Determining al-Qaʻida's Targeting Strategy:

Who's in the Crosshairs?

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

Executive Summary

The American response to September 11, 2001 both at home and abroad, limited al-Qaʻida's ability to carry out another spectacular attack on the US Homeland. However, even though the Homeland has been somewhat hardened and al-Qaʻida's capabilities reduced, a substantial change in al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy is unlikely to result. The 2006 plot to bring down US passenger airliners with liquid explosives serves as a grim reminder of al-Qaʻida's determination to target the US Homeland. Bin Laden's reference to the US as the primary target and continuing statements from al-Qaʻida central indicate that al-Qaʻida's commitment to terrorize the US remains unchanged.

Al-Qaʻida's current organizational structure consists of al-Qaʻida central, affiliate organizations, connected cells, and homegrown sympathizers, enabling al-Qaʻida to encourage lower level members to act independently while also inspiring, coordinating and directing various terrorist groups around the world. Al-Qaʻida remains committed to attacking multiple targets but places more value on attacks against the US Homeland. However, because al-Qaʻida lacks the capability to strike the US domestically but has the means to carry out attacks in other regions, those regions will likely be targeted more often by al-Qaʻida until the group's capabilities can catch up with its intentions.

The United States is still al-Qaʻida's primary target. However, it may be operating under self-imposed and external constraints that limit the type of operations the group may be able to carry out in the US Homeland. Recent US counterterrorism measures have frustrated al-Qaʻida's operational planning and also limited the type of attacks the group is able to execute. Al-Qaʻida appears to lack the resources and networks in the United States necessary to conduct a successful operation.

Al-Qaʻida's decision to attack Europe has likely been because of this inability to directly strike the US Homeland, but also due to its ideology, and a genuine desire to punish Europe for its part in the "War on Terror." By targeting European countries participating in or supporting US counterterrorism efforts in Muslim countries, al-Qaʻida hopes not only to punish Europe but also erode support from the United States and, ultimately, drive Western forces out of the Middle East. Al-Qaʻida will continue to view Europe as a target of convenience but, at the same time, will seek to develop its capability to attack the US Homeland. As things currently stand, al-Qaʻida will likely have to first rebuild its capabilities before it can effectively threaten the US Homeland.

Al-Qaʻida has to rebuild its base of operations, solidify its safe haven, acquire new resources, and recover lost manpower. To facilitate rebuilding, al-Qaʻida seems to have focused increased attention on other areas of the world. However, that does not signify an actual strategic shift on al-Qaʻida's part but rather a choice determined by opportunity and capability. Other regions such as South Asia, the Maghreb and the Arabian Peninsula all have resources al-Qaʻida needs to regain the capabilities it lost following US military operations in Afghanistan. Therefore, al-Qaʻida's operations in those regions also serve its broader strategic goals of attacking the United States, forcing the withdrawal of Western forces from Muslim lands, and

establishing a global Caliphate.

Introduction

Al-Qaʻida: Then and Now

In the years leading up to September 11, 2001, al-Qaʻida functioned primarily as a top-down organization whose leaders had a clear-cut command and control over the rank and file and established roles and tasks. Around that central structure there was a loosely organized group of supporters who were allied with al-Qaʻida and offered up support and expertise. Usama bin Laden and his aides supervised the planning and execution of the 1998 attacks on the US Embassies in East Africa and the 2000 USS Cole bombing in Yemen, the thwarted millennium attacks in Jordan and the United States, and the September 11, 2001 attacks.[1] That trend of direct involvement in all stages of an operation's planning lasted until after the 9/11 attacks when the United States invaded Afghanistan and drove al-Qaʻida from its base in late 2001.[2]

US and allied counterterrorism operations after the September 11, 2001 attacks severely impacted al-Qaʻida, resulting in the capture or death of 80 percent of the group's international leadership structure which greatly constrained its operational capabilities.[3] After the United States drove al-Qaʻida from its Afghan safe haven, the organization lost its centralized structure and became diffuse in its orientation. Some experts argued that at this stage it was little more than an ideology inspiring others to act. This view likely had significant merit in the months and even years following the Taliban's destruction; however, the specter of a scattered and weak al-Qaʻida leadership is not wholly accurate today. Even during the first couple of years following its eviction from Afghanistan, al-Qaʻida's central leadership helped plan terrorist operations for others to conduct, such as the 2004 Madrid train bombings, and now that it has reconstituted a safe haven in Pakistan, al-Qaʻida has regained more of its strength and relevance.[4] Al-Qaʻida's ability to use the tribal areas as a base of operations allows the leadership to avoid capture, communicate with its cells around the world, train new operatives and release propaganda to further the spread of its ideology.

Al-Qaʻida's current organizational structure can be described as a combination of "bottom-up" and "top-down" in that it both encourages lower level members to act independently while also continuing to coordinate and direct various terrorist groups around the world. The "al-Qaeda movement" can be divided into four dimensions each with varying levels of sophistication. The first and most influential is al-Qaʻida central, or al-Qaʻida's strategic leadership (AQSL), which consists of what is left of the pre-9/11 organization, including some of the core leadership such as bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri[5] and new players such as Abu

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[1] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004) 67,174-190.

[2] Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Kyle Dabruzzi, "Is Al-Qaeda's Leadership Still Relevant?" *Middle East Quarterly*. Vol. 15, Issue No. 2, Spring 2008.

[3] Reid Sawyer and Michael Foster, "The Resurgent and Persistent Threat of al Qaeda," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* July 2008, p.200.

[4] Gartenstein-Ross 2008.

[5] Bruce Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 14, Issue No. 2, Summer 2007, p. 45.

Yahya al-Libi,[6] to replace those like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who were either captured or killed. The second dimension are the al-Qaʻida affiliates and associates made up of established terrorist groups or insurgencies, such as al-Qaʻida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), that have either benefited from bin Laden or received some kind of assistance from al-Qaʻida, be it training, arms or money.[7] The third dimension is the al-Qaʻida locals or cells of al-Qaʻida members who have or did have a direct connection with al-Qaʻida central whether they fought in a jihad campaign in the Balkans, Chechnya, Algeria, or Afghanistan, trained in an al-Qaʻida camp before 9/11 or received training after 9/11 such as the 7/7 London bombers. The fourth dimension is the al-Qaʻida network, the homegrown Islamic radicals and local converts who have no direct link to al-Qaʻida or any other terrorist organization but decide to carry out attacks according to al-Qaʻida's ideology. This category acts without any direction from al-Qaʻida and includes small bunches of like-minded individuals who subscribe to al-Qaʻida's ideology such as the Hofstad Group in the Netherlands that was responsible for the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004.[8]

A reconstituted al-Qaʻida central and its affiliates would appear to present the greatest threat to US interests given their ability to coordinate and carry out complex attacks, access to resources and international reach. Thus, when discussing al-Qaʻida's intent and capabilities, it is important to look at all aspects of al-Qaʻida that have a direct connection to the central leadership, namely the first three dimensions of al-Qaʻida's structure. The fourth dimension covers a group of Islamic radicals that fall outside of al-Qaʻida's direct control and thus cannot be used to directly gauge al-Qaʻida's goals and strength. Still, this fourth group can and has served as a pool of potential recruits for al-Qaʻida operations[9] and should be factored into any discussion of the threat posed by al-Qaʻida.

The al-Qaʻida Threat

According to the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, al-Qaʻida continues to pose a threat to the United States because it has developed a safe haven in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, protected its top leadership and replaced many of its main operational lieutenants.[10] While the camps within FATA are not of the same size and sophistication of the bases located in Afghanistan under the Taliban because of al-Qaʻida's limited reach within the country and the lack of full backing from the Pakistani government, the very existence of the camps provide al-Qaʻida with a place to train militants from around the world, including Europe, the Persian Gulf and North Africa.[11] However, a major limiting factor in the camps' ability to increase al-Qaʻida's operational capability is the relative difficulty of getting non-tribal militants and other adherents into FATA to train and then back home or to their target country without raising the suspicion of Pakistani authorities. While this

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[6] Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, "Rising Leader for Next Phase of Al Qaeda's War," *New York Times* 4 April 2008, 8 April 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/world/asia/04qaeda.html>.
[7] Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" 2007, p. 45.
[8] Hoffman "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" 2007, p. 46-48.
[9] Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism in the West: al-Qaeda's Role in 'Homegrown' Terror," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs,* Vol. 8, Issue No. 2, Spring/Summer 2007, p. 94.
[10] National Intelligence Council, *National Intelligence Estimate: The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland*, 2007.
[11] Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen, "Al Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Beyond," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, 2008, p. 788-789.

complication may reduce the number of militants who have easy access to the camps, there are other ways into Pakistan; they may travel through Iran or enter Pakistan under the cover of an Islamic nongovernmental organization, and militants of Pakistani origin have greater ease of access to Pakistan and the tribal areas.[12] However, the FATA safe haven and the components of al-Qaʻida central stationed there have come under increased pressure during the past year. Al-Qaʻida lost part of its upper echelon command structure in 2008, complicating its ability to rebuild its strategic leadership and command and control. Four key leaders, Khalid Habib, Abu Layth al-Libi, Abu Khabab al-Masri, and Usama al-Kini,[13] were killed, once again forcing al-Qaʻida to find replacements for a part of its central leadership.[14] The limitations of the camps in advancing al-Qaʻida's agenda and the continuing loss of high-level leadership hinders the organization's ability to reconstitute itself to pre-9/11 levels; however, AQSL remains the most dangerous aspect of al-Qaʻida because of its relative safety within its Pakistani safe haven and its ability to conduct or orchestrate terrorist attacks around the world.

Some of the most deadly post-9/11 attacks—the 2002 nightclub bombings in Bali, the 2004 train attacks in Madrid, and the 2005 coordinated attacks on the public transit system in London—were conducted by terrorists either trained in al-Qaʻida camps or terrorists with tangible ties to al-Qaʻida. The August 2006 plot to blow up 10 transatlantic flights over the United States could indicate a resurgence in al-Qaʻida's operational capability regardless of the status of its bases in FATA. The plot failed due to intelligence successes; however, its magnitude goes beyond what any one local cell would be capable of and if successful, would have rivaled the September 11 attacks in the number of potential deaths and degree of destruction.[15]

Since 9/11, al-Qaʻida seems to have set its sights on Europe. The increased focus on Europe is the likely result of several factors, such as the large numbers of ethnic Pakistanis and North Africans in European communities which have been used for recruitment or cover, the radicalization of European converts to Islam, Europe's association with the United States and the West, and the ease of access between Europe and the United States.[16] British authorities know of approximately 3000 British Muslims who traveled to al-Qaʻida camps in the 1990s, and Spanish officials have uncovered approximately 1000 Spanish Muslims who made the same trip.[17] It is entirely possible that the focus on Europe over the past few years is an attempt on al-Qaʻida's part to use Europe as a staging ground for future attacks against the United States. The 2004 plot uncovered in Britain to attack financial landmarks in the United States, like the New York Stock

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Khalid Habib was al-Qaʻida's fourth in the chain of command and the group's military chief; Abu Layth al-Libi was an up-and-coming leader in al-Qaʻida and directed cross-border military action against allied forces in Afghanistan; Abu Khabab al-Masri was a primary driver on terrorist plotting against the US homeland and Europe and al-Qaʻida's main expert on chemical and explosive attacks; Usama al-Kini was the chief planner of al-Qaʻida attacks within Pakistan and involved in the 1998 East African Embassy bombings.

[14] Dennis C. Blair, *Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, 111th Cong., 1st Sess., 12 Feb. 2009, p.4, 19 Feb. 2009
<http://intelligence.senate.gov/090212/blair.pdf>.

[15] Gartenstein-Ross 2008.

[16] Steven Emerson, *Testimony before the United States House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence*, 110th Cong., 2nd Sess., 9 April 2008.

[17] Hoffman "Terrorism in the West: al Qaeda's Role in 'Homegrown' Terror," 2007, p. 95-96

Exchange and the foiled August 2006 airline plot, could be evidence that such a method is in use.[18]

The Threat to the Homeland

Under the direction of bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, AQSL still perceives the United States as its foremost strategic target and aims to attack American interests around the world, including the US Homeland.[19] While al-Qa'ida central may currently lack the capability to carry out an attack on US soil, it has the ability to direct either its affiliated groups or local extremists to conduct smaller attacks and could also influence increasing amounts of homegrown terrorists in the United States and abroad.[20] However, there have been relatively few instances of domestic al-Qa'ida plots uncovered in the United States thus far.

The domestic threat from homegrown extremists[21] has not yet reached the level or coordination of what Europe is facing because Muslim communities in the United States have thus far appeared to most observers to be better integrated into American culture than some of the Muslim communities in Europe, namely Britain and France.[22] However, homegrown groups or individual extremists motivated by al-Qa'ida's propaganda and ideology could potentially plan and carry out a minor attack within the United States without any direct guidance from al-Qa'ida.[23] They may also provide fertile recruiting grounds for al-Qa'ida central and facilitate an al-Qa'ida attack against the US Homeland in the future.

Homegrown extremism is not a recent phenomenon in the United States. During the 1980s, small numbers of African Americans traveled to the Middle East and fought in Afghanistan, some of whom belonged to US-based Jamaat al Fuqra (Community of the Impoverished). Though not formally designated as a terrorist organization, al Fuqra is motivated by radical Islam and has perpetrated violent acts over the last 25 years, including bombings and assassinations.[24] Throughout the 1990s, there was an increasing nexus between homegrown extremists in the United States and foreign jihadists. The New York region played a central role in this development. The New York jihadist "cluster" centered around the Masjid al Farooq

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[18] Peter Bergen, "The Return of Al Qaeda," *The New Republic* 29 January 2007, 19 March 2009 <http://www.peterbergen.com/bergen/articles/details.aspx?id=288>.

[19] Blair 2009, p. 6.

[20] Fred Burton, Stratfor Vice President for Counterterrorism and Corporate Security, Telephone interview, 13 Feb. 2009.

[21] "The quintessential "homegrown network" is composed of individuals born in the West (second or third generation Muslim immigrants and/or converts) who embraced a radical interpretation of Islam autonomously and formed a more or less cohesive cluster that operates independently from any other organization. Nevertheless, a looser definition of "homegrown" focuses less on the individual's place of birth, but rather on where his or her radicalization has taken place." (Vidino, p. 2-3)

[22] Farooq Kathwari, Lynn M. Martin and Christopher B. Whitney, "Strengthening America: The Civic and Political Integration of Muslim Americans," *Task Force Series*, The Chicago Council of Global Affairs, 2007, p. 7, 1 May 2009 <http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/Task%20Force%20Reports/Strengthening%20America%20Report.pdf>.

[23] Blair 2009, p. 7.

[24] Lorenzo Vidino, "Homegrown Jihadist Terrorism in the United States: A New and Occasional Phenomenon?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 32, 2009, p. 4-5.

mosque, the American headquarters of al Khifa,[25] and Omar Abdel-Rahman[26] had links to both the 1993 Landmarks Plot[27] and the first bombing of the World Trade Center.[28] Other clusters of homegrown extremists tied to al Khifa formed in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Tucson and became the basis for the first group of al-Qaʻida supporters in the United States, some of whom traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is estimated that between 1000 and 2000 homegrown extremists volunteered and traveled to fight or train with jihadist organizations around the world during the 1990s. Contrary to the popular belief that US Muslims are impervious to radicalization, those numbers are comparable to the number of European Muslims who made similar journeys during that time.[29]

In the first two years after 9/11, three extremist clusters within the United States with considerable homegrown characteristics were uncovered and dismantled—the Lackawanna Six, The Portland Seven and the Virginia Paintball group. While homegrown in nature, all three groups either traveled abroad to train or attempted to travel and connect with a pre-existing terrorist organization. For the Portland and Virginia groups, the September 11 attacks served as motivation for them to commit jihad.[30] However, since 9/11, most of the terrorist plots directed against the US homeland have been conceived by "purely homegrown, operationally independent, and…quite amateurish clusters." These plots include the 2004 plan to bomb a New York subway station in conjunction with the Republican National Convention, the targeting of Chicago's Sears Tower and federal buildings in Florida in 2006, and the 2007 plan to attack the Fort Dix military base in New Jersey.[31]

While potentially dangerous, genuinely homegrown extremist groups generally have had a limited connection with al-Qaʻida and have not thus far been used to independently determine al-Qaʻida's core intentions or capabilities. However, their attempted actions against the US homeland are reflective of al-Qaʻida's strategy in that the homegrown cells usually radicalize and act based on jihadist ideology as propagandized by al-Qaʻida. Therefore, on some level the actions and plots of homegrown clusters can be used to partially judge al-Qaʻida's overarching targeting strategy. Still, the homegrown threat is only one aspect of the broader danger al-Qaʻida presents. Previous attacks against the United States have all involved the movement of al-Qaʻida operatives into the United States from a foreign country, and it remains possible that future plots will be conducted in the same manner.

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[25] Al Khifa was established by al-Qaʻida founder Abdullah Azzam as an organization to recruit and raise money for the Afghanistan jihad.

[26] Also known as the "Blind Sheikh" and spiritual leader of the Egyptian al-Gamaʼat al-Islamiyya.

[27] In July 1993, eight individuals associated with al-Qaʻida were arrested for plotting attacks on several key locations in Manhattan. The militants intended to use several teams to attack the Waldorf-Astoria, UN Plaza and St. Regis hotels, the Holland and Lincoln tunnels, and a Manhattan heliport that serviced business executives and VIPs traveling to local New York airports.

[28] Vidino 2009, p. 5.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Batt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, (New York: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007), p. 62-63.

[31] Vidino 2009, p. 8.

Defending the Homeland

US counterterrorist actions since 9/11 have not eliminated the threat of al-Qaʻida attacks against the homeland; however, they may have provided the United States with some of the necessary tools to lessen the threat and undermine al-Qaʻida actions domestically.[32] The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) have allowed the US government to address many of the issues raised by the 9/11 Commission, including problems in intelligence sharing and coordination. The NCTC and the JTTF were formulated to allow representatives from multiple agencies to work together and share information to combat the terrorist threat, a condition that was lacking prior to 2001.[33] Furthermore, the United States has taken steps to improve the hardening of various critical infrastructure components such as aviation and border security.[34] Policies designed to track and dismantle money laundering and terrorist fundraising operations have also contributed to disrupting the terrorist threat against the US homeland.[35]

The federal government is not alone in its actions to harden the homeland. State and local authorities have also begun to develop policies and procedures specifically designed to counter the terrorist threat. The most commonly cited examples of this on a local level after the September 11 attacks is the creation of a new counter-terrorism division within the New York Police Department, complete with foreign language specialists, intelligence analysts, and offices around the world[36] and the Los Angeles County Terrorism Early Warning (TEW) Group designed to improve counterterrorism through better local, state and federal intelligence sharing.[37]

Methodology

We began work on this project by examining one central question: *Has al-Qaʻida's grand targeting strategy shifted from the United States to attacking US allies, especially in Europe?* As part of this question, we sought to challenge the assumption that *al-Qaʻida is still focused on the US as its primary target.* We then examined another five assumptions regarding al-Qaʻida's intent and capability to conduct attacks against the US Homeland (versus its intent

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[32] Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: It's Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), p. 132.

[33] Ronald Sievert, Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Personal interview, 12 Feb. 2009.

[34] David McIntyre, Director of the Integrative Center for Homeland Security at Texas A&M University, Personal interview, 19 Feb. 2009.

[35] James Forest, Director of Terrorism Studies and Associate Professor of Political Science at the United States Military Academy, Email interview, 15 Feb. 2009.

[36] Craig Horowitz, "The NYPD's War on Terror," *New York Magazine* 27 January 2003, 7 Feb. 2009 <http://nymag.com/nymetro/news/features/n_8286/>.

[37] The Los Angeles County Terrorism Early Warning Group was established to analyze "the strategic and operational information needed to respond to and combat terrorism and protect critical infrastructure." The core of TEW is comprised of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Police Department, city and county fire departments, public health services and the FBI as well about 30 local, state and federal coordinating agencies.
United States Department of Homeland Security, Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, "Terrorism Early Warning Group: Intelligence Coordination Among Federal, State, and Local Agencies," 2005, 4 April 2009 <http://www.mofb.org/webquest/terr3.pdf>.

and capability to conduct attacks elsewhere) and paired those assumptions up based on geographic region. For the first region, the United States, we focused on the following assumptions about al-Qaʻida's strategic intentions to strike the Homeland and current capabilities to do so:

- Al-Qaʻida wants to carry out an attack inside the US Homeland that is more "spectacular" than 9/11
- Al-Qaʻida lacks the capability to conduct attacks inside the United States

Specifically, we examine the assumption that attacking the US Homeland is a key strategic goal of al-Qaʻida. For example, to assess whether al-Qaʻida is still intent on carrying out an attack in the US more spectacular than 9/11, we look at whether or not al-Qaʻida has put itself "in a box" or limited itself strategically by setting the bar too high for its next attack. To assess al-Qaʻida's capability to strike the Homeland, we examine the status of al-Qaʻida's critical means, or resources (to include safe havens, money, recruits, weapons), necessary to enable it to conduct attacks in the United States and evaluate counterterrorism actions both at home and abroad designed to diminish those means.

For the second region, Europe, we address the following assumptions to determine if al-Qaʻida does intend to target Europe, its reasons for doing so, and whether it has the capability to conduct attacks on the continent:

- Al-Qaʻida seeks to target US allies, particularly Europe, for participating in Afghanistan and Iraq
- Al-Qaʻida has focused its attacks on Europe because there are more available means and/or because counterterrorism measures there are weaker

To assess whether al-Qaʻida is still intent on targeting US allies, particularly in Europe, we examine the assumption that they are targeting them as punishment for participating in coalition operations targeting Afghanistan and Iraq. To determine if al-Qaʻida has the capability to follow through on its possible intentions and carry out attacks against Europe, we look at what resources or opportunities al-Qaʻida may have in Europe that it lacks in the United States.

Finally, we move beyond the United States and Europe and analyze al-Qaʻida's actions in other parts of the world by examining the following assumption:

- Al-Qaʻida has shifted, or is shifting its bases of operation to other strategically significant region.

To examine this final assumption, we look at al-Qaʻida's overall strategic objectives and actions to determine where it is active in other areas of the world. From there, we evaluate whether such activity is indicative of an actual shift of al-Qaʻida operations to these regions, what al-Qaʻida's intentions are in these areas (whether it has particular political or ideological goals to pursue), and if it means al-Qaʻida has diverted attention and resources away from its objective to attack the United States.

For our analysis of our key question and related assumptions, we relied on open source material for information about al-Qaʻida, related events, the group's activities in various regions, and government responses to the terrorist threat and their potential impact on al-Qaʻida operations in a given region. In looking at the open source information, we used translations of al-Qaʻida statements and jihadist commentary; US and European government documents about al-Qaʻida and their efforts to combat the threat; interviews with scholars, counterterrorism experts and homeland security practitioners; news articles on events, attacks and reported al-Qaʻida activity; and various journal and other scholarly reports to formulate our analysis and address our assumptions. However, our heavy reliance on open source information greatly limited the depth and scope of our research and subsequent analysis.

Challenges and Limitations

Some of the challenges inherent in this process stem from the complex nature of the issue and the difficulty obtaining reliable information concerning al-Qaʻida's intent and capabilities from various open sources. Given the potential scope of our central question, it was important for us to bound our research and develop an organizational structure for our project that best conveyed our research and analysis. This was made somewhat more difficult due to the overlapping nature of many of the questions we had to address, particularly when it came to dividing up the questions for research purposes. Another significant challenge was the number of people involved in this project. Trying to effectively coordinate nine project members and integrate their work into a finished, cohesive paper is a daunting task, and one that is best undertaken piecemeal rather than waiting until the end.

Data sources and the time available to us to complete the project also presented their own unique sets of challenges. Relying on open source information for something such as determining al-Qaʻida's intentions and capabilities is a tricky endeavor. This particular issue is heavily prone to sensationalism or bias within certain sources, depending on the desire for profit (the media) or domestic agendas (some countries seeking greater US assistance). Therefore, the manner in which sources are selected had to be monitored to ensure that no one section drew too heavily from one source and that our sources throughout the paper represented fair evaluations of the situation rather than pure opinion pieces that lacked justification. Time presented a problem because we were tasked with completing such an extensive project within one semester[38] which made it difficult to conduct the type of in-depth research needed to fully examine our key question and assumptions. With a longer timeframe, we would have had the opportunity to conduct more expert interviews and delve more deeply into the available primary sources on al-Qaʻida statements and various jihadist forums.

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[38] This project was completed in approximately 4 months from January 23-May 11, 2009.

The United States: The Primary Target

The United States is still al-Qaʻida's primary target because it is the foremost Western occupying force in the Middle East and challenger to al-Qaʻida's ideology. However, al-Qaʻida has some specific limitations regarding its intent and capability to carry out a spectacular[39] attack in the US Homeland. Regarding its intent, al-Qaʻida may be operating under some self-imposed constraints that limit the type of operation the group may be able to carry out in the US Homeland, and the conditions under which this kind of an attack can occur. Al-Qaʻida may also face some external constraints as well that complicate its ability to conduct a spectacular attack in the United States. Regarding its capability, recent counterterrorism measures enacted by the US government to harden the Homeland have frustrated al-Qaʻida's operational planning and also limited the type of attack the group is able to execute. Furthermore, al-Qaʻida appears to lack the resources and networks in the US necessary to conduct a successful operation. The first section will address al-Qaʻida's limitations with regard to intent, and the second will focus on its constraints with regard to capability.

Limitations on Intent

This first section will discuss three main issues regarding al-Qaʻida's intent to carry out an attack in the US Homeland more spectacular than on September 11, 2001. The first issue is whether or not al-Qaʻida leaders put themselves "in a box" after 9/11 and set the bar too high by stating that the next attack on the US homeland would be more "spectacular" than those perpetrated on 9/11. Media portrayal and public opinion clearly pointed to the belief that if terrorists were capable of carrying out the 9/11 attacks, then clearly something even worse was on the way—and soon.

The second issue is whether the statements made by al-Qaʻida leaders after 9/11, which promised an even more spectacular attack has actually contributed to the absence of further attacks on the US Homeland. Some have argued that a smaller attack could diminish al-Qaʻida's overall credibility and thus its influence among the greater Muslim community. The third issue is whether al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy, and as a result its rhetoric, has indeed changed since 9/11, reflecting its lowered expectations of an attack on the US Homeland. The timing, too, of al-Qaʻida attacks must be considered to determine how al-Qaʻida's credibility might be affected. This section aims to provide a better understanding of al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy by examining the impact of 9/11 on the US government's expectations concerning potential al-Qaʻida attacks and al-Qaʻida's intentions with regard to future attacks on the US homeland.

Has Al-Qaʻida Put Itself in a "Box"?

At this point, it is worthwhile to examine what "in a box" means. The common perception implies some sort of contained dimension which limits action and decision-making. For example, some have argued that al-Qaʻida leaders' proclamations after 9/11 somehow confined the group to particular type of action, such as limiting them to a WMD attack. This

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[39] The term "spectacular attack" in this context can have varying interpretations, but for the purpose of this study, the elements of a spectacular attack include high casualty counts, damage to critical infrastructure, intense media attention, widespread psychological trauma, and a "ripple" effect on the US economy.

would suggest that al-Qaʻida has become predictable and that the threat can more easily be assessed. This definition, however, raises two key questions. First, is al-Qaʻida in a "timing box" that requires it to act quickly or fear losing legitimacy? The group's leaders have claimed that more attacks would come. Is the group confined to a "box" because it now must act on this promise? Second, is al-Qaʻida in a "tactical box" that relegates it to a limited range of attacks? This would require that the group's modes of operation be predictable and clearly identifiable. This section will show that al-Qaʻida is only in a "box" to the extent that its attacks on the US Homeland must be considered "spectacular." The timing and modes of action allow the group a good deal of freedom when choosing how, when, and where to carry out an attack.

Is al-Qaʻida in a "timing box"?

In many respects, the US government is focused on the timing factor while al-Qaʻida is not. One terrorism expert indicates that if al-Qaʻida "believed the lack of an attack against the Homeland was hurting their image, they would pour all their resources into pulling off another so-called spectacular attack."[40] In reality, it does not seem that al-Qaʻida feels the pressure to act. Another expert notes that "if the time comes that [al-Qaʻida feels] that nobody is paying attention to them (as was the case before 9/11), then they will feel the need to pull off another 9/11-type attack."[41] This same expert offers an insightful perspective of how the US "box" vision is flawed. He discusses how the United States lives "in election cycles and every 2-4 years. Governance changes and over time Americans backslide on counterterrorism efforts."[42] This implies that the element of timing is very different for the US government than it is for groups such as al-Qaʻida. In fact, he even sees that al-Qaʻida's "long term plans could be successful in carrying out an attack on US soil."[43] This implies that the United States has not covered all of its bases with regard to long-term security and could become complacent. It is important to remember that after the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, al-Qaʻida "waited almost a decade before striking the US Homeland again."[44] A former FBI terrorism consultant claims that "one of bin Laden's defining characteristics is patience."[45] The outcome is what matters. In al-Qaʻida training camps, recruits were ingrained with the belief in the overall importance of patience.[46] Al-Qaʻida's leadership is known for taking its time to plan attacks. The group took five years to plan the 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Kenya.[47]

Although open source information regarding terrorist group plans and intentions is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, it is clear from jihadist statements, previous attacks both successful and interrupted, and the fact that al-Qaʻida is reconstituting its leadership and training

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[40] Forest 2009.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Burton 2009.

[43] Ibid.

[44] U.S. House. Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamist Extremist Threat* (H. Rpt. 109-615) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006) 18 Feb. 2009 <http://intelligence.house.gov/Media/PDFS/ExtremistThreat.pdf>, p.9.

[45] Paul L. Williams, *The Al Qaeda Connection: International Terrorism, Organized Crime, and the Coming Apocalypse* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005) p. 99.

[46] ,Ibid.

[47] Chitra Ragavan, "Tracing Terror's Roots: How the First World Trade Center Plot Sowed the Seeds for 9/11," *US News and World Report*, 16 Feb. 2003, 9 May 2009 <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/030224/24wtc_5.htm>.

structure in Pakistan that al-Qaʿida intends to continue planning attacks against the US Homeland. Indeed, al-Qaʿida collaborators from other extremist organizations and homegrown terrorist cells "continue to plan for horrific attacks."[48] Also, al-Zawahiri has claimed that future attacks are likely if current US military operations continue in the Muslim world. In December 2006, he proclaimed that if his group, and Muslims in general, continue to be attacked in their Homelands, most notably in the Middle East, then "[al-Qaʿida] shall never stop striking [us] in [our] countries."[49] This statement came just a few months after the failed air liquid bomb attack in the United States. Post-9/11 statements from bin Laden and Zawahiri demonstrate a desire for further attacks on the United States but claim that the timing is not yet right. For instance, in January 2006, they claimed to be in the final stages of an attack on America and that planning just needs to be completed.[50] One also needs to recognize that, regardless of how much time transpires until the next major attack, al-Qaʿida's next attack on the Homeland will have a significant impact and amplify the organization's threat level once again. However, one counterterrorism expert claims that al-Qaʿida does not sense any real urgency at the present considering its recent successes in Pakistan and Afghanistan.[51] The group definitely appears to be rehabilitating itself well and thus does not see the need to act right away.[52]

Is al-Qaʿida in a "tactical box"?

A former State Department counterterrorism official expands on the problem with the "box" belief. He argues that the United States is "still struggling to understand the changing character and nature of al-Qaʿida and the shifting dimensions of the terrorist threat as it has evolved since 9/11."[53] Thus, al-Qaʿida could not have put itself "in a box" if it is morphing into a new organization with different strategies. A recent RAND study even claimed that "[al-Qaʿida] morphs and changes organizationally to adjust to arrests and disruption of planned attacks."[54] Thus, the predictability which the United States has tried to pin on al-Qaʿida is likely to be ill-informed.

As discussed in the previous section, there is not sufficient evidence to support the belief that al-Qaʿida leadership statements have set the bar too high and thus doomed the group to failure. Rather, al-Qaʿida has pursued alternative courses of action to attack or injure the United States. Some claim that "[al-Qaʿida] now believes defeating the United States in Iraq (rather than terrorizing it at home) will best serve its goals."[55] In essence, the United States is now closer to al-Qaʿida's "base of operations" in the Middle East and can therefore be more easily targeted. One expert has even claimed that "the US intervention in Iraq [landed] the Bush administration

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[48]*Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Extremist* Threat 2006, p. 27.

[49] IntelCenter, *IntelCenter: Words of Ayman al-Zawahiri, Vol. 1* (Alexandria, VA: Tempest Publishing, 2008) p. 182.

[50] *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Extremist Threat* 2006.

[51] Daniel Byman, Director of Center for Peace and Security Studies, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, Telephone interview, 27 Feb. 2009.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Angel Rabasa, Peter Chalk, et al.,*Beyond al-Qaeda, Part 1: The Global Jihadist Movement* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006) p. 105.

[55] Martin Libicki, Peter Chalk, and Melanie Sisson, "Exploring Terrorist Targeting Preferences," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), p. 92.

in the type of quagmire that [al-Qaʻida] was hoping would eventuate from the September 11th attack."[56] Some could argue then that al-Qaʻida has not needed to attack the US Homeland, and that as a result of 9/11, the United States put itself "on the ropes" in Afghanistan and especially Iraq. This, in fact, can be seen as a second tier effect triggered by al-Qaʻida which the United States has helped perpetuate.

The alternative courses of action taken by al-Qaʻida to inflict harm on the United States should not be interpreted as lowered expectations, as al-Qaʻida still calls for resistance and attacks against the United States with the same conviction as before. Official statements from al-Qaʻida leadership demonstrate no major shift in the goals of al-Qaʻida leadership or its targeting strategy. Approximately one year after 9/11, on October 8, 2002, Ayman al-Zawahiri claimed that al-Qaʻida would "continue to target the key sectors of the US economy."[57] This statement demonstrates that al-Qaʻida wanted to continue what it started on 9/11. Two years later, al-Qaʻida restates its intention to strike an economic blow against the US through a drawn-out struggle. Al-Qaʻida leadership draws on historical comparisons to portray this ambition. On November 1, 2004, bin Laden discussed the group's "experience in using guerilla warfare and the war of attrition to fight tyrannical superpowers."[58] US efforts in Afghanistan had continued for about two years and the effort in Iraq for one year and al-Qaʻida maintained that it was just a matter of time before the United States would give up. Bin Laden claimed that the organization "bled Russia for ten years, until it went bankrupt and was forced to withdraw in defeat."[59] It is important to note the reference to 10 years. Al-Qaʻida acknowledges that its past success took time and resulted from a war of attrition, pointing to the economic aspect of al-Qaʻida's strategy. Indeed, in 2004, bin Laden restated his commitment to a "policy [of] bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy."[60] Al-Qaʻida uses whatever strategy it needs to fight the United States, and what better way than to damage and exhaust the US economy. Al-Qaʻida has remained consistent in its targeting strategy and even though it may choose different modes of attacks as its capabilities wax and wane, the location is always the same – the United States.

Limitations on Capability

Al-Qaʻida's grand targeting strategy remains focused on the United States, but the organization lacks the capability necessary to carry out an attack on American soil. Since the 9/11 attacks, policymakers have worked to implement numerous policies designed to harden key soft targets within the Homeland. US policy changes may have increased the difficulty of attacking the Homeland; however, the policies alone do not fully explain al-Qaʻida's inability to attack the United States. Al-Qaʻida's limitations in the US Homeland also stem from its lack of established networks and safe havens, its limited operational resources, its difficulty in inserting operatives, and its inability to exploit a radicalized domestic Muslim population.

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[56] Libicki 2007, p. 92.
[57] *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Extremist Threat* 2006, p. 33.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

Differentiating Between a Hard and a Soft Target

In a general sense, hardening a target involves strengthening its physical state. In a political context, it is important to differentiate between a hard target and a soft target to comprehend what makes soft targets particularly attractive to terrorists, such as al-Qaʿida, and why hardening a target increases the cost of an attack. For example, one source defines a hard target as "[a] site, normally constructed under rock or concrete cover, designed to provide protection against the effects of conventional weapons. It may also be equipped to provide protection against the side effects of a nuclear attack and against a chemical or a biological attack."[61] US military bases are generally considered to be hard targets.

Conversely, a soft target can be defined as "military tech speak for a place with what are called 'exploitable vulnerabilities'."[62] Another definition identifies soft targets as "those [targets] that are not subject to special protection, that are frequented by the public, which could be local nationals or foreigners."[63] Shopping malls and sporting events are generally considered to be soft targets because of the large crowds they attract and the little protection that is generally provided. When terrorists attack a soft target, "[d]estruction of or damage to economic or other capabilities is not the primary aim of such attacks. The primary aim is to kill human beings, though destruction or damage of capabilities may also result from such attacks."[64] Attacks on soft targets are primarily designed to incite panic and reveal vulnerabilities in the current security environment. Hardening these targets is the US government's effort to make these targets less vulnerable, driving up the cost of an operation. If the cost of the operation goes up, the terrorists will be more hesitant to act.

Policies to Harden the Homeland

The US government has focused on four key areas to harden the US Homeland: finance, access, critical infrastructure and information. The term access refers to access to the Homeland, which includes policies related to the border, transportation, and screening measures. Critical infrastructure refers to the physical security of those assets that are deemed particularly valuable. Information refers to policies that have been implemented to allow better collection of intelligence and better cooperation between and among federal, state, local, and foreign agencies.

Finance

Since September 11, the US government has worked to implement financial policies that hinder terrorists' abilities to raise and move funds. In Executive Order 13224, President Bush authorized the Treasury Department, in collaboration with other Cabinet agencies, to "use all appropriate measures to identify, track, and pursue not only those persons who commit terrorist

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[61]United States Department of Defense, "Hardened site," 17 Oct. 2008, 27 April 2009
<http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js4340.htm>.
[62] Scott Simon, "Open Ways Make Easy Prey Of 'Soft Targets,'" *NPR Weekend Edition*, 6 Dec. 2008, 27 April 2009
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97905047>
[63] B. Raman, "Why Terrorists Attack Soft Targets," *Rediff India Abroad*, 14 May 2008, 27 April 2009
<http://www.rediff.com/news/2008/may/14raman.htm>.
[64] Ibid.

acts here and abroad, but also those who provide financial or other support for terrorist activity." The US Department of Treasury created the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program run to target terrorist finances and has successfully helped the US track terrorist money, identify and find operatives through that money, monitor terrorist networks and prevent those networks from getting some of their money.[65] The Treasury Department also created the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI) which focuses on several key issues: the Financial Action Task Force[66] and freezing terrorist assets and protecting charitable organizations.[67] TFI is also responsible for the Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, which is in charge of policy development and outreach for the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.[68]

Since 9/11, federal authorities have shut down at least twenty-five charitable organizations that made financial contributions to al-Qaʻida. For example, in October 2004, the Treasury Department designated the Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA) as one such organization, claiming that it funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars to bin Laden and al-Qaʻida.[69] In 2002, Treasury raided the Benevolence International Foundation because several members attempted to obtain chemical and nuclear weapons on the behalf of al-Qaʻida.[70] Overall, the United States has made significant strides in limiting al-Qaʻida's access to monetary resources domestically.

Access

The US government has made some of its most visible efforts to protect the Homeland through policies and programs designed to limit or control access and travel to and within the United States. First, border security operations, including more comprehensive searches and seizures and border infrastructure improvements, have provided the US government with more tools to restrict terrorist access across land borders.[71] Second, the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has helped bolster aviation security. Al-Qaʻida has targeted the aviation sector in the past and has shown a continued interest in using airplanes as a means to conduct future attacks, as evidenced by the 2006 liquid explosives plot. TSA has helped standardize the process of airport security, implemented more thorough screening and identification measures, increased public awareness, adopted new technologies to detect

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[65] United States, Department of the Treasury, "Terrorist Finance Tracking Program Fact Sheet," 23 June 2006, 27 April 2009 <http://www.ustreas.gov/press/releases/js4340.htm>.
[66] The Financial Action Task Force is an "international policy-making and standard-setting body dedicated to combating money laundering and terrorist financing."
United States, Department of the Treasury, "U.S. Government and FATF," 27 April 2009
<http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/usg_and_fatf.shtml>.
[67] United States, Department of the Treasury, "Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI)," 8 April 2009, 27 April 2009 <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/>.
[68] United States, Department of the Treasury, "Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes (TFFC)," 24 Aug. 2007, 27 April 2009 <http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/eotf.shtml>.
[69] United States, Department of the Treasury, Office of Public Affairs, "Treasury Designates Global Network, Senior Officials of IARA for Supporting bin Laden, Others," 13 Oct. 2004, 28 Feb. 2009
<http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/js2025.htm>.
[70] "US Accuses Charity of Financing Terror," *BBC News*, 20 Nov. 2002, 4 March 2009
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2494337.stm>.
[71] United States, White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Sept. 2006, p.17.

potentially dangerous materials, and stepped up physical security aboard airplanes, thereby reducing vulnerabilities and limiting al-Qaʻida's ability to attack the United States through the aviation sector.[72] Combined, these efforts have made it more difficult for al-Qaʻida to gain access and/or insert its operatives into the United States for planning and operations.

Along with the issues of access are the policies designed to address identification standards. On the surface, identification standards may seem like a state and/or local issue, but because identification documents are critical to gain entry into the country and to gain entry into secure facilities, raising identification standards have become a federal issue. At this point, there is no safeguard that prevents a person from presenting an identification document, even a standardized identification document, which does not in fact belong to them. The 9/11 commission recommended that policies involving biometric screening systems should require that identification documents contain some kind of biometric information to safeguard against this problem.[73]

The United States Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program is a program that "provides visa-issuing posts and ports of entry with the biometric technology that enables the US government to establish and verify your identity when you visit the United States."[74] The program requires that those entering the country must provide a digital photograph and fingerprints to US officials when entering the country. The fingerprints and photo will be checked against a watch-list of known terrorists and if there is no hit, the traveler will be allowed entrance. While a traveler does not, at this point, have to provide biometric information when leaving the country, this will soon become a requirement of the program as well.[75]

The US-VISIT program was implemented to track those visitors coming into the United States. By providing fingerprints, the US government can check the person against fingerprints found at crime scenes, terrorist or otherwise. The added scrutiny has made entering the United States harder, especially if the person's fingerprints receive a hit. As a result, al-Qaʻida is likely to recruit and send only those fighters who have not taken part in a previous attack to ensure that their entrance to the United States meets little or no resistance.

When the US-VISIT program first began, it did not include those visitors entering the United States through the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which allows nationals from certain participating countries[76] to travel to the United States without a visa as long as they are staying 90 days or less and the reason for their visit is tourism or business.[77] The reason for the expansion of the US-VISIT program to include VWP countries was to close a potential loop-hole

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[72] Ibid, p.13.

[73] *The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, p. 386.

[74] United States, Department of Homeland Security, "US-VISIT: Traveler Information," 13 April 2009, 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/content_multi_image_0006.shtm>.

[75] United States, Department of Homeland Security, "US-VISIT: What to Expect When Visiting the United States," 16 March 2009, 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/editorial_0525.shtm>.

[76] As of December 19, 2008, all Visa Waiver Program countries are required to be included in US-VISIT procedures.

[77] United States, Department of State, "Visa Waiver Program (VWP)," 27 April 2009 <http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html>.

that terrorists might have tried to take advantage of by using recruits from participating countries. Many of the Visa Waiver Program participants are European countries with large populations of immigrants from Middle Eastern countries. These large populations have made Europe a more attractive target because it is closer and easier to enter and exit unnoticed. Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui, citizens of the United Kingdom and France, respectively, were both Islamist terrorists who entered the United States via VWP.[78]

Radicalization among the European Muslim populations, the ease of entry via VWP, and the unrealized potential of US-VISIT provide al-Qa'ida with the opportunity to infiltrate the United States. A radicalized European Muslim trained by al-Qa'ida could enter the United States legally without a second look by customs and, with his intimate knowledge of Western culture, blend into the populace and either organize or individually carry out a plot against a vulnerable target. This capability indicates that even if focusing their short-term attention onto Europe, these vulnerabilities could assist al-Qa'ida in striking the US Homeland. The capability to enter the United States can also enable foreign militants to join existing Muslim communities and either use the cover these communities provide to plan operations and/or radicalize others.[79]

Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources

The USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 defined critical infrastructure as those "systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters."[80] A few examples are telecommunications networks, water networks, and energy networks.[81] The government has worked to address this issue by providing funds to state and local governments so that they can secure the critical infrastructure in their area. The 9/11 commission recommended that the government not hand out the funds equally as different state and local governments will emphasize different programs with the money that has been given to them because they have different needs.[82]

Because critical infrastructure targets are so vital to everyday life, the US government has been working to harden these targets to make them less attractive and to find ways that will limit the damage if one of these targets does get hit. DHS published the National Infrastructure

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[78] Alison Siskin, *Visa Waiver Program*, RL32221, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007) 24 Jan., 8 March 2009 <http://www.ilw.com/immigdaily/news/2007,0314-crs1.pdf>,p. 7-9.

[79]Steve Emerson, *The Homeland Security Implications of Radicalization: Testimony before the United States House Committee on Homeland Security*, 109th Cong., 2nd Sess., 20 Sept. 2006, 20 Jan. 2009 <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/20.pdf>.

[80] Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107-56, 26 Oct. 2001, Stat. 115.272, 27 April 2009 <http://epic.org/privacy/terrorism/hr3162.html>. Section 1016 Critical Infrastructure Protection, part (e) Critical Infrastructure Defined

[81] The government lists the following as Critical Infrastructure and key resources: agriculture and food; banking and finance; chemical; commercial facilities; communications; critical manufacturing; dams; defense industrial base; emergency services; energy; government facilities; healthcare and public health; information technology; national monuments and icons; nuclear reactors, materials, and waste; postal and shipping; transportation systems; and water. United States. Department of Homeland Security, "Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources," 29 Dec. 2008, 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/programs/gc_1189168948944.shtm>.

[82] *The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, p. 396.

Protection Plan which "provides the coordinated approach that is used to establish national priorities, goals, and requirements for CIKR protection."[83] Each of the 17 sectors identified as critical infrastructure publishes its own plans, some of which include specific programs that have been put in place.

Two of the programs listed in the water sector specific plan, the Water Security Initiative and the Water Laboratory Alliance,[84] focus on detecting contamination of the drinking water. With the Water Security Initiative, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working to design a system that will provide a warning that the water supply has been contaminated.[85] The EPA set up the Water Alliance Program to develop a network that includes federal, state, local, and commercial labs to support programs that monitor the drinking water.[86] The telecommunications sector specific plan mentions several programs, most of which create groups that work to prevent or respond to incidents that affect the telecommunications sector.[87] One of these programs, the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), works to bring together federal agencies, state and local governments, private sector entities, international entities, and the research community to coordinate "defense against and response[s] to cyber attacks nationwide."[88]

The sector specific plans with regard to critical infrastructure highlight a key shortfall that the federal government has when trying to implement policies to harden the Homeland, namely that the federal government is not the only actor making decisions related to these policies. In the US-CERT program, the federal government is only one of several actors involved in creating and implementing plans for the telecommunications sector. Because there are so many decision-makers involved in the process, the process tends to be slower and have more gaps, creating vulnerabilities that al-Qaʿida can take advantage of.

Information

Information in this context refers to policies that have been enacted to help communication flow between federal government agencies, between federal agencies and state and local agencies, and between federal agencies and foreign agencies. The creation of the DHS was seen as a way to consolidate "redundant programs,"[89] with the goal of placing all

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[83] United States, Department of Homeland Security, *National Infrastructure Protection Plan,* 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nipp_consolidated_snapshot.pdf>.

[84] United States, Department of Homeland Security, "Water: Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Sector-Specific Plan as input to the National Infrastructure Protection Plan," May 2007, 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nipp-ssp-water.pdf>, p. 65

[85] Ibid, the fiscal year of 2009 is supposed entail calibrating the warning systems, conducting evaluations of the pilot systems that have been established and promoting a nation-wide adoption of the WSI-based warning system

[86] Ibid.

[87] United States, Department of Homeland Security, "Communications: Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Sector-Specific Plan as input to the National Infrastructure Protection Plan," May 2007, 27 April 2009 <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/nipp-ssp-communications.pdf>, p. 106-107

[88] Ibid, p. 61 and 106

[89] Michael Scardaville, "The President's Proposal to Create a Department of Homeland Security: An Initial Assessment," Heritage Foundation, 7 Jun. 2002, 27 April 2009 <http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandSecurity/WM109.cfm>.

departments and agencies with homeland security missions in one place. The Director of National Intelligence was designed to place one person in charge of all of the intelligence agencies to facilitate sharing between the numerous agencies and ensure that the entire intelligence community operates as a cohesive unit.[90] The drive to increase information sharing among agencies is crucial because intelligence is often the key to identifying terrorist suspects and disrupting terrorist operations.

Another aspect of information sharing is the changing role of the FBI, which has moved away from a strictly criminal and prosecutorial focus to one that includes counterterrorism and prevention. One of the more specific changes was the creation of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which brings together specialists, investigators and intelligence analysts from multiple agencies and law enforcement. These task forces work with local law enforcement officials to keep a finger on the pulse of the communities in which they work. The task forces are meant to make it more difficult for terrorists to disappear within the chaos of the free society because they encourage information sharing among all levels of law enforcement and the government, keeping all relevant players informed of potential threats and actions taken to reduce those threats.[91] JTTFs have improved the United States' ability to detect known and suspected terrorists in the US, track them down and disrupt a threat before it fully materializes.[92]

Impact of These Policies on Al-Qa'ida

While not foolproof, US policies designed to improve the country's counterterrorism efforts have built upon previous lessons learned. After September 11, the United States began to harden domestic targets and bolster other vulnerabilities in the system, implementing measures to impact al-Qa'ida's ability to enter and operate in the United States. In December 1999, Ahmed Ressam was caught crossing the US-Canadian border by US Customs and Border Patrol officers after evasively answering standard questions asked of all individuals entering the United States. The CBP officers became suspicious of Ressam's behavior and inspected his vehicle where they found explosive materials and timers in the trunk. Ressam's apprehension on the border disrupted his alleged plans to explode a bomb at the Los Angeles International Airport.[93] While this incident occurred before 9/11, it provides an example of the type of policies, education and lessons the US government sought to adopt following the 2001 terrorist attacks. By improving access policies, including border security, the United States can use the example of the foiled LAX plot in its training of Border Patrol agents so that catching suspicious individuals becomes the norm rather than an anomaly.

Another example that supports the change in US access policies and officer training occurred shortly after Ressam's arrest. On August 4, 2001, Mohamed al-Qahtani sought to enter the United States by flying in from London to the Orlando International Airport. However, al-Qahtani was sent for secondary inspection after failing to properly fill out his Customs

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[90] Sievert 2009.

[91] Ibid.

[92] " Protecting America Against Terrorist Attack: A Closer Look at the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces," FBI Headlines Archives, 1 Dec. 2004, 5 May 2009 <http://www.fbi.gov/page2/dec04/jttf120114.htm>.

[93] "Millennium Bomber' sentenced to 22 years for bomb plot," U.S. Customs and Border Protection Today, July/August 2005, 1 May 2009 <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/CustomsToday/2005/Jul_Aug/other/ahmed_ressam.xml>.

Declaration form. During the subsequent period of questioning, Immigration Officer Jose E. Melendez-Perez, who had previous interview experience from US Army training, discovered that the aggressive al-Qahtani had no return ticket, no hotel reservation, no consistent story, no credit cards and little cash. As a result, al-Qahtani was denied entrance to the United States and sent back to London. He was later apprehended by US forces in Afghanistan, and after discovering Mohammed Atta had been at the Orlando airport during al-Qahtani's secondary inspection, the US government realized it may have kept the twentieth hijacker from entering the United States.[94]

Policies adopted following the September 11 attacks have also been responsible for foiling terrorist activity within the United States. The USA PATRIOT Act is credited by some with bringing the "wall" down between agencies in the intelligence community,[95] which has allowed information to flow more freely between these agencies. This new movement of information is one of the factors credited with shutting down the Lackawanna group.[96] While the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) received an anonymous letter alerting them to the fact that the group had traveled to Afghanistan to train with al-Qa'ida, they did not have enough evidence to begin surveillance. The CIA had conducted an interview with one of the suspected group members where he gave up the names of the other members. The intelligence community also found information about the man who had convinced the group to train for jihad in Afghanistan (Kamal Derwish) that connected him with one of Osama bin Laden's sons and another man who was believed to be the middle man who connected bin Laden with the *USS Cole* bombers.[97] It was because these two pieces of information were passed on to the FBI that the Bureau was able to get FISA wiretaps that led to the collection of suspicious e-mails and the subsequent interrogation of the author of those e-mails. The author of the e-mails confirms that he and his fellow group members trained at an al-Qa'ida camp in Afghanistan.[98]

Al-Qa'ida Perceptions of the Homeland

It is also important to examine whether al-Qa'ida believes that the United States has been hardened. Based on statements from al-Qa'ida, the group either does not believe that the homeland is hardened or does not care. It is the latter that will have the biggest impact on the targeting strategies that al-Qa'ida pursues in the coming years since it indicates that no policy changes will effectively deter al-Qa'ida plans to attack the US Homeland. On February 3, 2009, Zawahiri made the following statement: "The American and Israeli targets are spread everywhere, and if the conditions are narrow in one place, they are wide in many other places. If the enemy fortifies some [of these places], many are left opened and threatened."[99] He is right

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[94] Kathleen Millar, "CBP Officer turns back possible security threat," Customs and Border Protection Today, January/February 2004, 1 May 2009 <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/CustomsToday/2004/JanFeb/melendez.xml>.
[95] Ed Carpenter, et al., "Chasing the Sleeper Cell: The Tools of Counterterrorism," *Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Frontline*. 16 Oct. 2003, 1 May 2009
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/tools/tools.html>
[96] The federal government investigated the group as if they were a sleeper cell although some critics have publicly doubted the danger posed by this group.
[97] "Chasing the Sleeper Cell: Chronology: The Lackawanna Investigation." *Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) Frontline*, October 2003, 1 May 2009 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/inside/cron.html>
[98] Ibid.
[99] "Zawahiri Mocks Obama, Urges Jihad," SITE Intelligence Group, 5 Feb. 2009.

that the United States can only harden so many targets. There is no way to protect everything at once.

While many had hoped that a new President might mean a change in the attitude toward American leadership, Zawahiri made the following comments right after Barack Obama was elected: "It appears that you [Obama] don't know anything about the Muslim Ummah and its history, and the fate of the traitors who cooperated with the invaders against it, and don't know anything about the history of Afghanistan and its free and defiant Muslim people." "America, the criminal, trespassing Crusader, continues to be the same as ever, so we must continue to harm it, in order for it to come to its senses, because its criminal, expansionist Crusader project in you lands has only been neutralized by the sacrifices of your sons, the Mujahideen."[100] Al-Qaʻida leadership is trying to convince its supporters and the world that a change in US administration will not result in any significant changes in al-Qaʻida strategy.

From an examination of their statements, it appears that al-Qaʻida does not believe that the Homeland is sufficiently hardened to prevent an attack, only more of a challenge to access. The challenge of entering the United States will take time to figure out, but as demonstrated by the aforementioned statements, al-Qaʻida does not appear to mind waiting. In fact, the group seems to relish the anticipation that comes with waiting for the next attack to be perpetrated.

However, assuming US policies have not hardened the Homeland to a degree capable of deterring al-Qaʻida action in the United States, the question remains as to why al-Qaʻida does not yet seem to be active in the Homeland. A possible explanation is that while US policies alone have not deterred al-Qaʻida, they have helped create and foster an environment in the United States unfavorable to al-Qaʻida activity.

Societal Constraints on Al-Qaʻida Activity

While the policies designed to harden the Homeland do not appear to have sufficiently deterred al-Qaʻida, the US has had successes in foiling the group's attempts to operate domestically. Still, those counterterrorism policies and successes are only one reason for al-Qaʻida's seeming domestic difficulties. Another factor that appears to have impacted al-Qaʻida's ability to operate in United States is the group's difficulty inspiring, radicalizing and tapping into extremist Muslim populations and homegrown terrorist networks as it has done in other regions. Despite al-Qaʻida's difficulties in the United States, disrupted al-Qaʻida plots against the Homeland are indicative of its continued desire to target the United States regardless of its relatively weak capability to conduct a successful attack here.

Unlike in Europe, the United States does not have a significant radicalized Muslim population for al-Qaʻida to exploit. Some portions of the American Muslim population may sympathize with al-Qaʻida's ideology and objectives; however, only a small number are likely to radicalize enough to become al-Qaʻida operatives willing to help conduct an attack on US soil.[101] Following the September 11 attacks, the FBI did not detect any evidence of individuals or

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[100] "Zawahiri Responds to Obama Victory," SITE Intelligence Group, 19 Nov. 2008.
[101] Kamran Bokhari, "Al Qaeda Networks: Concerns and Probabilities," Stratfor, 6 Nov. 2004, 13 March 2009 <http://www.stratfor.com/al_qaeda_networks_concerns_and_probabilities>.

terrorist cells within the United States planning further spectacular attacks against the Homeland. Instead, the FBI saw the greater threat coming from al-Qaʻida operatives in the United States providing logistical support for operations, such as travel documents, recruitment and fund-raising.[102] However, some domestic Muslim populations have demonstrated an increased susceptibility to al-Qaʻida overtures, though so far this has been limited to training and operating overseas. The danger increases when al-Qaʻida can successfully convince these recruits to attack the US Homeland. Philip Mudd, Associate Executive Assistant Director of the FBI's National Security Branch, spoke of a terrorist recruiting network on US soil in a testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, saying there is an "active and deliberate attempt to recruit individuals…to travel to Somalia to fight or train on behalf of Shabaab." The exact number who may have traveled to Somalia to support al-Shabaab[103] and other extremist organizations is uncertain, but it is estimated the number of recruits is in the tens.[104] This demonstrates that al-Qaʻida cannot likely radicalize the Muslim population on a scale that would sufficiently assist them in their efforts. The radicalization of Somalis living in the United States is not a wide-spread phenomenon but highlights a potential vulnerability should al-Qaʻida succeed in its recruitment efforts.

That portion of the radicalized American Muslim population that does develop into homegrown terrorist cells provides al-Qaʻida with the greatest opportunity to conduct an attack on US soil comparable to September 11. That opportunity stems from the homegrown terrorists' familiarity with and placement in US society. The fact that they live in the United States provides them with advantages that foreign operatives lack. First and second generation immigrants benefit from their legal status or citizenship in that they are better able to move freely and journey abroad, unlike al-Qaʻida operatives whose movements would elicit greater scrutiny. Furthermore, being established members of society affords them greater access to resources, such as weapons, money and contacts, because they know how to operate within the legal and cultural boundaries of American society. They understand the rules of law and can use US freedoms, including the freedom of speech and the right to bear arms, to further their agenda. Their knowledge of the United States and its weaknesses would also allow them to better identify potential target sets throughout the country. While radical homegrown terrorists are more capable of accessing the resources necessary to conduct a spectacular attack in the Homeland, they have thus far shown themselves to be amateurish and still unable to fully develop the necessary capabilities. They lack the coordination, oversight, training, experience, and al-Qaʻida connections and resources to present a significant threat to the US Homeland at this juncture.[105]

Regardless of numerous setbacks and its inability to draw upon and enhance homegrown terrorism in the United States, al-Qaʻida has not lost its resolve to attack the Homeland. Several thwarted attacks indicate both al-Qaʻida's continued resolve to attack the United States as well as its weak capability to fulfill its objectives. In 2003, with the help of its allies, the US arrested and

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[102] *The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, p. 366.

[103] Al-Shabaab is an insurgent terrorist group that controls much of Somalia that fights against the Somali government. The group began as a wing of the Islamic Courts Union and declared affiliation with al-Qaʻida in 2007.

[104] Philip Mudd, *Statement before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs,* 111th Cong., 1st Sess., 11 March 2009, 12 March 2009 <http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/031109Mudd.pdf>.

[105] Vidino 2009, p. 8.

prosecuted Iyman Faris, who conducted research for an al-Qaʻida plot to attack the Brooklyn Bridge.[106] The US also successfully thwarted a 2002 al-Qaʻida plot aimed at flying an aircraft into the largest building in Los Angeles, the Library Tower. There have been several other disrupted plots since September 11, 2001,[107] all of which catalogue al-Qaʻida's attempts to strike the United States and its current inability to do so with any success.

Conclusion

The 9/11 Commission Report stressed that "[t]errorists should perceive that potential targets are defended."[108] While the United States has made a valiant effort to harden the Homeland and has been successful at hardening some of the softest targets around the country, the effort cannot completely address all domestic vulnerabilities or alter the psyche of al-Qaʻida's leadership, though these efforts have helped disrupt several potentially devastating plots. The lack of attacks since 2001 against the Homeland has likely been a result of al-Qaʻida's patience and determination to build upon its existing capabilities so that it can conduct another attack comparable to September 11. Al-Qaida's current limitations are no indication of its future objectives; when or if the organization regains the necessary resources and capabilities, an attack against the US Homeland will become more plausible.[109] Al-Qaʻida can bide its time, focus on rebuilding its capabilities in the US and abroad, plan future attacks and continue to spread its ideology around the world.

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[106] Iyman Faris, a naturalized US citizen, was arrested in May 2003 for conspiring to commit a terrorist act. He was suspected of planning to use blowtorches to collapse the Brooklyn Bridge

[107] Some of the disrupted plots include: The arrest of Jose Padilla n May 2002 at the O'Hare Airport after returning from Pakistan and charged as an enemy combatant for planning to use a dirty bomb against America; the arrest of six American citizens of Yemeni descent, known as the Lackawanna 6, for conspiring with terrorist groups; the December 2005 arrest of Michael C. Reynolds by the FBI for being involved in a plot to blow up a Wyoming natural gas refinery, the Transcontinental Pipeline, a natural-gas pipeline stretching from the Gulf Coast to New York and New Jersey; and a New Jersey Standard Oil refinery; and the 2007 arrest of six men plotting to attack and kill soldiers at the Fort Dix Army base in New Jersey.

[108] *The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, p. 408.

[109] Richard Mac Namee, Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Personal interview, 18 Feb. 2009.

Europe: A Secondary Target

Al-Qaʻida remains committed to attacking both the US and its European allies but places more value on attacks against the US than Europe. However, because al-Qaʻida lacks the capability to strike the US Homeland but has the means to carry out attacks on European soil, Europe will likely be targeted more often by al-Qaʻida until the group's capabilities can catch up with its intention to attack the US. Al-Qaʻida's decision to attack Europe has likely been because of this inability to directly strike the US coupled with a genuine desire to punish Europe for its part in the "War on Terror." Additionally, al-Qaʻida's ideology which condemns Western hegemony, advocates the establishment of a global Caliphate, and calls for the expulsion of "crusaders" from all Muslim countries also contributes to al-Qaʻida's decision to target Europe. By targeting European countries participating in or supporting US counterterrorism efforts in Muslim countries, al-Qaʻida hopes not only to punish Europe but also erode support from the United States and, ultimately, drive Western forces out of the Middle East. It is important to remember, however, that al-Qaʻida is still intent on striking the US and that Europe represents a target of convenience as long as al-Qaʻida remains unable to target the US Homeland. Al-Qaʻida will continue to target Europe for the aforementioned reasons but, at the same time, will seek to develop its capability to attack the US. As things currently stand, al-Qaʻida will likely have to first rebuild its capabilities before it can effectively threaten the US Homeland.

Europe: A Punitive Target?

Al-Qaʻida has adopted a targeting strategy which is limited in its reach but expansive in its scope. The realities of the security environment may have restricted al-Qaʻida's capabilities but not necessarily its ambitions. Al-Qaʻida has stated its desire to carry out attacks against the US Homeland, US interests abroad, and US allies around the world.[110] One such ally and target has been Europe, particularly those European countries which have participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan.[111] Since 2003, Europe has become a "target for global jihad" because of al-Qaʻida's ability to inspire, plan, prepare, and execute attacks against European countries that contributed to the US-led "War on Terrorism" and because of European participation in the invasion of Iraq.[112] The desire to punish European countries for their support of US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is but one factor influencing al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy. Nevertheless, this desire to inflict punishment has served as a significant impetus behind al-Qaʻida attacks on European soil.

Recognizing the dichotomous nature of the threat posed by al-Qaʻida, the desire to punish Europe and the United States for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq has influenced al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy in two ways. First, it motivates al-Qaʻida central to execute attacks in European countries participating in the conflicts, because through those attacks, al-Qaʻida central intends to erode support from the US, intimidate European governments into abandoning operations in OEF and OIF, and mobilize Europeans with whom al-Qaʻida's message resonates

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[110] Christopher M Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," *Congressional Research Service* 5 Mar. 2007: 1-4.

[111] Peter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994-2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 2008: 924-946.

[112] Ibid, p. 925.

to conduct attacks. Second, it motivates al-Qaʿida sympathizers to seek direction from al-Qaʿida and inspires them to act on their feelings of indignation and anger through attacks on countries that they perceive as anti-Islamic or unjust. Essentially, al-Qaʿida has capitalized on the utility of emotion to achieve its strategic goals. Al-Qaʿida has attempted to harness the emotions felt by certain Muslims and exploit the turbulent relations between Europe and the US as part of a larger strategy to drive out Western forces from the Middle East.

Usama bin Laden has repeatedly stressed the importance of fighting Western forces in the Middle East.[113] In 1998, bin Laden stated that "terrorizing you [Americans], while you are carrying arms on our land, is a legitimate and morally demanded duty." He has also made clear the importance of Iraq in al-Qaʿida's strategy, claiming that the conflict in Iraq is "a golden and unique opportunity" to defeat the US because it serves as a key battle in a "Third World War, which the Crusader-Zionist coalition began against the Islamic nation."[114] The invasion of Iraq compelled al-Qaʿida to attack the US and its allies because of the significance ascribed to it. As a result, those European countries fighting with or supporting US forces in Iraq became more prominent al-Qaʿida targets. The Madrid bombings on March 11, 2004 which killed 191 people and injured over 1600 were carried out by a Moroccan group affiliated with al-Qaʿida and were at least in part perpetrated to punish Spain for its involvement in Iraq and to intimidate the Spanish into withdrawing support.[115] An expert on jihadi terrorism in Europe, argues that the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan directly contributed to the Madrid bombings and points to "multiple communiqués by the al-Qaida leaders specifying all the European contributors in Iraq as legitimate targets."[116] Similarly, al-Qaʿida statements indicate that the 2005 London bombings were carried out in response to British and American military operations in Iraq.[117] And in 2004, bin Laden offered Europeans a "truce" if they would abandon the United States and withdraw their support in Iraq and Afghanistan.[118]

One particularly telling statement issued by Ayman al-Zawahiri in October 2002 reveals al-Qaʿida's intention to punish the US and its allies as part of a larger strategy to disrupt US alliances and push the "crusaders" out of the Middle East and other Muslim countries.[119] Zawahiri stated:

> Our message to our enemies is this: America and its allies should know that their crimes will not go unpunished, God willing. We advise them to hasten to leave Palestine, the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, and all Muslim countries, before they lose everything. We addressed some messages to America's allies to stop their involvement in its crusader campaign. The mujahid youths have addressed a

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[113] *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamist Extremist Threat* 2006, p. 13.

[114] Blanchard 2007, p. 6.

[115] Peter Nesser, "Jihad in Europe: A Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-millennium Europe," *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment* 2004, p. 71-75.

[116] Peter Nesser, "How Does Radicalization Occur in Europe?" *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment* 2006, p. 3.

[117] Blanchard 2007, Summary.

[118] Ibid, p. 5.

[119] *Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamist Extremist Threat* 2006, p. 33.

message to Germany and another to France. If the measures have not been sufficient, we are ready, with the help of God, to increase them.

Al-Qaʻida seeks to punish the US and its European allies not just to fulfill a psychological need for revenge or justice but also to accomplish the very practical goal of intimidating US allies. Attacks on Europe serve as a way to intimidate American allies[120] and split the US-led coalition[121] Al-Qaʻida would achieve a significant victory if it could coerce or frighten US allies into abandoning OEF and/or OIF because it would advance al-Qaʻida's larger agenda of driving the "crusaders" out of all Muslim countries. The US, stripped of international support, would not only struggle to carry the burden of being the sole source of funding and manpower for reconstruction and security efforts but would also suffer from a general loss of legitimacy, leading to increased calls for an American withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan.[122] However, eroding support from the US will likely bring little benefit to European nations and is, therefore, not expected to result in a significant split between the US and its current allies.[123] Nevertheless, intelligence experts still expect al-Qaʻida to attack Europe in order to undermine the coalition's solidarity. In November of 2007, Britain's intelligence chief stated that the terrorist threat to Europe had not yet "reached its peak," and expected al-Qaʻida attacks to continue for some time to weaken US support.[124]

The psychological need to hurt the United States and its allies remains a key component shaping al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy. The prevalence of discontented Muslims in Europe has become an important resource for al-Qaʻida. Those susceptible to al-Qaʻida's influence often sympathize with al-Qaʻida's desire to punish Europe for its involvement in perceived anti-Islamic operations. Attacks on Europe that are perpetrated by al-Qaʻida sympathizers are often done as part of an emotional response to exact revenge. Feelings of indignation and anger within Europe provide fertile ground for radicalization and exploitation by al-Qaʻida which has used appeals for revenge in the past when seeking to motivate others to carry out attacks.[125] Not only core al-Qaʻida but also those sympathizing and supporting al-Qaeda's radical jihadi agenda "are motivated by a shared sense of enmity and grievance felt towards the United States and the West in general and their host-nations in particular… abetted by profound rage over the US invasion and occupation of Iraq."[126] Such an observation indicates that Europe is confronted with a twofold problem; disaffected Muslims within Europe may strike against their host countries and may also be further motivated out of anger toward Europe's perceived collusion with the US in Iraq to attack elsewhere.

Experts have observed that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have helped radicalized European Muslims and aided al-Qaʻida recruitment efforts because of the pervading belief that the "War on Terrorism" is a war on Islam and that European governments are unjustly siding

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[120]Nesser, 2008, p. 925.
[121]US intelligence officials, Personal interview 25 Feb. 2009.
[122]Martin J Hart, "Al Qaeda: Refining a Failing Strategy," *Joint Force Quarterly* 51 2008: 119.
[123] James Dobbins, "The Effect of Terrorist Attacks in Spain on Transatlantic Cooperation in the War on Terror." *RAND Corporation* 2004: 1.
[124]Hart, 2008, p. 123.
[125]"New al-Qaeda tape claims Victory," *Al Jazeera* 20 Sept. 2007.
[126] Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" 2007, 48.

with the US in the Iraq War.[127] The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were important factors in the radicalization and mobilization of European Muslims. Participation in a coalition that supported the invasion of two Muslim countries made Europe a widespread target for terrorism. A key mobilizing factor for European radicals, the invasion of Iraq multiplied al-Qaʻida supporters and expanded its support across Europe.[128] For these individuals, deliberate punishment for supporting the US-led intervention was sufficient to justify attacks against Europe. Consequently, jihadi activities in Europe have intensified after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and culminated, some argue, in the Madrid and London bombings.[129]

In Europe, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided al-Qaʻida with a recruitment pool to draw from, a pool capable of carrying out attacks and created in part by the West's prosecution of OEF and OIF. As a result, those recruited by al-Qaʻida, motivated by their anger and resentment, target those countries they perceive as culpable. Adam Gadahn, an American al-Qaʻida recruit and operative, appeared on videos released by al-Qaʻida's media arm Al-Sahab and threatened attacks against the US and UK for their "crimes" in Iraq and Afghanistan.[130] In Europe, the 2004 Madrid bombings, the two separate operations foiled in Britain in 2004, the 2005 London bombings, and the August 2006 plot to blow up ten planes from Britain and crash them into American cities were perpetrated by operatives inspired and coordinated at some level by al-Qaʻida.[131] It is these European operatives who represent one of the two threats posed by al-Qaʻida - that of the self-starter who sympathizes with al-Qaʻida but relies on his own initiative to carry out attacks (the other threat stemming from core al Qaʼida and those operatives over whom core al-Qaʻida exercises top-down leadership). The two-pronged threat posed by al-Qaʻida then requires that intent be examined as it relates to both core al-Qaʻida and al-Qaʻida's self-starting sympathizers. In Europe, the bitterness felt by al-Qaʻida sympathizers over their host-countries' involvement in OIF and OEF provides the impetus behind many of their attacks. And in Europe, this group has found an outlet for their discontent which can be exploited and influenced by al-Qaʻida until it manifests in violent attacks against the European homeland.

Essentially, al-Qaʻida's calls to punish participating members of the US-led coalition can serve as inspiration to first and second generation Europeans to join in jihad against the West. For example, both the 2005 bombings in London and the 2006 liquid explosives plot at Heathrow were conducted by British Muslims with Pakistani roots.[132] Targeting Europe therefore serves two complementary purposes; it both radicalizes Muslims with existing grievances living in Europe, and encourages them to mobilize and take action against the United States. European Muslims who embraced al-Qaʻida's radical ideology can then network with local Muslim diasporas, seek further jihadist training, plot independent terror operations, or simply provide material support for al-Qaʻida's mission.[133] Al-Qaʻida attacks on Europe can

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[127]Kristen Archick et al., "Islamist Extremism in Europe." *Congressional Research Service* 2005: 3.

[128]Nesser, 2008, p. 934.

[129]Ibid, 2006, p. 2.

[130]Emerson 2006.

[131]Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" 2007, p. 50.

[132]Jerrold M Post and Gabriel Sheffer, "The Risk of Radicalization and Terrorism in US Muslim Communities." *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13 2007: 101-112.

[133]Sawyer et al. 2008, 197.

therefore promote bin Laden's mission of transnational jihad by inspiring Muslims to seek out al-Qa'ida networks, as well as motivating action by independent groups holding weak affiliations with al-Qa'ida.[134]

Europe: An Ideological Target?

Western Europe, like the US, has drawn the ire of al-Qa'ida not only because of its involvement in military and counterterrorism operations in Muslim countries but also because of how al-Qa'ida perceives the West. Bin Laden's *Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders* mandates that all Muslims "kill the Americans and their allies" and characterizes Europe and the US as violators of Muslim lands.[135] Long viewed as imperialist powers, and now as the occupiers of two predominantly Muslim countries, European states are seen by many radicals as legitimate targets.

However, Europe is not targeted as a result of al-Qa'ida's ideology any more than the US or Israel, and, in fact, bin Laden's statements single out the US as an enemy of Islam more often than Europe.[136] Nevertheless, Al-Qa'ida views the US, Western Europe, the Saudi government, and Israel as major obstacles to the success of the Salafi Jihadi movement and resents what it perceives as Western meddling and encroachment on Muslim lands.[137] Europe now finds itself grouped with the US and Israel as enemies and potential targets of al-Qa'ida because of where it falls within al-Qa'ida's ideology. Much of that ideology draws from the conservative Islamic tradition known as Salafism, and al-Qa'ida, distorting and expanding various Salafi tenets, has sought to apply the notion of strict religious rule to the entire Muslim world through the establishment of a global *umma*, or Caliphate. A component of this ambition is the perceived necessity to resist Western encroachment, a stance which has led al-Qa'ida to declare jihad against the US and its allies, often referred to by al-Qa'ida as the "crusaders."[138] And as a symbol of Western hegemony, a perception reinforced by European involvement in Muslim countries and a close relationship with the US, Europe has become an attractive target for al-Qa'ida. By attacking Europe, al-Qa'ida remains ideologically consistent; attacks against Europe are attacks against the "crusaders" and can be interpreted by Muslims as steps toward stymieing Western influence and ending US and allied the presence in Muslim countries.

In the previous section, the importance of driving the US and its allies from Muslim lands was identified as a significant motivation driving al-Qa'ida's targeting strategy. However, the expulsion of Western forces from the Middle East and other Muslim countries is not only a strategic priority but an ideological one as well. Al-Qa'ida's ideology demands that the Muslim world be governed by Muslims according to the teachings of Mohammad, a goal that cannot be accomplished until non-Muslim and secular governments are overthrown in the areas designated as part of the global Caliphate. Western governments that have occupied Muslim territory and Muslim governments that have allied themselves with the West disrupt al-Qa'ida's ideological

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[134]Nesser, 2004, 22.

[135]Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Press) 2007: 132.

[136]*Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamist Extremist Threat* 2006, Appendix I.

[137]Blanchard 2007. 3.

[138]*Al-Qaeda: The Many Faces of an Islamist Extremist Threat* 2006, p. 6.

goals by impeding the creation of a global Caliphate. As a result, bin Laden has sought to rally Muslims to his cause by declaring that there is a "new crusade led by America against the Islamic nations" and that there is an emerging conflict "between the Islamic world and the Americans and their allies."[139] One such ally, Western Europe, has been attacked by al-Qaʻida for the side it has allegedly chosen in that conflict, and as long as al-Qaʻida remains committed to following an ideology which seeks to establish a global Caliphate and combat the "crusaders," Western Europe will continue be grouped along with the United States as a legitimate target.

Europe: A Convenient Target?

In many ways, Europe is also a target of strategic convenience. The boundaries of al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy are largely determined by what it perceives is a sure, easy, salient, and meaningful target. Al-Qaʻida's intentions are influenced by the degree of certainty the group has with regard to the success of an attack and how that attack measures against the aforementioned targeting criteria. Both the United States and Europe are significant targets for al-Qaʻida but, relative to the US, Europe is an easier target to execute attacks against and, consequently, less likely to result in a failed attack. To ensure credibility, maintain legitimacy, draw recruits, and attain funds and support from affiliate organizations al-Qaʻida must carry out successful attacks.[140][141] Conversely, unsuccessful attacks only serve to publicize al-Qaʻida's failures, severely damaging its reputation as a capable organization.[142] Europe's presence in the Middle East coupled with its participation in operations against al-Qaʻida make Europe a convenient target because not only is Europe easier to attack but it is also an enemy "crusader," ally of the United States, and symbol of Western hegemony. A number of European countries have found themselves in al-Qaʻida's crosshairs for just these reasons. The UK in particular has become one of al-Qaʻida's preferred targets for its collaboration with the United States.[143] The Dutch, too, have earned a place on al-Qaʻida's hit list,[144] and German authorities observed that Germany "is classed as one of the so-called crusaders, the helpers of the United States and of Israel" and that Germany's involvement in Afghanistan and its training of Iraqi officers make it part "of the Islamist terrorists' theater of operations."[145] Not only do these European countries have strategic or symbolic value but they also provide al-Qaʻida with a greater opportunity, relative to the United States, for a successful attack. Because al-Qaʻida is an opportunistic group, it will capitalize on an advantage when it can, and al-Qaʻida has many advantages in Europe that it lacks in the United States. It is these advantages which make Europe an easier target.

The first of these advantages is that Muslim diaspora communities can be more easily radicalized in Europe than in the United States because of the greater number of extremist groups in Europe that spread al-Qaʻida's ideology and their proximity to the Muslim world and to theaters of conflict.[146] Dozens of Muslim diasporas scattered across Europe, both higher in

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[139]Blanchard, 2007, p. 3.

[140] McIntyre 2009.

[141]US intelligence officials 2009.

[142]Ibid.

[143]Ibid.

[144]Ibid.

[145]Anouar Boukhars, "The Threat of Islamist Terrorism to Germany." *Terrorism Monitor* 5 2007, p. 7.

[146]David J Kilcullen, "Subversion and Countersubversion in the Campaign against Terrorism in Europe" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 2007, p. 653.

number than US Muslim populations and less dispersed geographically, are potential breeding grounds for radicalization because of the prevalence of other extremists groups and radicalizing mosques in European Muslim communities that are absent in the United States. For example, the German domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), estimated that there are 32,000 extremists in Germany, 3,000 of which are believed to be violent, and a tenth of whom were veterans of jihad in Bosnia and Chechnya. The BfV also estimated that at least 100 residents also trained in al-Qaʻida's camps in Afghanistan.[147] The Hamburg cell of the 9/11 attackers (which included Mohammed Atta among others) met at radical mosques and eventually traveled to Afghanistan where they trained with al-Qaʻida. [148] In the UK, radical imams have been able to enter the country, often to obtain political asylum, and establish mosques which preach radical Islam, such as the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park which Richard Reid and Zacarias Moussaoui attended.[149] As a result of these extremist influences, first and second generation Europeans have expanded opportunities to network, radicalize, and travel to jihadist training camps in contrast to their American counterparts.[150]

The London tube bombings serve as a stark reminder of the threat posed by radicalized European Muslims, but such attacks may also drive other Muslims into the arms of al-Qaʻida. Al-Qaʻida terror attacks on Europe have led some European Muslims, who feel disenchanted and disillusioned with their governments, to embrace al-Qaʻida's ideology and join the jihadist movement against the West.[151] It should be stressed, however, that the vast majority of European Muslims have refrained from extremism. That said, the potential threat posed by radicalized European Muslims should not be ignored. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom contain two-thirds of Western Europe's Muslims. The concentration of approximately 11 million Muslims in the major cities of these three countries could potentially provide al-Qaʻida with an enormous recruitment pool. If only one percent of the total Muslim population radicalizes, that amounts to one million potential extremists. If only one percent of that one percent is willing to carry out a violent attack, the potential number of terrorists is still near 100,000. And of all of those, only one potential terrorist needs to succeed.

The second advantage that al-Qaʻida has in Europe is that the continent faces challenges combating terrorism and the spread of radical ideology that the United States does not. The presence of "urban undergrounds, alienated ethnic groups, and slums where the writ of government does not always run, and situational awareness is low," coupled with the "strength of European human rights legislation [which] provides loopholes that subversive cells exploit as a 'legislative safe haven'" makes it more difficult for Europe to combat radicalization.[152] The difficulty of discovering al-Qaʻida command cells in Europe, which often conceal themselves

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[147] Mia Bloom, "The Increasing Radicalization of European Muslims." Talk given at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. 15 May 2006; Michael Taarnby. "Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe: Trends and Perspectives." Centre for Cultural Research, University of Aarhus. 14 January 2005: p. 26.

[148] *The 9/11 Commission Report* 2004, Chapter 5.

[149] Neville Dean and Nick Allen. "Finsbury Park mosque's terrorist roll call." The Independent, 7 February 2006. http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/finsbury-park-mosques-terrorist-roll-call-465867.html

[150]Peter Bergen, "Al Qaeda the Organization: A Five-Year Forecast," *The Annals of the American Academy* 2008: p. 27.

[151] Robert S Leiken, "Europe's Angry Muslims." *Foreign Affairs* 84 2005: p. 120-135.

[152]Kilcullen 2007, p. 654.

through legitimate Islamic institutions, poses a serious challenge to European counterterrorism officials who are already faced with the challenge of coordinating counterterrorism efforts with a diverse group of agencies across the whole of Europe. Spanish counterterrorism magistrate Baltasar Garzon addressed the difficulty of enforcing broad counterterrorism initiatives when he observed, "There is an enormous amount of information, but much of it gets lost because of a failure to cooperate. There is a lack of communication, a lack of coordination and a lack of any broad vision."[153]

A third advantage is that Muslim diasporas in Europe have direct familial links in countries with al-Qaʻida cells, obfuscating the flow of human traffic in and out of Europe because of the difficulty distinguishing between Europeans traveling to places like Pakistan for legitimate purposes and Europeans meeting with al-Qaʻida or going to terrorist training camps.[154] The UK in particular has become an easier target for al-Qaʻida relative to other countries because "al-Qaeda's leadership is based in the tribal areas of Pakistan where there are links to the UK and flows of people going back and forwards."[155] Furthermore, many of these potential recruits have the advantage of being legal residents or citizens of Europe, can speak with native fluency and possess inside knowledge of their host country's laws and cultural norms, providing al-Qaʻida with a valuable resource with which to conduct attacks. Unlike al-Qaʻida operatives who originate in foreign countries and are unfamiliar with the societies, these recruits are already situated to initiate an attack and can more easily avoid suspicion because of their intimate knowledge of their host countries.

A fourth advantage is that Europe is more accessible than the United States. The proximity of European countries to the Afghan-Pakistan region increases the risk of al-Qaʻida infiltration, a risk not as great in the United States because of the Atlantic divide. Europe is also vulnerable because of the "EU's largely open borders and the accession of central European countries that border less stable regions such as the Balkans."[156] Furthermore, Europe has transit and entry points for Islamist militants that the United States lacks such as in Greece where "long and porous coastal borders and proximity to the Middle East [make] it a potential source for terrorist infiltration to many Western countries" and where networks with connections to the Middle East have branched out to Kosovo, northern Albania, Bosnia and the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia.[157]

These four factors make Europe a convenient target because al-Qaʻida can strike a blow against the West, advertise its ideology, and punish Europe for its complicity in the US-led "war on terror" while simultaneously reaping the benefits that come from carrying out a successful attack. It should be stressed, however, that Europe is only an easy target when compared to the United States. Al-Qaʻida will likely still find it difficult to exploit many of the advantages it has in Europe because of the organization's limited ability to extend its operational reach beyond

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[153]Michael Taarnby, "Recruitment of Islamist Terrorists in Europe: Trends and Perspectives," Centre for Cultural Research, University of Aarhus14 January 2005: 51.

[154]US intelligence officials 2009.

[155]"UK 'number one al-Qaeda target,'" *BBC News*. 19 Oct. 2006. 2 March 2009

[156]Kristin Archick et al., "European Approaches to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," *Congressional Research Service* 2006: p. 2.

[157]Panos A. Kostakos, "The Threat of Islamic Radicalism to Greece." *Terrorism Monitor* 5 2007, p. 15.

South Asia and Europe's increased security efforts. That said, al-Qaʻida will likely continue to attempt attacks, and if Europe is unable to effectively combat radicalization within its borders, the threat from al-Qaʻida guided or inspired groups will likely persist.

Europe: A Vulnerable Target?

Generally speaking, how Europe has responded to al-Qaʻida attacks in the past and how it continues to respond today suggests that al-Qaʻida doesn't perceive Europe as a defenseless target so much as an accessible target. Europe seems better prepared to prevent a terrorist attack than it was prior to 9/11 and has improved in its ability to adequately respond to terrorist attacks. As explained in the previous sections, however, Europe remains an easier target relative to the US because it must confront security challenges that the US does not, namely Europe's proximity to the Middle East and Europe's large Muslim population.

Europe's response to terrorism has certainly not been as aggressive as America's response, but neither has it been so weak as to advertise glaring vulnerabilities to al-Qaʻida. The measures that Europe has taken as a result of terrorist attacks on its soil, while not as sweeping as the United States, have nonetheless strengthened European security and presented al-Qaʻida with a harder, if not completely hardened, target. Generally, European policy has been to respond to terrorist attacks with initiatives aimed at increasing domestic security, often resulting in tighter border controls, resource allocation towards counterterrorism programs, expanded law enforcement and intelligence capabilities, and increased protection of critical infrastructure. Following 9/11, many European countries, particularly Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, and the UK, responded by enacting measures to strengthen their counterterrorism efforts and response capabilities.[158] Since September 11, the European Union has taken action to boost police and judicial cooperation among its 25 member states, bolster external border controls, and harmonize immigration and asylum policies.[159] Various European countries also increased spending to shore up their counterterrorism capabilities, directing funding toward intelligence and law enforcement apparatuses.[160] In France, intelligence sharing between law enforcement and security agencies has been encouraged under the law, and French magistrates have been given broad powers, including the authority to detain people suspected of "conspiracy in relation to terrorism."[161] In Germany, the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre was established to bring together analysts from both law enforcement and intelligence.[162]

In the years since the September 11 attacks, European security has foiled at least 20 major terrorist plots.[163] The UK, Germany, and Denmark have very recently disrupted Islamic terrorist plots in their respective countries, namely the Glasgow, Sauerland, and Glasvej

[158]Kristin Archick et al., "European Approaches to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," 2006: Entire.

[159]Ibid., p. 2.

[160]Ibid. Summary.

[161]Dana Priest, "Help from France Key in Covert Operations," *Washington Post* 2005.

[162]Counter Terrorism and Human Rights Unit. "Country Profile: Germany." Human Rights Law Centre, University of Nottingham. http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/law/hrlc/cthrunit/countryprofiles.php

[163] Kilkullen 2007, 647–666.

plots.[164][165] Europe as a whole has witnessed an increase in counter-terrorist operations with 1,044 individuals having been arrested for terrorism-related offenses, a 48 percent increase compared to 2006.[166] With the number of antiterrorism programs and counterterrorist operations undertaken by European countries, al-Qaʻida would have little reason to believe that Europe is sitting on its hands, waiting for another attack. Europe's response to al-Qaʻida's attacks has increased preparedness throughout Europe, heightened the awareness of Europeans to the threat of Islamic terrorism, and sent a clear message that Europe intends to make it harder for terrorists to carry out a successful attack on European soil.

Europe has also made progress in confronting the threat posed by its large Muslim populations that may be susceptible to radicalization. The UK, with its large and potentially dangerous Pakistani population, has taken measures to prevent the spread of radicalization within its borders. Inflammatory jihadist preachers such as Abu Hamza, Omar Bakri and Abdullah Faisal have been imprisoned, exiled, or deported. [167] Britain has also prohibited the "glorification" of terrorism through the 2006 Terrorism Act, and as a result, has "badly damaged extremists' operations, leading to a number of successful prosecutions and sharply curtailing extremists' abilities to incite violence."[168] Similarly, through its mosque monitoring program which is intended to identify and halt the radicalization process, France has dissolved several terrorist cells seeking to recruit French volunteers to fight in Iraq.[169] And although the 7/7 bombings in London were at least in part perpetrated by radicalized European Muslims, European governments have made clear attempts to prevent the spread of al-Qaʻida's ideology to radicalized extremists within their borders.

With the exception of the 2004 attacks on Spain, European responses to al-Qaʻida attacks, by and large, have been neither conciliatory nor submissive. The March 11, 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid elicited a strong response throughout Europe to bolster security domestically and combat terrorism. Spain was no exception and reacted swiftly through the 3/11 Commission by increasing the training of police in counterterrorism, focusing on Islamist groups, monitoring jihadist activities, coordinating intelligence sharing, developing an antiterrorism prevention and protection plan, protecting critical infrastructure, establishing the National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Center to direct counterterrorism operations, and sharply increasing resources to counterterrorism.[170] Spain also pushed for stronger law enforcement, intelligence, and border control cooperation within the European Union and has prosecuted and jailed a number of Islamic extremists and terrorist group members.[171] However, despite Spain's strong security-related response to the March 11 attacks, Spain's immediate response resulted in

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[164]The Glasgow plot involved the attempted car bombing of London and Glasgow in June 2007. The Sauerland plot involved the planned use of 26 detonators and 12 drums of hydrogen peroxide in Germany in September 2007. The Glasvej plot involved the arrest of eight militant Islamists in the greater Copenhagen area in September 2007.
[165]Thomas Renard, "Europol Reveals Trends in Jihadi Terrorism in Europe." *Terrorism Monitor*, 6 2008, p. 9.
[166] Ibid.
[167] James Brandon, "The Next Generation of Radical Islamist Preachers in the UK," *Terrorism Monitor,* 6 2008, p. 13 <http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5013>.
[168]Ibid.
[169]Pascale Combelles Siegel,"An Inside Look at France's Mosque Surveillance Program," *Terrorism Monitor*, 5 2007, p. 16 <http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4376>.
[170]Archick, *European Approaches to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism* 2006, p. 32-35.
[171]Ibid

the election of the Socialist Party and a complete withdrawal from Iraq, which al-Qaʻida interpreted as a victory. Al-Qaʻida quickly claimed responsibility for the attack, chiding Europe for its "collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies" and warning that "if you don't stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow."[172] Spain's response gave al-Qaʻida what it wanted; it signaled to the world that the attack had successfully cowed Spain into retreating from the Middle East and that Europe was vulnerable to coercion. Conversely, the UK's response to the July 7, 2005 London bombings provided al-Qaʻida with little that it could manipulate into a portrayal of victory. Where Spain could be presented as bowing to al-Qaʻida pressure, the UK not only stepped up its counterterrorism efforts[173] but also remained committed to OIF and OEF, depriving al-Qaʻida of the chance to claim that the UK was intimidated into yielding to al-Qaʻida demands. Furthermore, like the Madrid bombings, the London attacks spurred other European nations to adopt tougher measures on terrorism and to focus more heavily on Islamist networks.[174] Spain's actions after 3/11 may have emboldened al-Qaʻida to continue attacking European targets, particularly those involved in OEF and OIF, but European responses as a whole have signaled Europe's commitment to defend itself against terrorism. Europe, like the US, has hardened its homeland, and, with the exception of Spain, has consistently resisted al-Qaʻida intimidation.

Overall, al-Qaʻida's decision to strike European targets may have been marginally encouraged by Spain's response to the Madrid bombings, but Europe's improvements to domestic security, increased vigilance over radical Islamists, and largely uncompromising attitude toward al-Qaʻida has reinforced Europe's image as a strong, rather than weak, and hard, rather than soft, target. Nevertheless, relative to the US, Europe remains the more accessible target, and al-Qaʻida is likely to attempt to exploit the advantages it has in Europe that it does not have in the US and continue targeting Europe. When considering other factors, Europe's response to terrorist attacks figures less significantly in the decision-making process which drives al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy. Because of Europe's symbolic value as an ally of the US and "crusader," because of Europe's strategic value as a relatively easier target to carry out attacks against when compared to the US homeland, and because of the relatively higher possibility for a successful attack in Europe than in the US, al-Qaʻida will continue to attack Europe if it can, to retain legitimacy, to gather recruits, and to damage the US by damaging its allies.

Europe: A Lingering Target?

When considering the future implications of OEF and OIF, one can assume that al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy will continue to concentrate on perpetrating attacks against the US and its allies. As part of a long-term strategy to keep pressure on the West and outlast Western powers in a protracted conflict, al-Qaʻida will likely carry out attacks where its affiliates or sympathizers have the capability to attack and where the chance of success is greatest. If the future security environment changes in favor of al-Qaʻida, then it will almost certainly attempt

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[172] "Full Text: 'Al-Qaeda' Madrid Claim." *BBC* March 14, 2004, 6 March 2009
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3509556.stm>/
[173]Archick, *European Approaches to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism* 2006, p. 37.
[174]Ibid, p. 5, 23, 28-32, 43.

more attacks on the US Homeland. However, even as al-Qaʻida makes advances in its ability to strike the US, it will also seek to carry out attacks on US allies, particularly Europe.

Some terrorism experts estimate that al-Qaʻida will lack the capabilities to organize and execute a substantial attack within the US for the next five years.[175] If this is indeed the case, al-Qaʻida will continue attacking Europe in the short-term as a means of harming the West.[176] Whether or not al-Qaʻida can eventually gain the capabilities needed for attacks against the United States depends on several important factors, particularly the outcome of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan are anyone's guess, it seems unlikely that any resulting changes will enable al-Qaʻida to attack the US within a five-year time-frame. If military operations draw down in Iraq, the continuing conflict in Afghanistan might be enough to keep jihadist forces occupied within the short-term. Coalition military leaders have stressed that troops need to remain in Afghanistan for several years to maintain stability, which could potentially keep the mujahedeen occupied for as long as the conflict persists.[177] If the conflict in Afghanistan were to occupy the attention of trained jihadists, al-Qaʻida loses nothing if it continues to stage successful attacks on Europe. If al-Qaʻida is planning to attack the US Homeland, it will gain some credibility as an organization, and at the very least, continue to survive for as long as its ideology maintains appeal.[178] A continuing conflict in Afghanistan could fuel al-Qaʻida's ideology and inspire jihadists to take action. Furthermore, the blowback that many expected has not yet occurred. It is certainly possible that battle-hardened mujahedeen returning from conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan will provide al-Qaʻida with new capabilities and manpower to target the US.[179] However, even if there is substantial blowback in the near future, it will still take time for al-Qaʻida to consolidate its new recruits and complete preparations for an attack against the US. Therefore, any capabilities that al-Qaʻida is able to gain from Iraq and Afghanistan is likely to take full effect in the long-term rather than the short-term.

In the long-term, US efforts to harden the Homeland could potentially keep pace with al-Qaʻida's capabilities and prevent any attacks. However, this is unlikely, and even with advances in security and continued international cooperation against foreign terrorist groups, time is on al-Qaʻida's side.[180] Al-Qaʻida can be expected to exercise patience and continue cooperating with regional affiliates in an attempt to gain the capability needed to eventually attack the US[181] Unless a major change in the status quo occurs which disrupts the spread of al-Qaʻida's ideology and eliminates its safe havens, al-Qaʻida has the potential to make gains in the long-term. The terrorist organization has demonstrated its resilience and ability to adapt even while on the defensive.[182] Time allows al-Qaʻida to survive by regrouping, recruiting and training new members, and generating support.

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[175]Bergen 2008, p. 14.
[176] Short-term defined from three to five years.
[177] Sievert 2009.
[178]Sawyer et al., 2008, p. 2.
[179]Ayoob 2008, p. 149.
[180]Burton 2009.
[181]US intelligence officials 2009.
[182]Sawyer et al., 2008, p. 2.

The post-conflict situations in Iraq and Afghanistan can also assist al-Qaʻida as time passes. History has demonstrated that long-term occupation typically breeds hostility against the occupying force. As long as the coalition maintains a military presence in Muslim lands, al-Qaʻida will seek to capitalize on Muslim suspicion and resentment to further its support and ideological legitimacy. Despite the Defense Department's proclamation that Iraq served as a flytrap that distracted jihadists from terrorizing the Homeland, it instead "increased radicalization in the Muslim world and provided al-Qaeda with more recruits than it otherwise [would] have had."[183]

Furthermore, al-Qaʻida's ability to attack the US and Europe in a post OEF and OIF environment will be strongly influenced by the existence of functioning al-Qaʻida training camps in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. These camps, if allowed to subsist, can enable al-Qaʻida, in the long-term, to fulfill its goal of attacking the US and Europe.[184] US military operations against terrorist networks may have reduced al-Qaʻida's ability to execute attacks, but the existence of training camps gives al-Qaʻida the ability to overcome losses by regenerating manpower, provide its followers with the skills needed to take arms against the West, and restore the leadership's ability to communicate with and direct operatives. Since "terrorist plots have a much higher degree of success if some of the cell's members have received training in person," hands-on training will become increasingly crucial to al-Qaʻida's attack capabilities after Iraq and Afghanistan no longer serve as training grounds. [185] In fact, some have judged that al-Qaʻida has already "regenerated its [US] Homeland attack capability in Pakistan's tribal areas."[186]

Finally, the risk of a blowback occurring as trained jihadists return from Afghanistan is much greater in the long-term. The potential for long-term blowback "from the Iraq invasion is likely to be far greater than that from the American-supported war against the Soviets in Afghanistan."[187] The coalition's declared commitment to remain in Afghanistan until the country achieves some measure of stability may temporarily occupy trained fighters who are ripe for al-Qaʻida recruitment.[188] However, after the coalition withdraws, radical militants may seek ways to continue the fight against the West in another arena. When these mujahidin find themselves without a purpose in Afghanistan, but with the same determination to wage jihad, al-Qaʻida will have the opportunity to recruit hundreds of "battle-hardened" militants.[189] If al-Qaʻida does manage to enlist forces returning from Afghanistan, their experience in the battlefield will certainly bolster al-Qaʻida's capabilities. Moreover, many of the jihadists that trained in Iraq's urban areas will have skills beneficial in a large-scale attack against a US city.[190] However, in the long-term, while returning jihadists might facilitate al-Qaʻida's efforts to target the US Homeland, Europe and Middle Eastern countries allied with the US will remain the most at risk from terrorist attacks. As mujahedeen who fought against coalition troops return to their

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[183] Bergen 2008, p. 21.
[184] Gunaratna 2008, p. 775-802.
[185] Bergen 2008, p. 7.
[186] Bergen 2008, p. 4.
[187] Ayoob 2008, p. 149
[188] Sievert 2009.
[189] Bergen 2008, p. 22.
[190] US intelligence officials 2009.

countries of origin, the easiest targets to attack will be Middle Eastern regimes allied with the United States, followed by Europe.[191]

Conclusion

Europe is a secondary target because al-Qaʿida perceives the United States as the leading Western power behind the occupation of Muslim lands and would value an attack against the United States more than it would value an attack against Europe. When al-Qaʿida was formed, bin Laden specifically identified the United States by name as the principal enemy of Islam and continues to refer to the United States as its primary target.[192] Al-Qaʿida statements have not indicated that Europe has replaced the United States or that Europe has even achieved the same level of primacy as the United States. However, Europe is a convenient target because it is more accessible, requires less capability to attack, and has more al-Qaʿida sympathizers within its borders than does the United States. Al-Qaʿida also desires to punish Europe for its role in OEF, OIF, and the "War on Terror." Likewise, because al-Qaʿida remains committed to following an ideology which seeks to establish a global Caliphate and combat the "crusaders," Europe will continue be grouped along with the United States as a legitimate target. Europe is a vulnerable target not because it has responded weakly to terrorism but because, relative to the United States, it must confront security challenges that the United States does not, namely Europe's proximity to the Middle East and Europe's large Muslim population. Finally, Europe is a lingering target. Depending on the outcome in Afghanistan and Iraq, the withdrawal of Western forces will either provide al-Qaʿida with the opportunity to reallocate resources toward striking the United States and its allies or will remove the impetus behind radicalization which has fueled the spread of al-Qaʿida ideology and attacks against the West. However, Europe will remain a fixed target for the foreseeable future as long as al-Qaʿida remains ideologically consistent, retains its operational capabilities, and can inspire followers to action.

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[191] Sievert 2009.
[192] Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 69.

Regions of Opportunity: Tertiary Targets

While the United States remains al-Qaʻida's primary enemy, it is not the only enemy, and directly attacking the Homeland at this juncture is not al-Qaʻida's only option when it comes to furthering its strategic goals and increasing its capabilities. Al-Qaʻida's ultimate goals include bringing down the United States and establishing an Islamic Caliphate, an objective more easily attainable with the United States out of the way, but to achieve those goals, al-Qaʻida has to rebuild its base of operations, solidify its safe haven, acquire new resources, and recover lost manpower.

To facilitate its reconstitution, al-Qaʻida seems to have focused increased attention on other areas of the world. However, that does not signify an actual strategic shift on al-Qaʻida's part but rather a matter of practicality. First, it is not currently necessary for al-Qaʻida to travel across the Atlantic to attack the United States; US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have provided al-Qaʻida with numerous, more accessible US targets overseas. Therefore, al-Qaʻida can attack the United States and as bin Laden said, "make America bleed profusely to the point of bankruptcy,"[193] without having to unnecessarily stress its limited resources until it is ready to plan and carry out a more complex, expensive operation. Furthermore, other regions such as South Asia, the Maghreb and the Arabian Peninsula all have some of the resources al-Qaʻida needs to regain the capabilities it lost following US military operations in Afghanistan, so al-Qaʻida's operations in those regions also serve its broader strategic goals of attacking the United States and establishing a Caliphate. This section will evaluate why al-Qaʻida seems to have focused its attention on other regions in the near term and what it hopes to gain from those regions.

Al-Qaʻida's Global Objectives

Al-Qaʻida's global targeting strategy is similar to that of a multinational corporation. Businesses go abroad for two main reasons: 1) the firm has an advantage it can capitalize on overseas, and/or 2) there are resources abroad that will help boost the business. Like multinational corporations, al-Qaʻida does not expand into regions that lack the requisite assets, such as established networks or untapped resources, for conducting terrorist operations. Rather, al-Qaʻida seeks to expand in those areas where it can capitalize on radicalized populations, lawlessness, and operational expertise. Multinationals take into consideration cultural differences, like language, religion, social norms, and ethnicities, when determining their markets. For example, a US firm is more willing to operate in Canada or Western Europe rather than Asia because of the cultural similarities. Likewise, al-Qaʻida prefers to expand to traditionally Muslim areas because its ideology is more likely to resonate with the population, providing the group with a ready recruitment pool. For example, al-Qaʻida has been successful in Pakistan, where a large radicalized Muslim population exists. Also, firms are attracted to locales with friendly host governments just as al-Qaʻida desires states or regions that provide safe havens or whose lawlessness allows exploitation. Al-Qaʻida, like a multinational corporation, profits from favorable conditions which facilitate its global operations and bolster its organizational capabilities. Al-Qaʻida's objectives in other regions are determined by the degree

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[193] Osama bin Laden, "The Full Version of Osama bin Laden's Speech." *Middle East Media Research Institute*, 5 Nov. 2004, 9 Feb. 2009 <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=sd&ID=SP81104>.

to which it can develop safe havens, harness potential recruits and capitalize on available resources.

The increased denial of safe havens in regions around the world has stymied al-Qaʻida's operational capabilities. Safe havens provide al-Qaʻida with a base of operations for training, organization, planning and recruitment, and without this sanctuary, al-Qaʻida is more vulnerable to counterterrorism operations and less able to coordinate international operations.[194] The UN has tried to crack down on countries that allow al-Qaʻida access to their territory for training grounds in exchange for financial gain. The enforcement of stiffer penalties, such as sanctions, is designed to discourage nations from associating with al-Qaʻida.[195]

Although al-Qaʻida has lost traction in some of its former strongholds such as Southeast Asia, it has gained or maintained a presence in South Asia, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, and the Horn of Africa. Each of these regions provide al-Qaʻida with certain resources that allow it to improve its operational capabilities, achieve local and regional objectives, and eventually attack the United States. As a result, al-Qaʻida's targeting strategy is shaped both by what its current capabilities allow as well as by what it can gain from targeting and using other regions to achieve its goals of attacking the US Homeland, spreading its ideology, and freeing the Muslim world from Western occupation.

South Asia

<u>Afghanistan</u>

Afghanistan served as al-Qaʻida's primary base of operations from 1998-2001 because the Taliban allied with and provided al-Qaʻida with a much needed safe haven and operational freedom. However, following the 9/11 attacks, US and NATO forces drove al-Qaʻida out of Afghanistan into neighboring regions in Pakistan and throughout the world. Despite US and allied military, political, and economic assistance, Afghanistan currently faces significant challenges to its authority and lacks the ability to govern all of its territory. The recent Taliban resurgence also erodes the government's control, particularly along the mountainous Pakistani border. These governance issues make it difficult for Afghanistan to prevent al-Qaʻida's movement to and from the country, and weaknesses within the police and military forces hinder the effective enforcement of law and order and the protection of the local population.[196] In addition, rampant narco-trafficking and crime undermines the government's jurisdiction along Afghanistan's southern border with Pakistan and Iran.[197]

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[194] Francis T. Miko, *Removing Terrorist Sanctuaries: The 9/11 Commission Recommendation and US Policy*, RL32518, 11 February 2005. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, p.1, 15 March 2009 <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32518.pdf>.

[195] "Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities," United Nations, 15 Oct. 1999, 15 Feb. 2009 <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/>.

[196] Seth Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad," *International Security* Spring 2008: 8 <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/isec.2008.32.4.7?cookieSet=1 >.

[197] "A Sobering Look at Iraq & Afghanistan: An Interview with General James Jones." *US Naval Institute Proceedings* Feb. 2008: 26-27.

Al-Qaʻida continues to be active in Afghanistan because it seeks to regain access to the country and harass US and coalition forces there. Its presence in Pakistan allows al-Qaʻida to move resources and personnel across the border for operations. The rough terrain and local support for the Taliban and al-Qaʻida makes it difficult for NATO forces in country to effectively halt the passage of militants and supplies across the border.[198] Al-Qaʻida's success in Afghanistan would increase its capabilities in the region by providing another safe haven to plan, train and coordinate international terrorist attacks. However, al-Qaʻida's ability to succeed in Afghanistan is largely contingent on its continued ability to operate in Pakistan.

Pakistan

Al-Qaʻida has established a sanctuary in FATA which has allowed the group to develop camps in the region similar to those it once had in Afghanistan prior to OEF.[199] Al-Qaʻida's strategic leadership is also focused on using the camps to reconstitute a broader central leadership and expand its command and control apparatus.[200] The maintenance of its new safe haven has become one of al-Qaʻida's primary goals in the region. In order to attain that goal, al-Qaʻida needs to keep the Pakistani government out of its operations while it regroups and regains its strength and aims to ultimately replace the current government with one more sympathetic to its objectives.

One of the keys to success in Pakistan is the continued support of Pakistani tribal groups and locals who help keep al-Qaʻida operatives hidden. Mawlawi Faqir Muhammad, the Deputy Leader of The Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Shari'a (TNSM) in Pakistan, states, "Sheikh Usama and Dr. Al-Zawahiri are our guests, and we ask Allah to protect them."[201] In return, al-Qaʻida uses propaganda against India to further that bond with local Pakistani elements. An al-Qaʻida military commander and third in command, Mustafa Abu Yazid, issued a threat to India that, should it attack Pakistan, al-Qaʻida "Mujahideen will sunder your armies into the ground, like they did to the Russians in Afghanistan."[202] Al-Qaʻida has also been increasingly active in Pakistan as it struggles to maintain its safe haven. Yazid was allegedly involved in several acts of terror within Pakistan, including the 2008 bombings of the Danish Embassy in Islamabad and the 2007 assassination of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.[203]

Overall, al-Qaʻida is determined to bolster its network in Pakistan, and recent increases in suicide bombings in the country—56 in 2007 up from only 6 in 2006—demonstrate its increased

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[198]George Friedman, "Al-Qaeda, Afghanistan and the Good War," *Stratfor,* 25 Feb. 2008, 8 March 2008 <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/al_qaeda_afghanistan_and_good_war>.

[199]Mark Mazzetti, "Qaeda Rebulding in Pakistan, Intelligence Chief Tells Panel." *New York Times*, 28 Feb. 2007, 23 Feb. 2009 <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9905E6DE1F3EF93BA15751C0A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=>.

[200] Mazzetti 2007.

[201] "Al-Jazeera Interview with Mawlawi Faqir Muhammad, Deputy Leader of the Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Shari'a in Pakistan," *SITE Intelligence Group* 19 Dec. 2007, 14 March 2009. <https://www.siteintelgroup.com/getReportsClient1.aspx?id=2398>.

[202]Syed Shoaib Hasan, "Al-Qaeda video belies death claim," *BBC News* 9 Feb. 2009, 3 April 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7879511.stm>.

[203]Hasan 2009.

capability to expand its operations and put pressure on the Pakistani government.[204] The government already has little influence or authority in FATA, which hampers its attempts to reduce the Taliban and al-Qaʿida presence in the northwest regions and increases its instability. The situation is further complicated by elements of the Pakistan government who are critical of US policies in the region and supportive of Taliban and al-Qaʿida objectives.[205]

Several factors have contributed to the development of a safe haven in FATA. First, the large number of radical Islamic elements fosters increased public support for al-Qaʿida. Second, radicalization among Pakistani Muslims is on the rise, resulting in the emergence of more Islamist movements in the state[206] and a greater potential recruitment pool from which to draw. Third, tribalism in the seven semi-autonomous tribal agencies of the FATA—North and South Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, Kurram and Khyber—reduces the loyalty of local populations to the central Pakistani government, increasing the risk that militants may influence or bribe tribal leaders.[207] Al-Qaʿida also receives support from officials within the Pakistani government. Retired members of Pakistan's military and intelligence services, particularly Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), continue to actively support al-Qaʿida by organizing training camps and procuring arms.[208]

The United States views al-Qaʿida's safe haven in the northwest regions in Pakistan as a threat to national security and continues to work with the Pakistani government and President Zardari's administration to curb al-Qaʿida's influence, destroy the sanctuary and capture or kill key al-Qaʿida operatives. Shortly after September 11, Pakistan helped the United States catch several major al-Qaʿida leaders and conducted several military operations in FATA in hopes of combating the threat posed by the terrorist sanctuary. However, these military operations have complicated the situation in FATA by damaging local tribal institutions, increasing the spread of radicalism, leading to the deaths of hundreds of Pakistani soldiers, and prompting opposition from the Pakistani people.[209] These problems led to Pakistan's decision to seek peace deals with militants in FATA. Starting in 2004, the Pakistani government signed several peace agreements designed to halt Taliban attacks on US, NATO, Afghan and Pakistan forces, and in return, the Pakistan army would withdraw from the region.[210] The successive peace deals met with failure and ultimately helped al-Qaʿida consolidate its presence in the region.[211]

The Taliban and al-Qaʿida are not the only groups operating in Northwest Pakistan. Militants from Kashmir, Chechnya, Africa, China and Central Asia have gathered in the region to train.[212] For example, many Kashmiri terrorist organizations receive funding and training

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[204]Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), p. 379.

[205] "Terrorism Havens: Pakistan," *Council on Foreign Relations* Dec. 2005 <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9514/>.

[206]Issac Kfir, "Pakistan Coming Apart at the Seams," *ICT Herzliya* 6 May 2007, 1 March 2009. <http://www.ict.org.il/NewsCommentaries/Commentaries/tabid/69/Articlsid/151/currentpage/7/Default.aspx>.

[207] Kfir 2007.

[208] B Raman, "Looming Jihad Anarchy in Pakistan," *ICT Herzliya,* 30 March 2007, 15 March 2009 <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/244/Default.aspx>.

[209]Lisa Curtis, "The Terrorist Challenges in Pakistan," Weblog entry, *The Foundry* 16 June 2008. Heritage Foundation 13 March 2009 <http://blog.heritage.org/2008/06/16/the-terrorist-challenge-in-pakistan/>.

[210] Rashid 2008, p. 270-277.

[211] Curtis 2008.

[212] Rashid 2008, p. 278-279.

from al-Qaʻida.[213] Furthermore, almost all post-9/11 al-Qaʻida attacks and plots have originated in FATA, including the July 2005 bombings in London and the August 2006 plot to blow up nine aircraft over the Atlantic.[214] The July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) published by the US intelligence community also emphasized the continuing capability of al-Qaʻida to attack the US homeland partially because of its reconstituted sanctuary in FATA.[215]

Pakistan is al-Qaʻida's safe haven. The Pakistani government's reluctance and inability to combat the threat in FATA has allowed "al-Qaʻida leaders [to] use the tribal areas as a base from which they can avoid capture, produce propaganda, communicate with operational cells abroad, and provide training and indoctrination to new terrorist operatives."[216] Al-Qaʻida's sanctuary in Pakistan provides the group with the foundation it needs to expand its capabilities and conduct future terrorist attacks in the region, internationally and against the United States.

North Africa

Al-Qaʻida maintains close to ties to affiliate organizations in North Africa, namely al-Qaʻida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM is based primarily in Algeria but maintains a presence in the surrounding countries, including Mali and Mauritania.[217] The organization focuses most of its attacks on Algeria to overthrow the government and establish an Islamic Caliphate, an objective shared by AQSL as a secondary goal. Within the past several years, AQIM has attacked foreign convoys carrying Western nationals using IEDs, demonstrating its resolve to attack targets other than Algerian security forces.[218] However, AQIM's primary focus remains on its local objectives rather than al-Qaʻida's broader strategic objectives, including attacking the United States.[219]

By affiliating itself with AQIM and encouraging local Algerians to overthrow their secular government, al-Qaʻida is able to further some of its secondary goals by keeping its name relevant and maintaining a global terrorist presence. However, al-Qaʻida's regional objectives do not end there. AQIM's influence is not limited to North Africa; there are indications that the organization wants to develop the capability to attack Western Europe and North America,[220] providing al-Qaʻida with a prime opportunity to capitalize on the actions of its regional affiliate. French intelligence estimates that AQIM has approximately 5,000 sympathizers in France,[221] and in June 2008, Spanish officials apprehended 18 men suspected of providing logistical assistance

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[213] "Kashmir Militant Extremists," *Council on Foreign Relations* 12 June 2006, 12 March 2009 <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9135/>.

[214] Rashid 2008, p. 278-279.

[215] *National Intelligence Estimate* 2007.

[216] Blair 2009.

[217] United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence National Counterterrorism Center,"Al-Qaʻida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)" 2009, 2 March 2009 <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/aqim.html>.

[218]Ibid.

[219] Jean-Luc Marret, "Al-Qaʻida in the Islamic Maghreb: A 'Glocal' Organization," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31 (2008): p. 543.

[220] "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Council on Foreign Relations* 31 July 2008 <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12717/>.

[221]Bruce Riedel. "Al-Qaeda Targets France," *Brookings Institute* 14 June 2007, 15 March 2009 <http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/0614france_riedel.aspx>.

and funding to al-Qaʻida in the Islamic Maghreb.[222] However, despite AQIM forays into Europe there is doubt that the group has the capability to conduct an al-Qaʻida-like attack outside North Africa. According to Hugh Roberts, former head of the International Crisis Group's North Africa project, "They haven't done anything spectacular…They have not actually pulled off a single terrorist attack in Europe in the eight years they've existed. And that's a fact that you have to put in balance against European security services that say the group is a major threat."[223] AQIM has the potential to perpetrate attacks in Europe and the United States but has yet to demonstrate a capability to do so.

Considering the support for AQIM in Europe, al-Qaʻida could use North Africa as a springboard into Europe should it actually develop these assets. However, recent events have curtailed al-Qaʻida's ability to accomplish its goals both locally and abroad as government actions have begun to threaten AQIM's existence. Algeria and neighboring countries arrested more than 200 members in 2007, and the Algerian army succeeded in eliminating key figures of the terrorist group, creating a difficult vacuum to fill and causing challenges for recruitment efforts.[224] While a significant al-Qaʻida affiliate organization, AQIM's strengths remain primarily focused on its local objectives. However, AQIM does help spread al-Qaʻida's ideology in the region and could provide valuable resources should it fully radicalize its European sympathizers.

Arabian Peninsula

Al-Qaʻida's presence in Yemen has diminished since 2001 but has begun to rebound in recent years,[225] and with the help of al-Qaʻida in Yemen (formerly al-Qaʻida in the Arabian Peninsula), it has managed to conduct several successful attacks in the country, including the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole,[226] 2008 attack on the US Embassy in Sanaa[227] and 2009 suicide bombing against a South Korean diplomatic convoy.[228] Former Director of Central Intelligence General Michael Hayden states Yemen has seen an "unprecedented number of attacks" in 2008 and the "[p]lots are increasing not only in number but in sophistication and the range of targets is broadening."[229] Like Pakistan, but to a lesser extent, al-Qaʻida in Yemen (AQY) enjoys a great deal of freedom in the remote tribal areas of Yemen where the government lacks any real

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[222]Elaine Sciolino, "Spain Arrests 8 It Says Aided a Al-Qaeda Linked Cell," *New York Times* 11 June 2008, 3 Mach 2009 <http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/0614france_riedel.aspx>.
[223] "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" 2008.
[224] Thomas Renard, "Restructuring al-Qaeda's Algerian Insurgency," *Terrorism Focus*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol.5, Issue No. 29, 7 August 2008, 15 March 2009
<http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4709>.
[225] Michael Hayden, "CIA Director Hayden – State of al-Qaeda Today," *Global Intelligence Forum: State of Al Qaeda*, Atlantic Council of the United States, Washington, DC 13 November 2008, 6 March 2009.
<http://www.acus.org/http:/%252Fwww.acus.org/event_blog/cia-director-event-transcript>.
[226] Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Nineteen Alleged Al Qaeda Operatives Acquitted in Yemen," *Transnational Threat Update,* Vol.4, Issue No. 7, July/Aug. 2006: p. 2.
<http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/tnt_0607.pdf>.
[227] "US embassy in Yemen bombed," *Al Jazeera* 18 Sept. 2008, 10 Feb. 2009
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2008/09/20089177649418697.html>.
[228] "AQAP Claims Suicide Bombing on South Korean Envoy," *SITE Intelligence Group*, Email, 10 April 2009.
[229] Hayden 2008.

authority.[230] Al-Qaʻida is able to exploit the government's inability to effectively enforce the rule of law, the country's porous borders with Saudi Arabia and sympathy within the population.[231]

AQY remains committed to the overarching al-Qaʻida ideology to establish a global Islamic Caliphate, seeks to overthrow the Yemeni government and attack the Western presence in Saudi Arabia.[232] Al-Qaʻida uses Yemen to recruit, train and direct operations in the region. Though not on par with its operations prior to September 11, al-Qaʻida maintains several training camps in the lawless southern areas of the country.[233] The combination of homegrown recruits, Saudi militants fleeing Saudi Arabia's crackdown and Yemeni mujahedeen returning from Iraq and Afghanistan provides AQY with the manpower, experience and leadership necessary to continue conducting attacks in the Arabian Peninsula.[234] In addition, the governorates of Marib and Hadramaut share similar qualities with Afghanistan—remote and mountainous terrain and conservative Islamic tribes.[235] These tribes may offer Yemeni mujahedeen safe haven and assist in arms procurement and storage.[236] According to Osama bin Laden, another reason for al-Qaʻida's continued presence in Yemen is to provide a future safe haven should al-Qaʻida be forced out of South Asia.[237] Additionally, al-Qa'ida also wants to use its base in Yemen to launch attacks into Saudi Arabia. Saudi counterterrorism efforts since 2003 have resulted in an exodus of Saudi al-Qaʻida operatives across the border into Yemen,[238] potentially providing training, know-how and assistance to Yemenis tribal militants.[239]

Conditions in Yemen provide al-Qaʻida with training grounds, recruits, experienced fighters, weapons and a potential safe haven because the government lacks the capability to enforce the laws or safeguard the borders. From Yemen, AQY seeks to attack neighboring Saudi Arabia and help further al-Qaʻida's goals of an Islamic Caliphate by expelling Western forces from the region and establishing an Islamic state in Yemen.[240]

The Levant

While al-Qaʻida continues to use the Palestinian issue to bolster its image and rally support in the region, expert analysis suggests that al-Qaʻida has been unable to establish a physical presence in the Levant or exercise any direct control over operations. There are several

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[230] Ibid.

[231] "Terrorist Havens: Yemen," *Council on Foreign Relations* Dec. 2005, 24 Feb. 2009
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9369/>.

[232] Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Al Qaeda Leaders in the Arabian Peninsula Speak Out," *Terrorism Focus*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 6, Issue No. 3, 29 January 2009, 19 March 2009
<http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34420 >.

[233] "Terrorist Havens: Yemen" 2005.

[234] Hayden 2008.

[235] Michael Scheuer, "Yemen's Role in al-Qaeda's Strategy," *Terrorism Focus*, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 5, Issue No. 5, 2008, 17 Feb. 2009
<http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4708&tx_ttnews[backPid]=246&no_cache=1 >.

[236] Bakier 2009.

[237] Scheuer 2008.

[238] Blair 2009.

[239] Bakier 2009.

[240] Scheuer 2008.

groups in the region inspired by al-Qaʻida's ideology though not created by al-Qaʻida, such as Fatah al-Islam.[241] While Israel has warned that al-Qaʻida is developing networks in the region, "al-Qaʻida activity within Israel has been strikingly non-existent"[242] as no al-Qaʻida inspired or directed attacks have actually taken place in recent years. Similar claims of al-Qaʻida's presence in the Palestinian territories by Hamas and Fatah were likely designed to maximize political gains, essentially using al-Qaʻida as a tool to delegitimize one another.[243]

What presence al-Qaʻida does have in the Levant is mainly limited to influence over groups operating in the area. As with North African and the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qaʻida hopes to franchise its name to local terrorist groups and insurgents in the Levant as they pursue their localized goals in order to gain more supporters within the Muslim communities there and capitalize on the passion surrounding the Palestinian issue. By casting al-Qaʻida's goals as a fight against the Jews and Israel, al-Qaʻida can draw support and fighters from communities that have been negatively affected by Israel but would otherwise have no reason to join the fight against the United States. "Israel remains at the core of international Islamic issues and provides a revolutionary motivation for Palestinians to join al-Qaeda's war on crusaders and Jews under American command."[244] Al-Qaʻida's association with local terrorist groups provides al-Qaʻida with operational capabilities necessary to maintaining its global presence without depleting its resources. The limitations of such a strategy are that al-Qaʻida has virtually no control over the actions of the groups to which it lends its support.

Terrorist leaders like Shaker al-Abssi, head of Fatah al-Islam, have local resources and operational capabilities that al-Qaʻida lost following the US invasion of Afghanistan.[245] To pursue its stated goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate,[246] al-Qaʻida seems to have chosen to focus some of its efforts on lesser targets which provide a greater payoff towards fulfilling its regional objectives and rebuilding its capabilities. Fatah al-Islam promotes instability in Lebanon,[247] and in supporting actions against the Lebanese government, al-Qaʻida furthers its secondary goals by using the localized goals of insurgents to expand its political capital and base of support, so it can later use both for an attack against its primary enemy, the United States.

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[241] Bilal Y Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, "Fatah al-Islam: How an Ambitious Jihadist Project Went Awry," *Brookings Institute* 28 Nov. 2007, 27 Feb. 2009 <http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2007/1128_terrorism_saab.aspx>.

[242] Fadhil Ali, "Al Qaeda's Palestinian Inroads," Terrorism Monitor, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 6, Issue No. 8, 17 April 2008, 16 Feb. 2009.<http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4864&tx_ttnews[backPid]=167&no_cache=1>.

[243] Ali 2008.

[244] Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Al-Qaeda Outlines Its Strategy Seven Years After 9/11," Terrorism Focus, Jamestown Foundation, Vol. 5, Issue No. 35, 1 Oct. 2008, 4 April 2009.<http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5191&tx_ttnews[backPid]=246&no_cache=1>.

[245] Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, "A new face of Al Qaeda emerges in Lebanon," *International Herald Tribune* 15 March 2007, 12 March 2009 <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/03/15/news/lebanon.php>.

[246] Blanchard 2007.

[247] Nicholas Blanford, "Lebanon Army battles 'al-Qaeda' militia," *Times* 21 May 2007, 2 April 2009 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article1816643.ece>.

Horn of Africa

Somalia

Al-Qaʻida has sought to exploit the permissive operating environment in Somalia because its unsecured borders and continued political instability provide opportunities for terrorist transit and/or organization. As a potential safe haven for both Somali and foreign terrorists, al-Qaʻida is likely to continue working with Somali extremists both in an attempt to disrupt international peacekeeping efforts and franchise local Islamic terrorist groups.[248] Al-Qaʻida has demonstrated its interest in Somalia in the past by allocating USD three million to recruit and airlift elite veterans of the Afghan jihad to Somalia via third countries, such as Yemen and Ethiopia.[249]

Currently, the primary concern for the United States regarding Somalia is al-Shabaab, a group of Islamic militants that controls much of southern and central Somalia and has already sworn its allegiance to Usama bin Laden. Al-Shabaab "has links to the al-Qaʻida in East Africa network—including individuals responsible for the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania—and maintains ties with al-Qaʻida leaders in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)."[250] Many of the leaders of al-Shabaab have trained in al-Qaʻida camps,[251] and al-Qaʻida has praised the group in its own propaganda tapes.[252]

The lawlessness in Somalia has allowed al-Shabaab to carry out violent attacks geared toward undermining the Somali government and furthering broader al-Qaʻida objectives. Al-Qaʻida, through al-Shabaab, uses the country to recruit, train and orchestrate anti-Western attacks both in Somalia and internationally.[253] Former White House counterterrorism advisor Richard Clark stated, "US security interests are gravely threatened if [Somalia] again becomes what Afghanistan used to be: a safe haven for al Qaʻida, a government run by al Qaʻida affiliates, and a place where al Qaʻida supporters from around the world can come safely and train to get ready to launch terrorist attacks around the world."[254] The relationship between Al-Shabaab and al-Qaʻida creates the opportunity to destabilize Somalia, export al-Qaʻida's ideology, and attack other regions, even the United States.

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[248] United States Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Chapter 2 - Country Reports: Africa Overview," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007* 30 April 2008, 5 April 2009 <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103705.htm>.

[249] Richard Sale, "Yemen: Rocky Road to Terror Cooperation," *United Press International* 11 December 2001, 19 Feb. 2009 <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-80728939.html>.

[250] Mudd 2009.

[251] United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence National Counterterrorism Center, "Al-Shabaab." 2009, 2 March 2009 <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html>.

[252] Andrew Liepman, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America*, 111th Cong., 1st Sess., 11 March 2009, p. 5, 12 March 2009 <http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/_files/031109Liepman.pdf>.

[253] Mudd 2009, 1.

[254] Brian Ross, Avni Patel, and Dana Hughes, "Somalia: A New al Qaeda Safe Haven?" Weblog entry, *The Blotter from Brian Ross,* ABC News 1 Dec. 2008, 27 Feb. 2009 <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=6363800&page=1>.

<u>Sudan</u>

Al-Qaʻida had its base of operations and headquarters in Sudan from 1992-1996, during which the government of Sudan provided it with sanctuary and support. However, the Sudanese government expelled the terrorist organization due to international pressure in 1996.[255] Since then, al-Qaʻida operations in Sudan have been limited. Following OEF, the Taliban and al-Qaʻida shipped a significant amount of gold to Sudan, indicating al-Qaʻida's desire to maintain ties with the Sudanese government.[256] Furthermore, evidence suggests that al-Qaʻida has already begun providing weapons to militants within Sudan[257] and has been able to recruit fighters for foreign al-Qaʻida operations.[258] Al-Qaʻida's influence in Sudan appears to center on the appeal of its ideology, supply of weapons, and financial support rather than Sudan's function as a safe haven and primary staging area for operations.

Conclusion

Al-Qaʻida continues to operate in other regions to maintain its presence on the international stage while simultaneously spreading its ideology and building the capabilities necessary to once again attack the United States. The attention al-Qaʻida is currently devoting to these other areas does not represent a shift in al-Qaʻida's priorities or general intentions. Its stated intention is still to bring down "the West," with an emphasis on the United States, and to establish an Islamic Caliphate. The apparent shift in targeting emphasis is merely a strategic response to available opportunities, not a change in priorities or overall strategy. As al-Qaʻida's pool of recruits, networks, resources, bases, and sympathizers grows, so too does al-Qaʻida's ability to draw from those regions, reallocate resources, inspire attacks, and further its goals of expelling Western forces from Muslim lands and establishing a global Caliphate. However, al-Qaʻida's ability to tap into these resources and regional opportunities depends largely on al-Qaʻida strategic leadership's ability to remain relevant, legitimate, and resilient enough to direct, plan, and inspire operations through its affiliates, cells, and homegrown clusters.

A successful attack against the United States would be al-Qaʻida's ideal scenario. However, al-Qaʻida's limited resources make it increasingly difficult and risky to focus on a single target. Rather, it is more strategically beneficial for al-Qaʻida to diffuse its efforts among multiple targets. If al-Qaʻida were to invest $500,000 into another attack on the US Homeland, and fail to succeed, the operation could undermine its standing as an international terrorist organization. In contrast, targeting multiple easier targets, or franchising its name out to the operations of local organizations, increases al-Qaʻida's chances of success. These operations, which focus on local and regional enemies, keep al-Qaʻida on the map and maintain its international standing while it rebuilds its base of financial and human capital, and prepares for another attack against the US Homeland.

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[255] Preeti Bhattacharji, "State Sponsors: Sudan,"*Council on Foreign Relations* 2 April 2008, 13 March 2009 <www.cfr.org/publication/9367/#3>.
[256] Douglas Farah, "Al-Qaeda Gold Moved to Sudan," *Washington Post*. 3 September 2002: A01.
[257] Rabasa, et al. 2006, 101.
[258] Ibid, p. 143.

Implications

The United States remains the focus of al-Qa'ida's grand targeting strategy; however, al-Qa'ida currently lacks the capability to conduct a spectacular attack against the US Homeland. Given the current opportunities, al-Qa'ida will likely continue to attack US interests overseas and US allies in Europe while operating in other regions to increase its overall capabilities and further its regional objectives. By increasing its capabilities abroad—improving its ability to interact with regional affiliates, communicate effectively, secure a base of recruits, fund terror operations and establish a safe haven—al-Qa'ida will also advance its primary objectives of striking the United States and establishing a global Caliphate. Al-Qa'ida's ultimate success heavily depends on the capabilities it manages to acquire. However, several other factors also have the potential to impact al-Qa'ida's pursuit of its goals.

The international environment and external events can either help or hinder al-Qa'ida. The situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as previously discussed, have the potential to strengthen al-Qa'ida should blowback actually occur. Other forces, such as a global economic downturn, may also prove advantageous for al-Qa'ida in the future. The US administration will find it hard to justify sending billions of dollars overseas for nation-building when public frustration over a worsening economic situation demands domestic spending.[259] In addition, in the face of a global financial crisis, US allies will have fewer resources to devote to overseas reconstruction and combating transnational terrorism, and consequently will be tempted to lessen contributions to coalition efforts.[260] The US is likely to find itself with an even larger burden to carry in a post OEF and OIF environment as Europe focuses on domestic troubles over multilateral concerns.

Another important factor that can affect al-Qa'ida targeting strategy in the future is the Obama administration's approach to combating terrorism. Al-Qa'ida's declared mission of jihad against Western crusaders will ensure that the United States remains an al-Qa'ida target regardless of who comes and goes in the White House unless the United States completely withdraws from Muslim lands. However, a new US administration can force al-Qa'ida to make adaptations to its targeting methods depending on changes in US policy. Equally important is how al-Qa'ida's leadership perceives the new administration and its potential responses to a successful attack on US soil. Al-Qa'ida's next crucial decision about its targeting strategy concerns how the Obama administration will react to a new attack on the US Homeland.[261] After all, many of bin Laden's followers were disappointed after the September 11 attacks brought American troops into the Middle East instead of expelling the West from Muslim lands.[262] A massive retaliation from the George W. Bush administration, while confirming in many minds al-Qa'ida's stigma of the West as crusaders, also increased the US presence in the Middle East and made long-term Western occupation a reality. Al-Qa'ida has yet to determine how the Obama administration will react to a major terrorist attack, but the DNI's February 2009 Threat Assessment to the Senate makes it clear that the White House plans to continue its aggressive

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[259] Greg Bruno, "Defense Spending During Economic Crisis," *Council on Foreign Relations* 2008, 2 March 2009 <http://www.cfr. org/publication/17793/>.
[260] Blair 2009.
[261] Sievert 2009.
[262] Ibid.

approach to combating terrorism.[263] If al-Qaʻida is able to launch a second major attack on US soil, bin Laden will risk a renewed commitment to countering terror and a longer US presence in the Middle East.

Al-Qaʻida's future targeting strategy will also depend on its ability to interact with regional affiliates. Regional networks vary from true al-Qaʻida affiliates, such as al-Qaʻida in the Islamic Maghreb and al-Qaʻida in Yemen, to local cells with a less-established connection to al-Qaʻida central.[264] Whatever their level of affiliation, they enable al-Qaʻida to act on a transnational level and gain a wider reach than it otherwise would have enjoyed. Establishing relationships with regional cells has helped al-Qaʻida gain a presence in at least 45 states, and groups with an al-Qaʻida connection were found to operate in more than 65 countries in 2008.[265] The cross-border reach al-Qaʻida has gained from cooperating with affiliates makes the terror organization likely to continue establishing connections with regional cells, which all aim for the common goal of fulfilling jihad against the West.[266]

However, despite al-Qaʻida's transnational spread and multi-network structure, its central command is still important in deciding targets, changing strategy, and fulfilling operations. A complex attack that requires a significant amount of coordination and cooperation between networks will need "a command and control center at either an al-Qaʻida central or al-Qaʻida affiliated group level."[267] An attack such as this would require a leader to draw upon cell members and be able to coordinate the operation on a wider level. Therefore, for future successes, al-Qaʻida needs to develop a secure safe haven or ensure the safety of its base of operations in FATA. In addition, while linking with a variety of jihadist cells has provided al-Qaʻida with numerous advantages and given it a "global reach," many of these affiliates and localized cells depend upon al-Qaʻida for arms and finances.[268] Therefore, any US action in the future that disrupts al-Qaʻida's central leadership or its ability to interact with its affiliate groups could undermine its ability to function. This in itself will not destroy al-Qaʻida, since bin Laden purposefully designed the terror network as fluid and non-hierarchical to help it survive retaliation.[269] However, it will temporarily deny al-Qaʻida the capabilities to attack the US Homeland.

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[267] Burton 2009.

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