

Islamist Terrorist Groups: Threat and Response

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There are three categories of terrorism, one of which is ideological terrorism: left-wing, ethno-ideological, radical Islam.

1979: turning point (Iranian Revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan).

Al Qaeda was founded in 1984 as the Afghan Service Bureau.

In 1988, the Charter of Al Qaeda was published in a journal in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda training is both ideological and physical.

In 1989, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, leaving thousands of Mujahideens without enemy.

Their next targets were the armed forces of neighbouring countries (not civilians).

Egyptians within Al Qaeda wanted to overthrow the Egyptian government but the leader, Azam, rejected the idea. Osama bin Laden sided with the Egyptians and Azam was killed shortly after. Bin Laden took his place.

In August 1998, Al Qaeda became known in the West.

In Late 1989, bin Laden left to Saudi Arabia.

In 1990, he moved the headquarters to Afghanistan.

In 1996, Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan; the Taliban had virtually taken complete control of the country.

In February 1993, a bomb exploded at the World Trade Centre in New York. The objective was to topple one tower onto the other to kill approximately 250,000 people.

Another operation had been planned in Asia but was aborted.

There has been a failure to realise the very serious objective of Al Qaeda to kill a vast amount of people and there has been no substantive attempt to infiltrate the group, at least before 1998.

Hezbollah has carried out multiple-target attacks similar to the attacks of 11 September 2001, like the attacks on French and American headquarters of peacekeeping forces (1983?).

The leader of Hezbollah met with Osama bin Laden in 1992 and built a link with him to strike against the common enemy: the United States.

In fact, the tactic of cold, suicidal, multiple-target attacks of Al Qaeda comes from Hezbollah. For example, the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States, the plan to destroy a Radisson Hotel, police stations and a ship in Jordan in 2000.

In October 2000, they used C4 explosive instead of TNT for their attack against the USS Cole.

Osama bin Laden believes in the idea of losing and learning: he thinks in the long term.

On 24 December 2000, in Indonesia, they attacked 30 churches simultaneously: 15 were destroyed, killing 22 people.

In the Philippines, an attack involved the explosion of five different bombs.

Al Qaeda aims at strategic target, functions through inspiration, instigation and direct support, it has 3,000 members (the most motivated of all) and it has trained 110,000.

Al Qaeda's interest in Kashmir lies in the objective of having Pakistan move its troops from Afghanistan to the Indian border so Al Qaeda could re-establish its links with Pakistan (where it has links with the allied organisations). Also, Kashmir is a pool of potential Al Qaeda recruits.

The structure of Al Qaeda was disrupted by the American offensive but not destroyed. Al Qaeda already plans guerrilla warfare against the future civil government in Afghanistan.

The West missed a point: Islamist milieu can regenerate even after arrests and bombings. The West has to demonstrate how Al Qaeda is in fact a deviation of Islamism.

The motivation of Al Qaeda is based on radical Islamism, a misrepresentation of the Koran: 'the disbeliever must be killed' (mainly targeting Americans and their allies). In other terms, it says 'get rid of US troops'.

The long term objective of Al Qaeda is the reunification and the expansion of the Caliphate.

The ideology of Al Qaeda must be attacked and its heretic character must be exposed.

The United States and the West have adopted a military (short term) strategy that is not successful because Al Qaeda will replenish. The West needs a paramount strategy that goes beyond military action: it must (1) target the ideology and the leadership of Al Qaeda, (2) forbid terrorist propaganda which is still today recruiting new Al Qaeda members, and (3) help third-world countries to move towards democracy in order to avoid the emergence of Islamist extremists.

Al Qaeda members represent 70 different nationalities: it is really global.

Osama bin Laden and his main advisors have to be eliminated, as well as the ones with great experience in operation planning.

The United States has to be patient: you cannot fight terrorism if you are impatient.

Al Qaeda plans its operations over a very long period of time, which gives time for detection and prevention.

One fifth of Islamist non-governmental organisation are infiltrated by Al Qaeda.

To expose Al Qaeda's heresy, the West would have to work with Asian and Middle Eastern agencies.

The fight against terrorism should also be the burden of non-governmental organisations (media, schools, banks, etc.), not only of the intelligence and security agencies.

We must attack Al Qaeda's ideology by exposing how its ideology is out of context, heretic .

There is tremendous support for Osama bin Laden because there is no counter-propaganda; Osama bin Laden is seen in the Middle East as a benefactor, the 'champion of Islam', a folk hero (in Pakistan).

People in the Middle East – and not only in the West – have to be told (through radio, television, etc.) that Al Qaeda is heretic.

There is no resistance from Muslim women against Islamist terrorism because groups like Al Qaeda are seen as freedom fighters.

We have neglected Afghanistan in the past; we should not neglect hot areas in the world today to avoid future threats.