9 September 2001 two al-Qaeda suicide bombers, posing as Arab journalists, killed Massud Shah, the main leader of the Northern Alliance forces opposing the Taliban. Following the entry of US forces into Afghanistan bin Laden's whereabouts became even more obscure. A videotape dated 9 November 2001, found by US forces in December 2001, placed him in Qandahar meeting al-Qaeda associates and discussing his role in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. While he was thought to be hiding in tunnel complexes within the Tora Bora mountains in December 2001 later it was learned he had ordered a follower to use his satellite phone as a decoy to throw US intelligence off his trail. By late 2003 it was believed that bin Laden and al Zawahiri were hiding in regions bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan ruled by tribes not

under Pakistani government control. After December 2001 bin Laden avoided using telephones and other electronic communications that might reveal his location but depended instead on human couriers.

## Operations

Al-Qaeda operations included recruitment, logistical support, fund raising, propaganda, and training fighters in special camps in unconventional warfare. Al-Qaeda maintained extensive businesses and charities as front organisations, and traditional financial channels for flows of funds and communications needed to keep its network of allied groups functioning effectively. Some are entities created by al-Qaeda but in many cases it has infiltrated and taken over existing charities, banks, and businesses. Finally al-Qaeda has committed terrorist attacks which won it notoriety.

Al-Qaeda engaged in these operations prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks: On 29 December 1992 al-Qaeda bombed a hotel in Aden, Yemen, housing US troops headed to Somalia. In June 1993 Jordanian police discovered an al-Qaeda plot to assassinate Crown Prince Abdullah. On 3 October 1993 al-Qaeda forces crossed into Somalia from Kenya and attacked US forces, killing eighteen Americans and many Somalis. The 26 February 1993 World Trade Center bombing, killing six and wounding over one thousand people, was planned and executed by Ramzi Yousef, an al-Qaeda operative captured in one of bin Laden=s safe houses in Pakistan in February 1995. On 24 June 1993 al-Qaeda members were arrested for plotting to bomb the Lincoln and Holland tunnels in New York City. The Egyptian cleric, Omar Abdur-Rahman, whose Islamic Group in Egypt aligned itself with al-Qaeda, was arrested and later convicted for his role in these plots. On 6 January 1995 a police raid on Ramzi Yousef=s Manila apartment exposed Plan Bojinka, which included plots to assassinate Pope John Paul II during his visit to the Philippines, and also against both US President Bill Clinton and Philippines President Fidel V. Ramos. The plotters planned to bomb eleven US airliners over the Pacific Ocean after they had succeeded in a trial run bombing of a Philippines Airlines flight on 11 December 1994, which killed one Japanese passenger and forced the plane to land at Naha Airport, Okinawa. On 26 June 1995 Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak survived an al-Qaeda assassination attempt during a state visit to Ethiopia.

In Riyadh on 13 November 1995 a Saudi Arabian National Guard office was car-bombed, killing seven foreign employees while wounding forty-two bystanders. On 25 June 1996 US military housing in the Khobar Towers, in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, was truck-bombed killing nineteen US citizens and wounding some five hundred persons. On 17 November 1997 the al-Qaeda aligned Islamic Group

massacred fifty-eight foreign tourists and four Egyptians at the Temple of Queen Hatsheput outside Luxor, Egypt. On 7 August 1998 two near simultaneous bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killed 291 persons and wounded about 5,000 in the Nairobi attack and killed ten persons and wounded seventy-seven in the Dar es Salaam attack. On 14 December 1999 US Customs arrested an Algerian, Ahmad Rassam, for smuggling explosives from Canada, which exposed an al-Qaeda plot to bomb Los Angeles International Airport as well as other targets in North America and Europe during upcoming >Millennium= celebrations. Earlier on 30 November 1999 Jordanian police discovered an al-Qaeda plot to bomb the Radisson Hotel in Amman on New Year=s Eve, where a large >Millennium= celebration was certain to attract many foreigners.

On 3 January 2000 two bombers attempted to sink the USS The Sullivans anchored in Aden, Yemen, piloting an explosives laden boat but the operation was botched when the overloaded boat was swamped and sank. A second attempt succeeded on 12 October 2000 when the USS Cole was badly damaged by a large bomb deployed by two suicide bombers in a skiff which killed seventeen sailors. Finally al-Qaeda carried out the 11 September 2001 attacks in which suicide bombers hijacked four American domestic flights, crashing one into the World Trade Center north tower and another into the south tower, and another into the east side of the Pentagon. The fourth flight crashed following a struggle between the hijackers and passengers. At least 2,817 persons were killed at the World Trade Center and 125 were killed at the Pentagon. All nineteen hijackers and 238 passengers died in these attacks.

After US forces occupied Afghanistan al-Qaeda has been less able to muster terrorist operations on the scale of those before the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Yet on 13 October 2002 the al-Qaeda linked Jemaah Islamiyah group bombed several nightclubs in Bali, Indonesia killing 202 persons, including eighty-eight Australian tourists and seven US tourists. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 12 May 2003 al-Qaeda carried out three simultaneous bombings at a housing complex for foreign workers, killing twenty-three people, as well as the twelve suicide bombers. Al-Qaeda is believed to have been behind the 19 August 2003 bombing of UN offices in Baghdad, which killed twenty-three people, including Sergio Vieira de Mello, the top UN envoy to Iraq.

## Organisation

Al-Qaeda uses novel command structures and tactics to expand vertically by contacting and co-opting other Islamist movements into its network through heady ideological indoctrination, irresistible

financial support, and often by sheer force. These organisations include most known violent Islamist militant groups, the major exceptions being the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which are wary of al-Qaeda's propensity to absorb its allies. Each co-opted group then transmits al-Qaeda's strategic direction and tactical support horizontally down to its compartmentalised cells and front groups. Up to one-fifth of the bona fide Islamic charities and educational foundations worldwide were also co-opted whose patrons remained unaware until police crackdowns after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks revealed these infiltrations. Many takeovers of Islamist groups have been hostile, involving the murders of leaders or members who did not agree with al-Qaeda's agenda or methods. Oddly enough this group that began by resisting a Marxist-Leninist regime in Afghanistan itself adopted many of the tactics of Leninism in forming its own version of a militant >Islamist International= complete with its own vanguard leadership.

One must distinguish the central core group of al-Qaeda centered around bin Laden from the loose network of affiliated organizations operating outside Afghanistan and Pakistan. A third layer of Awalk ins@ consists of young, committed Islamic fundamentalists attracted to al-Qaeda who volunteer for martyrdom actions with no prior Afghan war experience or training. Acceptance by al-Qaeda requires that one must be a believing Muslim. However acceptance into a leadership position requires proficiency in the Arabic language and some ties of family, friendship or past shared combat experience to vouch for one's integrity to the cause.

Prior to al-Qaeda most terrorist organizations had a central leadership with command and control branches linked to several compartmentalised >cells= which operated independently but ordinarily could not coordinate attacks due to their mutual isolation. Bin Laden created a system whereby allied groups outside Afghanistan and cells of al-Qaeda operatives in various countries functioned as independent cells but could coordinate their actions through a system of human couriers that eluded the electronic surveillance upon which most western intelligence agencies relied. This system works because the many thousands of members of these different groups and cells share bonds of trust forged in their common experience fighting together in the Afghan war. Most leaders of the allied regional groups formed friendships with bin Laden during the Afghan war as well as with other al-Qaeda leaders.

The al-Qaeda core consists of bin Laden, other leaders, and the roughly 1,000-1,500 men who survived the al-Qaeda training program, passed its rigorous physical and mental tests, and who have sworn personal fealty, or bayat, to bin Laden as their Emir, imposing religious obligations of obedience to him unto death. This core provides the bodyguards, internal security force for preventing infiltration, and also

the staff who control the group=s personnel records and financial affairs.

The basic organization is headed by the Emir, bin Laden, assisted by his chief counsel, al Zawahiri. Under the Emir is the shura majlis, or consultative assembly, of roughly 10-15 men who run the various executive committees. Four permanent committees oversee the work of al-Qaeda: the military affairs committee, in charge of training, planning of operations and logistics; the Islamic study committee, in charge of indoctrination of members into proper understanding of Islamic law; the financial affairs committee, overseeing the holdings of al-Qaeda, the network of financial transfers, and the various fund raising schemes to finance operations; and the Islamic propagation committee, which disseminates al-Qaeda communiqués through public mass media and informal channels. Membership in these committees and their structure is not so much governed by rules and written documents but rather by family ties, friendship, and areas of experience and expertise. Al-Qaeda=s core members are driven more by their common goals than by formal organisational or procedural precepts.

While twenty-five different radical Islamic groups have been named as forming part of the al-Qaeda network only a few show consistent compliance with the core group. They include, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Ittihad al Islamiya; the Jemaah Islamiya group in Malaysia and Indonesia; and the Islamic Group in Egypt. The Lebanese Hezbollah group has provided al-Qaeda with instruction on mass casualty bombing attacks and use of suicide bombers, however their mutual dealings are those of equals rather than al-Qaeda being dominant. In other cases, al-Qaeda has co-opted existing Algerian and Egyptian networks in western Europe. Al-Qaeda has severed links with other groups when their behavior has proved scandalous. In 1998 al-Qaeda ceased supporting the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria after it embarked on massacres of Muslim civilians. It also abandoned the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines for degenerating into a gang interested more in robbery and kidnaping for ransom than in fighting for an Islamic state.

Al-Qaeda planted its own cells throughout North America , Great Britain, and Europe consisting of >families= of al-Qaeda operatives picked from similar national backgrounds who have trained or fought together in Afghanistan. They are carefully trained in assuming a cover identity and maintaining a plausible occupation, residence and behavior consistent with that cover. Mindful of police surveillance of immigrant Muslim communities they are advised to avoid mixing with local Muslim populations and to avoid attending prayer services in existing Islamic centres or mosques.

Like Ayatollah Khomeini before him bin Laden believes that the more fundamental conflict

between the Muslims and their enemies requires them to set aside their own doctrinal differences for the sake of unity. Thus al-Qaeda collaborates with Shi=ite Muslims, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and official Iranian representatives, in spite of its Wahhabi salafist orientation. Generally al-Qaeda avoids contact with non-Muslims but it has contacted the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to acquire better suicide bombing expertise and has contacted organized criminal syndicates to raise funds and, in some instances, to attempt to buy nuclear materials. However such contacts with Shi=ites and various non-Muslim groups are short term tactical accommodations rather than part of their long term strategy.

What is the relationship of al-Qaeda to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as to state sponsors of terrorism, such as Iran, Iraq, and Libya? Although Pakistan=s ISI had al-Qaeda contacts and helped create the Taliban, following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks the Pakistani government aligned itself with the US campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda and so the issue of Pakistani support for al-Qaeda became moot. After disclosures that the Saudi supported World Muslim League and International Islamic Relief Organization had each financially supported al-Qaeda, members of the US Congress and others have questioned the sincerity of Saudi efforts against al-Qaeda. In the past the ruling elites of Saudi Arabia tolerated fund raising for al-Qaeda and limited activities within their borders on the implicit understanding that in return al-Qaeda would not directly attack them. But with recent al-Qaeda attacks on Saudi targets, including planned attacks within the holy city of Mecca, the question of passive Saudi support for al-Qaeda also became moot.

Ironically Libya was the first nation to issue an arrest warrant for bin Laden in 1998 following the 1994 murder by al-Qaeda of a German couple vacationing in Surt, Libya. The Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has always repressed salafist groups in Libya and even aided the Algerian government in its war upon its salafists in the 1990s by interdicting salafists operating along Libya=s western border with Algeria and through intelligence cooperation.

Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks questions were raised about Iraqi support for al-Qaeda and in particular about possible Iraqi sponsorship of those attacks. On 16 September 2003 the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, stated there was no evidence of Iraqi involvement in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks but that there was evidence of earlier Iraqi aid to al-Qaeda in bomb construction and training in the use of chemical and biological weapons. However with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by US troops in April 2003 the issue of Iraqi state support for al-Qaeda became moot.

Finally there remains the question of Iranian state support. There is ample evidence of active Iranian aid to al-Qaeda: Hezbollah trainers and Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security agents trained

al-Qaeda fighters in al-Qaeda camps in the Sudan, in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon, and in training bases within Iran. Imad Maghniyah, the Hezbollah mastermind of the 23 October 1983 bombing of the US Marines encampment, is known to have instructed al-Qaeda in his bombing expertise. Recovered records of al-Qaeda's international telephone calls show that over ten percent of its calls were routed through Iran. As of October 2003 one of bin Laden's sons, as well as Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the al-Qaeda biochemical weapons expert, and Turki al-Dandani, wanted for the 12 May 2003 Riyadh bombings, were all hiding in Iran. Iranian state support for al-Qaeda has been continuing in spite of Iranian claims to the contrary.

## Challenge

Rohan Gunaratna (Gunaratna 2002: 223) and other counterterrorism experts concur that the policies of western liberal democracies to counter al-Qaeda should be multilateral, not unilateral. However military actions even by coalitions of nations against al-Qaeda remain half-measures unless conjoined with >public \*diplomacy= to make their case heard among the developing Muslim nations to which al-Qaeda directs its appeal. Other counterinsurgency experts note that the true >centre of gravity= of most conflicts is the issue of legitimacy, that of the regime(s) being attacked versus that of its attackers. If so, then disarming al-Qaeda requires exposing its ideology before its intended Muslim constituencies as being an opportunistic distortion of Islamic teaching. This demythologising is necessary since bin Laden's appeal rests on his image as a pious militant serving Islam. Bin Laden has ingeniously exploited Islamic religious symbolism and Muslim grievances for his self-aggrandisement, promoting himself as a populist folk hero among the Muslims not only of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East but even among the educated and prosperous Muslim diasporas in North America, Europe, and Australia.

Apart from the continuing operations of al-Qaeda and similar groups two other problems of international relations must be addressed to lessen their threats. First is the problem of \*failed states and of >gray areas.= After the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan in the late 1980s, US foreign policy failed to address the growing political vacuum that the Taliban and al-Qaeda soon filled. Failed states such as Afghanistan and Somalia provide both sanctuaries for groups like al-Qaeda and recruiting grounds for the thousands of young men lacking other ready employment in the midst of devastated economic and political systems. Apart from failed states other sanctuaries are found in remote regions where government authority is lacking, >gray areas,= such as the frontier bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the region

overlapping Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, that are also breeding grounds of terrorism. Second is the problem of \*rogue states, such as Iran and Syria, and formerly, Iraq and Sudan, which use groups like al-Qaeda to pursue their geopolitical aims. Clearly even well financed networks, such as al-Qaeda, require some state support to obtain identity documents, weapons, explosives, sanctuaries, and other needs. Effective counterterrorism policies need to correct failed states and gray areas, to isolate and punish rogue states that sponsor terrorism, and to reward and aid states that withdraw from passive or active sponsorship of terrorism. Finally the liberal democracies must find ways to ensure the movement of \*globalisation brings net material, social and political benefits to developing nations, and in particular to the Muslim nations, to neutralise the grievances and resentments that groups such as al-Qaeda exploit.

#### Further Reading

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See also: chemical weapons; diplomacy; failed state; globalisation; imperialism; Islam, nation-state, neo-colonialism; rogue state; terrorism; weapons of mass destruction

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