
Al-Qaida's Appeal: Understanding its Unique Selling Points

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Introduction

Despite its seemingly extreme ideology and its even more extreme use of political violence, al-Qaida has been able to elicit sympathy and support from a surprisingly large number of people. Suspected al-Qaida members have been arrested in dozens of countries around the world, and opinion polls in both Western and Middle Eastern countries have shown that relatively large numbers of young Muslims express sympathy with al-Qaida. In other words, we have a situation in which al-Qaida has killed civilians on a massive scale, including a large number of Muslims, but still seems to enjoy relatively widespread support. How can we explain this apparent conundrum?

This article argues that al-Qaida's continuing appeal is a result of three key factors. First, al-Qaida *propagates a simple popular message*, which resonates strongly with deeply held grievances in the Muslim world. The organisation strives to follow the popular mood in many respects. Second, al-Qaida has created for itself *a powerful and captivating image*. It has become the world's most feared terrorist organisation, which has an immense attraction for certain groups of young people. In some countries in Europe, it has become "cool" to be a jihadi.[1] Third, the strength of al-Qaida's appeal lies in *its global character*; unlike most terrorist groups of today, membership of al-Qaida is open to virtually everyone, irrespective of ethnicity and nationality. As long as one is willing to accept its extremist ideology, anyone can, in principle, become an al-Qaida member. [2]

These three factors: *simple message*, *powerful image* and *global character*, lie at the very core of al-Qaida's appeal today. By studying these three factors in more detail, one may also find clues to identifying al-Qaida's inherent weaknesses.

Al-Qaida's simple populist message

Why is it that al-Qaida's message seems so powerful, and why does it appear to resonate so strongly among segments of young Muslims in most parts of the world? In propaganda, the key to success is simplicity of message and linkages with real-world grievances. Al-Qaida's propaganda has succeeded in both. During the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s, militant Islamist groups condemned the rulers in Muslim countries as apostates, hypocrites, and collaborators. They called for overturning Muslim regimes and preached the need for an Islamic state. Their theoreticians talked about abstract notions such as excommunication (in Arabic: *takfir*), and God's sovereignty on earth (*hakimiyya*), concepts which were formulated by Sayyid Qutb back in the 1960s. However, the problem for these militants was that this message did not have much resonance among ordinary Muslims. Very few Muslims were ready to sacrifice their lives for the abstract notion of an Islamic state. Furthermore, there is a religious taboo against internal strife among Muslims, (*fitna*), and militant Islamists who justified the killing of other Muslims often found themselves isolated and marginalised.

Al-Qaida has shrewdly avoided the ideological missteps and failures of previous Muslim extremist groups. It has not propagated the revolutionary, anti-regime Qutbist ideology of previous jihadi groups. Instead, al-Qaida has consistently rallied its followers around a simple populist pan-Islamic message, which is that “Islam is under attack”, militarily, religiously, and economically. Al-Qaida focuses almost exclusively on the foreign or “Crusader” occupation of Muslim land, foreign desecration of Islam’s holiest places, and foreigners plundering the Islamic world’s natural resources, especially oil. [3]

This choice of focus on foreign occupation, religious desecration, and economic imperialism is not coincidental. Al-Qaida strategist Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri has written extensively on why this choice of focus is so important for al-Qaida. [4] He correctly observes that Muslims will not sacrifice their lives for the abstract notion of an Islamic utopian state. However, they will die for *al-Aqsa*, and they will sacrifice themselves for liberating Palestine or other countries under occupation such as Afghanistan or Iraq. Al-Suri’s conclusion is that Muslims are deeply touched by anything that smacks of foreign occupation. Hence, he urges al-Qaida to harness the power of pan-Islamic sentiments and the strength of popular Muslim solidarity in order to rally a mass following.

Clearly, this identification is key to understanding the power of al-Qaida’s propaganda. Al-Qaida’s simple message of foreign occupation, desecration, and exploitation seems to resonate deeply among Muslims today. The reason for this is simple: there is some truth to it. The Western world, led by the United States, has a strong and visible presence in this part of the world: militarily, economically, and politically. There are US-led military coalitions occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, while the United States supports Israel militarily, economically, and politically, even if the latter continues to maintain an illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories. The ruling elites in many Muslim countries are not elected, corruption is widespread, and there is a widespread belief – right or wrong – that the United States keeps these regimes in power to secure its access to the region’s oil reserves. The list of widely shared popular grievances against the United States’ foreign policies in the Islamic world is very long. Hence, it is very easy for al-Qaida to find strong arguments for its propaganda messages.

Al-Qaida’s image

Al-Qaida’s second key selling point is its powerful and captivating image. Today, new information technologies are revolutionising our lives, at least in the way we communicate and socialise. Young people especially seem to live a considerable part of their lives in the virtual world of Facebook, or in other cyber communities. Furthermore, the new information technologies allow more and more people to disseminate their message to a global audience. In other words, the mass media is changing rapidly. The major news agencies face competitors, and the battle for capturing people’s attention is tougher than ever. Hence, image and branding have become absolutely vital components in any marketing campaign that aims to promote a product or an idea through mass media.

Terrorism and violence have always attracted the media's attention, but al-Qaida has succeeded more than any other terrorist group in modern history in captivating and thrilling the world through its acts of violence. From its very inception, al-Qaida has given top priority to carrying out spectacular and unprecedented attacks. Until al-Qaida gained a foothold in Iraq, its total number of attacks was actually very small. However, its operations were audacious, and almost mind-boggling in devastation. Al-Qaida was very innovative in the art of terrorism. Its bombing of the USS Cole warship in Aden harbour, Yemen on October 12th, 2000, and the September 11th attacks on America were unprecedented acts of terrorism. The attacks on America made al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden household names all over the world, and a powerful media image of al-Qaida was created. Over night, al-Qaida succeeded in elevating itself to a "vanguard" among Muslim extremist groups, and managed to outbid groups with more limited regional objectives.

Al-Qaida's acts of violence provoked massive countermeasures by the United States and its allies. You will probably recall that the Bush Administration stated that 9/11 was not an act of terrorism, but rather it was "an act of war". [5] By using the word "war" about 9/11, the US President *de facto* declared that al-Qaida was a worthy counterpart in a global confrontation with the United States. To remove any doubt about who was the key player in the post 9/11 world order, the United States unleashed the so-called "Global War on Terror" against al-Qaida. In other words, the whole world witnessed a new drama unfolding. And it was al-Qaida and the United States who starred in this drama, nobody else. Needless to say, this contributed immensely to skyrocketing al-Qaida's popularity, at least for a while, and making its brand name the strongest on the market. [6]

The ensuing US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq further elevated al-Qaida's status to almost mythical proportions. Not only did these invasions serve as "evidence" that al-Qaida's rhetoric about the aggressive Western world was true. The invasions also demonstrated the power of al-Qaida to provoke the sole remaining super power to drain its military and human resources in endless and costly occupation. The invasion of Afghanistan also had the effect of weakening many of al-Qaida's potential competitors, who had regional agendas and had opposed an attack on the United States. These groups lost their sanctuaries in Afghanistan and their remnants gravitated towards al-Qaida. [7]

Al-Qaida's global outreach

Al-Qaida's third selling point is its global outreach. Hardly any terrorist group of today is truly multinational with branches all over the world. Most violent extremist groups are diehard nationalist extremists who would never accept foreigners in their ranks. Al-Qaida is an exception. From its very commencement, al-Qaida has been a multinational and multiethnic enterprise, even if Arabs, especially Saudis and Egyptians, have always dominated the upper echelons of the organisation. The fact that membership in al-Qaida is open to virtually everyone, irrespective of ethnicity and nationality, is a key selling point for al-Qaida, because it strengthens the credibility of its pan-Islamic rhetoric. It greatly expands the recruitment base for the organisation. As long as one is willing to accept its extremist ideology, anyone can, in principle, become an al-Qaida member.

Hence, al-Qaida has succeeded in recruiting followers from a large number of countries. Furthermore, a substantial number of Western converts have played a role in al-Qaida, the American Adam Gadahn (a.k.a. Azzam al-Amriki) being the most famous example. [8]

However, al-Qaida's global outreach goes beyond its appeal to Muslims of every shade and origin. The organisation has also worked consistently over the past two decades to establish cooperative networks with other groups of Muslim extremists in many parts of the world, from South-East Asia to Northern Africa. Consider the following description from the 9/11 Commission Report on bin Laden's networking activities in the early and mid 1990s:

'Bin Ladin now had a vision of himself as head of an international jihad confederation. In Sudan, he established an 'Islamic Army Shura' that was to serve as the coordinating body for the consortium of terrorist groups with which he was forging alliances. It was composed of his own al Qaeda Shura together with leaders or representatives of terrorist organizations that were still independent. In building this Islamic army, he enlisted groups from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Oman, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Somalia, and Eritrea. Al Qaeda also established cooperative but less formal relationships with other extremist groups [...] The groundwork for a true global terrorist network was being laid.' [9]

Some of the groups that gravitated towards bin Laden's organisation during the 1990s, later merged with al-Qaida, such as the *Islamic Jihad Group* in Egypt. Others renamed their organisations in order to become "al-Qaida's branches" such as Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's *Tawhid wa'l-Jihadi Group* in Iraq, the Algerian *Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC), and the *Libyan Islamic Fighting Group* (LIFG). Yet others have maintained close long-term collaborative relationships, such as the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and the Pakistani tribal areas. This vast array of cooperative relationships underscores how important such alliances are to al-Qaida. It is precisely this ability to find reliable local partners that is al-Qaida's strength *and* weakness. In the past, al-Qaida succeeded in finding local partners by offering training facilities, military expertise, and financial support. In more recent years, the organisation has also offered media services, and – increasingly – also its brand name, to local groups willing to work with al-Qaida. Al-Qaida's ability to sustain cooperative relationships with local partners and insert itself as a relevant actor in local and regional contexts is key to its survival.

A final aspect of al-Qaida's image building is its exploitation of the Internet. There is little doubt that al-Qaida's appeal owes a great deal to its shrewd media strategies. The importance of "the jihadi web" for al-Qaida's widespread appeal cannot be overstated. The organisation has demonstrated an ability to exploit the potential of the Internet for a wide variety of purposes. Al-Qaida and its numerous online sympathisers are producing enormous amounts of material on the Internet. The scope of this material is far too extensive and variegated to be discussed in this article. Suffice to say that al-Qaida's Internet resources include thousands of audiovisual products, tens of thousands of audio-

files, and probably millions of written documents. They span a wide range of genres, all designed to cater for the needs of jihadi sympathisers, recruits, operatives, and not the least, the recruiters. [10]

Al-Qaida's Weaknesses

In conclusion, a few thoughts on al-Qaida's current and future weaknesses, especially in terms of its appeal, are warranted. A major weakness of groups such as al-Qaida is that their targeting of civilians is difficult to justify. In recent years, public outrage against al-Qaida-related violence has become more visible. There have, for example, been mass demonstrations in Jordan and Morocco against al-Qaida following terrorist attacks by al-Qaida-related groups. A number of leading militant ideologues, from Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi in Jordan, to Sayyid Imam al-Sharif in Egypt, have severely censured al-Qaida for its acts of violence. [11] Such criticism does not go unheeded. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's second-in-command, felt compelled to respond to al-Sharif's criticism in a 216-page document that was posted on the Internet in early 2008. Al-Zawahiri described the document as being "the most difficult text" he had ever written. [12] At the same time, al-Qaida also authorized an online "open meeting with Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri" where the latter responded to a number of very critical, even satirical, questions of al-Qaida's acts of violence. [13]

Schisms are not new to al-Qaida. In fact, recently declassified documents reveal that there has been far more internal dissent in al-Qaida than has hitherto been acknowledged. [14] These internal tensions started right after al-Qaida's foundation, and have been a recurrent feature of the organisation. In recent years, issues such as the repeated massacres of Shia Muslim civilians in Iraq by al-Qaida's Iraqi branch, have been a particularly controversial issue inside al-Qaida. [15] Last year, there were also seemingly contradictory statements by al-Zawahiri and bin Laden regarding al-Qaida's future course of action vis-à-vis Pakistan following the Lal-Masjid showdown during the summer of 2007. [16]

Another inherent weakness of al-Qaida is that it does not seem able or willing to prepare for a future transition to politics. Al-Qaida's appeal is totally dependent on the continuation of violence. Its brandname is simultaneous with car bomb attacks and suicide bombers, not state building and party politics. Bin Laden seems to suggest that al-Qaida's victory is simply to inflict pain and economic losses on the enemy, and undermine its political resolve. As Bruce Lawrence has noted, in bin Laden's speeches "no alternative conception of the ideal society is ever offered. There is an almost complete lack of any social program". [17] This means that al-Qaida's appeal will diminish quickly whenever the population grow tired of violence that does not lead anywhere. At some point, al-Qaida's image will inevitably fade; just as all extremist ideologies have a limited life span, so too does al-Qaida's extremist interpretation of Islam. Some time in the future, al-Qaida will lose its attraction among the youth, and to pose as a jihadist will no longer be "cool".

It may be that the lack of political vision from within al-Qaida will doom the organisation to decline before it loses its captivating image. Already, we find that that overall public support for al-Qaida in Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey, has declined since 2002, according to the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes survey. [18] Another poll in Saudi Arabia from late 2007, also strongly suggested that local populations, "... have so overwhelmingly turned against bin Laden, al Qaeda and terrorism in general that nine out of 10 of them look at all three unfavorably". [19] Very few people would like to see Osama bin Laden as their ruler. Furthermore, it is not very likely that al-Qaida would be willing to negotiate seriously with the United States, nor is it likely that the US would negotiate with al-Qaida, although the issue was recently raised in Britain by Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff from 1995 to 2007. [20] However, al-Qaida's biggest problem is that several of its key regional partners in Iraq and Afghanistan may be contemplating the idea of negotiating a political solution with their enemies. [21] This spells trouble for al-Qaida. Its Iraqi branch, *al-Qaida in the Lands of the Two Rivers*, has already lost territory and support bases in that country due to the rise of the *Sahwa* ("Awakening")-movement, consisting of predominantly of former Sunni insurgents who have now decided to switch sides. The situation could become particularly precarious if the Taliban movement agrees to a ceasefire with the Karzai government and enters into negotiations with a view to reaching a powersharing settlement. If this happens, al-Qaida would no longer be useful to the Taliban. On the contrary, the Taliban might consider al-Qaida a major liability of which it needs to rid itself. Or alternatively, the Taleban might begin to view individual al-Qaida fighters as bargaining chips that can be handed over to foreign powers for a suitable price. Both outcomes are, of course, bad for al-Qaida's future.

However, for now, this is an unlikely scenario, even though Mulla Muhammad Omar has recently hinted that he might be prepared to sever relations with al-Qaida sometime in the future. [22] Even if sympathy for al-Qaida appears to be on the wane and its ideological message has come under attack, the organisation will continue to enjoy a degree of support. As long as the United States and its Western allies continue to maintain a strong military, political, and economic presence in the Islamic world, groups like al-Qaida are ensured a certain minimum level of support. In the long run, however, al-Qaida is doomed to vanish, at least in its present form. The factors that underlie al-Qaida's appeal today, namely its simple populist message, its powerful image and its global character, will be its weaknesses in the future. Terrorist groups and extremist ideologies have limited life spans, and so will al-Qaida.

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[1] In mid-2006, Jessica Stern noted that "[...] among many Muslim youths, especially in Europe, jihad is a cool way of expressing dissatisfaction with a power elite whether that elite is real or imagined". See Jessica Stern, "Jihad - a global fad", *Boston Globe*, 1 August 2006.

- [2] In this article, the term "al-Qaida" refers to the remaining al-Qaida leadership structures, presumably located in the Afghan-Pakistani border areas, as well as the al-Qaida movement (sometimes also dubbed "the global jihadi movement"), consisting of affiliated local and regional groups, who have adopted al-Qaida's brandname, its ideological worldview, and modus operandi.
- [3] There are a number of collections of the al-Qaida leadership's writings and public statements in Arabic and in translation, see for example *Complete Archive of Speeches by the Mujahideen's Imam Shaykh Usama bin Muhammad bin Ladin (May God Protect Him)* (in Arabic). 3 June 2006. Compiled by *Shabakat al-Buraq al-Islamiyya*. Accessed via www.alfirdaws.org/vb/, July 2006; *Budskap til verden. Osama Bin Ladens ytringer*. [Messages to the World: Osama bin Laden's Statements] Edited and Presented by Bruce Lawrence. Translations by Anne Aabakken and Nora Eggen; Thomas Hegghammer, "Al-Qaida Statements 2003-2004 - A compilation of translated texts by Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri", *FFI Research Report* No. 2005/01428, <http://rapporteur.ffi.no/rapporteur/2005/01428.pdf>; Thomas Hegghammer, "Dokumentasjon om al-Qaida - intervjuer, kommunik er og andre prim erkilder, 1990-2002", *FFI Research Report* No.2002/01393, <http://rapporteur.ffi.no/rapporteur/2002/01393.pdf>; *What Does Al-Qaeda Want? Unedited Communiqu s*. With Commentary by Robert O. Martin IV. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2004); Laura Mansfield, *His Own Words. A Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri* (United Kingdom: TLG Publications, 2006); and *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*. Edited and Introduced by Bruce Lawrence. (London: Verso, 2005).
- [4] A translation of extensive excerpts of al-Suri's writings can be found in my book *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp.347-484.
- [5] The exact phrase was: "The deliberate and deadly attacks, which were carried out yesterday against our country, were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war. This will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and resolve. Freedom and democracy are under attack." Cited in "Text of Bush's act of war statement", *BBC News*, 12 September 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1540544.stm>
- [6] I have developed this argument more fully in my book *Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Patterns and Predictions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005/2006), pp.30-32.
- [7] See my book *Architect of Global Jihad*, pp.246-250, 313-316.
- [8] Daniel Benjamin at the Brookings Institute has observed that "[t]heir numbers are indeed astonishing. Converts have been involved in jihadist activity since before al-Qaida was fully formed." See "The Convert's Zeal: Why Are So Many Jihadists Converts to Islam?", *Brookings website*, 7 September 2007, www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/0907terrorism_benjamin.aspx?p=1. Numerous press reports have covered the issue of jihadi converts over the past few years, see f ex Emma-Kate Symons, "Muslim converts answer jihad call", *The Australian*, 2 October 2006; Matt Leingang, "U.S. Man Accused of Plot to Bomb Resorts", *Associated Press*, 13 April 2007 [Christopher Paul, 43, of Columbus, Ohio]; Raffi Khatchadourian, "Azzam the American: The making of an Al Qaeda homegrown", *The New Yorker*, 22 January 2007; "Journey of Belgian female 'bomber'", *BBC News*, 2 December 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4491334.stm> [on Muriel Degauque]; and "France Links German Suspect to al-Qaida", *Voice of America*, 11 Jun 2003, 17:47 UTC [on Christian Ganczarski].
- [9] Cited in Chapter 2.3, "The Rise of Bin Ladin and Al Qaeda (1988-1992)", *The 9/11 Commission Report*, www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Ch2.htm.
- [10] For studies of al-Qaida's exploitation of the Internet, see f ex Brynjar Lia, "Al-Qaeda online: understanding jihadist internet infrastructure", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2 Dec 2005, www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00075/Al-Qaeda_online_und_75416a.pdf; and Brynjar Lia, "Jihadi Web Media Production: Characteristics, Trends, and Future Implications", conference paper, Berlin, 26 February 2007, www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00092/Jihadi_Web_Media_Pro_92100a.pdf; Hanna Rogan, "Al-Qaeda's online media strategies: From Abu Reuter to Irhabi 007", *FFI Research Report* No.2007/02729, <http://rapporteur.ffi.no/rapporteur/2007/02729.pdf>; and Anne Stenersen, "The Internet: A virtual training camp?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no.2 (2008 forthcoming).
- [11] Al-Maqdisi's criticism of al-Zarqawi's conduct of war in Iraq was articulated in several articles and in an interview with al-Jazeera. See Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Al-Zarqawi; munasaha wa munasara: amal wa alam" [Al-Zarqawi: Advice and Support: Hopes and Pains], *Minbar al-tawhid wa'l-jihad*, August 2004, <http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=2979>. For more details, see Anouar Boukhars, "The Challenge of Terrorism and Religious Extremism in Jordan", *Strategic Insights* V (4) (April 2006), pp.7-8 and Nibras Kazimi, "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* (Hudson Institute), (12 September 2005), pp.65-68. For Sayyid Imam Sharif's criticism of al-Qaida, see his series of 15 articles in the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Jarida* between 17 November and 4 December 2007, entitled *Tarshid al-'amal al-jihadi fi misr wa'l-'alam* [Guiding Jihad Action in Egypt and the World Today]. I am indebted to William McCants for sharing his insight into Dr Fadl's thinking. See also Mohammed Al Shafey, "Jailed Islamists Revise Jihad Concept", *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (English Edition) 26 November 2007; and Jarret Brachman, "Leading Egyptian Jihadist Sayyid Imam Renounces Violence", *CTC Sentinel*, 1 (1) (December 2007), pp.12-14.
- [12] See Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Tabri'ah: Risalat al-tabri'at ummat al-qalam wa al-sayf min manqasat tuhmat al-khawar wa al-da'f* ["Disavowal: A Letter Exonerating the Writers and Fighters of Islamic Nation from the Unsubstantiated Accusation of Feebleness and Weakness"] (as-Sahab Media, January 2008), p.3.
- [13] See "The Open Meeting with Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri: Part One" (as-Sahab Media, April 2008). See also Ian Black, "Al-Qaida deputy goes online to justify attacks", *The Guardian*, 4 February 2008.
- [14] See especially Vahid Brown, *Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa'ida from 1989-2006* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), Report, 2007), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq3.asp>.
- [15] See in particular "Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi" (11 October 2005) and "Atiyah's Letter to Zarqawi" (26 September 2006), *Combating Terrorism Center website*, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq3_pdf.asp.
- [16] It is too early to conclude that these statements actually reflect disagreements between the two, but it is interesting to note that al-Zawahiri and bin Laden appear to offer radically different recommendations to their followers in Pakistan regarding where and whom to fight given the current circumstances. Compare Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Aggression against Lal Masjid (as-Sahab Media, July 2007), audiotape; and "Come to Jihad: A Speech to the People of Pakistan. Shaykh Usama bin Ladin (may Allah protect him)" (as-Sahab Media, September 2007).
- [17] Cited in *Messages to the World*. Edited and Introduced by Bruce Lawrence (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p.xxii.
- [18] "Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics. Support for Terror Wanes Among Muslim Publics", *Pew Research Center website*, 14 July 2005, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=248>; "Where Terrorism Finds Support in the Muslim World", *Pew Research Center website*, 23 May 2006, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/26/where-terrorism-finds>

[support-in-the-muslim-world](#); and Robin Wright, "Support for Bin Laden, Violence Down Among Muslims, Poll Says", *Washington Post*, 15 July 2005, p.A13.

[19] Cited in "Poll: Most Saudis oppose al Qaeda", *CNN.com World*, 18 December 2007, www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/12/17/saudi.poll/index.html

[20] Ian Katz, "Top Blair aide: we must talk to al-Qaida: Former No 10 chief says Irish peace process showed link to enemy needed", *The Guardian*, 15 March 2008; and Ian Black, "Terror talks: would contacting al-Qaida be a step too far?" *The Guardian*, 15 March 2008.

[21] See for example Bernhard Zand, "Al-Qaida versus The Islamic Army: Insurgents in Iraq Turn on Each Other", *Der Spiegel*, 12 June 2007; and "Clash between ex-insurgents, al-Qaida in Iraq kills 18 in terror group", *The Associated Press*, 9 November 2007.

[22] Consider the following excerpt from an interview with Mullah Muhammad Omar by the Dawn newspaper in January 2007: "Q: What is the present relationship between the Taliban and Al Qaeda? A: We have never felt the need for a permanent relationship in the present circumstances. But they [the Al-Qaeda] have set jihad as their goal while we have set the expulsion of American troops from Afghanistan as our target. This is the common goal of all the Muslims. Cited in Ismail Khan, "Omar threatens to intensify war: Talks with Karzai govt ruled out", *Dawn*, 4 January 2007, www.dawn.com/2007/01/04/top4.htm. I am indebted to my colleague Anne Stenersen for this source and for sharing her insight into al-Qaida-Taleban relations.