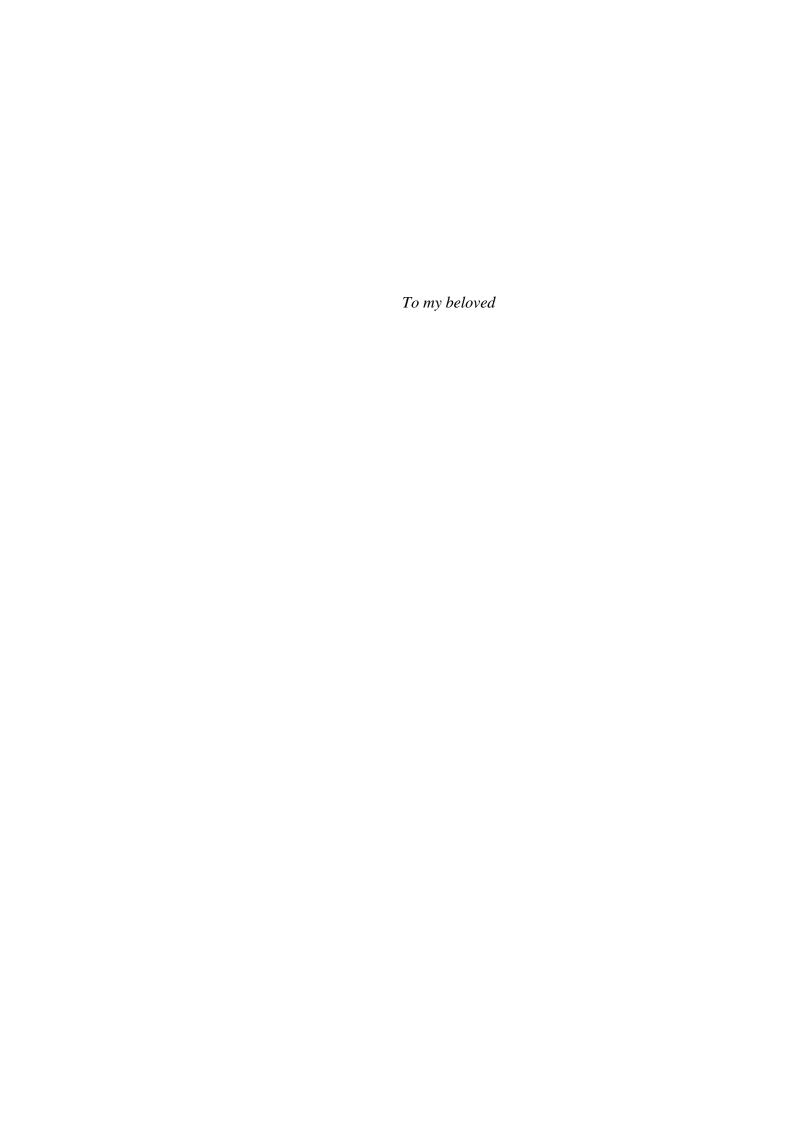AL-QAEDA AFTER 2001 WITH REGARD TO ITS STRATEGY

A Master's Thesis

by
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September 2010

To my beloved

AL-QAEDA AFTER 2001 WITH REGARD TO ITS STRATEGY

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Ihsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

SERCAN DOĞAN

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
IHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2010

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

AL-QAEDA AFTER 2001 WITH REGARD TO ITS STRATEGY
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September 2010

After almost a decade since the September 11 Attacks, in which its sanctuary in Afghanistan has been shattered and the vigilance against it has been strengthened, al-Qaeda still survives and poses a threat to both Middle Eastern and international security. This research attempts to explain the survival of al-Qaeda after 2001 with regard to its strategy. Therefore, the focus of the research is on the effects of al-Qaeda's strategy on its survival. Keeping in mind the conventional approach that handles al-Qaeda as a religious terrorist group, this research attempts to have a broader outlook on al-Qaeda by dealing with it as a non-state armed group. In this way, this research handles the situation as an asymmetrical conflict between al-Qaeda and the U.S. and its allies. Within the asymmetrical conflict, the strategy that al-Qaeda has pursued involves an indirect approach that compensated for the disadvantages it faced. The results of the research could pave the way for further research on the course of al-Qaeda in the context of the changing security environment in the Middle East.

Keywords: Al-Qaeda, Asymmetrical Conflict, Guerilla Warfare

ÖZET

EL KAİDE'NİN STRATEJİSİNE BİR BAKIŞ
Doğan, Sercan

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Mustafa Kibaroğlu

Eylül 2010

11 Eylül Saldırılarından hemen hemen on yıl kadar sonra, el-Kaide, Afganistan'daki kampları dağıtılmış ve üzerindeki baskı artmış olsa bile halen Ortadoğu'daki bölgesel güvenliğe ve genel anlamda uluslararası güvenliğe bir tehdit oluşturmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma el-Kaide'nin 2001 sonrası süreçte varlığını devam ettirebilmesini, takip ettiği stratejiye eğilerek açıklama girişiminde bulunmaktadır. Bu yüzden bu araştırmanın odağında el-Kaide'nin stratejisinin, 2001 sonrasındaki bekası üzerindeki etkileri bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, el-Kaide'yi bir dini terör örgütü olarak ele alan yaklaşımları da göz önünde bulundurarak, el-Kaide'yi daha geniş bir perspektiften, bir devlet-dışı silahlı grup olarak değerlendirmektedir. Bu sebeple el-Kaide, Ortadoğu'nun 20. Yüzyıl sonunda içinde bulunduğu genel tarihsel ve siyasi bağlamı çerçevesinde analiz edilmelidir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, mevcut durumu, el-Kaide ile ABD ve müttefikleri arasında bir asimetrik çatışma olarak ele almaktadır. Asimetrik çatışma bünyesinde el-Kaide'nin stratejisi, karşılaştığı dezavantajları telafi eden dolaylı bir tutum benimsemiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, Ortadoğu'da değişen güvenlik durumu bağlamında el-Kaide'nin alabileceği doğrultular üzerine daha ileri araştırmalar için bir temel teşkil edebilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: El Kaide, Asimetrik Çatışma, Gerilla Savaşı

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Several factors can be determinant in a non-state armed group's survival. Organizational structures, recruitment trends, international and regional system, even the characters of the leaders are important in that process. This study's aim is to explain how the strategy adopted by al-Qaeda affects its survival after 2001. Understanding the strategy and making a projection of al-Qaeda's future direction in both Middle Eastern and international politics are also other aims of this study.

This thesis is significant in several ways. First of all, in the context of the asymmetrical conflict between al-Qaeda and the United States of America, after almost a decade since the September 11 Attacks, in which its sanctuary in Afghanistan has been shattered and the vigilance against it has been strengthened, al-Qaeda still survives and poses a threat to both Middle Eastern and international security. While these facts are at hand, the conventional wisdom on al-Qaeda after 2001 handled al-Qaeda within the category of religious terrorism and focused on its religious aspect and ideology. Keeping in mind that the focus on the ideological and religious aspects might help developing insights on al-Qaeda, it achieves little on

explaining its survival. Moreover, the religious terrorism proves to be an inappropriate tool for analyzing al-Qaeda. It emphasizes the "Islamic" aspect of al-Qaeda while underrating its political character. Therefore, it prevents reflecting upon its rationality by deeming it an irrational group on an apocalyptic course and thereby limiting the analytical approaches to studying al-Qaeda and reinforcing current stereotypes and prejudices towards Middle East. This study has significance in that it would help making sense of the conditions that ensured al-Qaeda's survival up to now.

Secondly, considering the changing security environment in the Middle East that is marked by the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, the increasing risks that the Iran nuclear crisis presents, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, actions and reactions by al-Qaeda can be of increasing significance for security and stability in the Middle East. Therefore, studying the strategy of al-Qaeda would also serve the purpose of developing anticipatory thoughts on al-Qaeda.

The main question of the study is "How does the strategy adopted by al-Qaeda affect its survival after 2001". In the framework of that question, al-Qaeda will be contextualized in political and historical senses in order to base the argument that al-Qaeda has a political rationale that served as an element of its strategy.

Key questions of the thesis include:

1. What does the element of asymmetry imply for conflicts between state and non-state actors?

2. What are the elements of the strategies that non-state actors adopted in previous asymmetrical conflicts in the twentieth century?

3. How does the conventional literature on al-Qaeda focusing on religious terrorism remain insufficient?

4. How does al-Qaeda fit in the general political and historical context in the Middle East at the end of the 20th century?

5. What are the elements of al-Qaeda's strategy that guaranteed its survival?

The outline of the thesis is developed within the framework of the answers to those questions in turn.

The study consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, the conceptional framework for the study will be laid out. The non-state actors and their participation in conflicts will be handled. The asymmetry and the transnationality elements of contemporary conflicts will be discussed. The elements of strategies that non-state actors in the previous asymmetrical conflicts in the history adopted will be questioned. Consequently, it is determined that "in asymmetrical conflicts, strategies of non-state groups that involved an indirect approach aimed at compensating for the asymmetrical conditions had a strong potential for success".

In the second chapter, the shortcomings of the conventional understanding of al-Qaeda will be questioned. The study, which bases its assumptions on al-Qaeda that it possesses a political rationale, then, moves on to inspect the main elements in al-

Qaeda's evolution through the 1990s. The political context of al-Qaeda, which rests on the observation that non-state groups in the Middle East gained significant importance in the 1990s, will be deliberated with respect to structural aspects.

In the third and last chapter the strategy of al-Qaeda that helped it offset the asymmetry it faces, will be explained. Firstly, the political rationale, which is a key element in al-Qaeda's strategy, will be detailed based on the historical and political contexts that it fit in. Then the communication element of al-Qaeda's strategy will be examined with regard to al-Qaeda leaders' statements. Lastly, the way that al-Qaeda conducted the war will be inspected and deliberated as the guerilla warfare approach in a regional and global scale. The study will be ended with the conclusion.

The basic hypotheses of the study can be listed as:

- Al-Qaeda's strategy is the primary factor that contributed to its survival in the post-2001 era, through compensating for the asymmetrical condition it faces.

- The communication and the conduct of warfare are elements of Al-Qaeda's strategy in the post-September 11 period that compensated for the asymmetrical condition al-Qaeda faced.

- Al-Qaeda's political rationale covers a significant place in its strategy under the post-2001 era conditions.

- Current approaches towards al-Qaeda in religious terrorism studies underrate its political rationale.

- Contextualizing al-Qaeda in political and historical senses is a prerequisite for understanding al-Qaeda's political rationale

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Non-State Actors in International Relations

Nation-states have constituted the focus of the International Relations discipline for a long time. Their interactions among themselves and their environments and forms of relations among them, whether it is friendly or hostile, provided a mainstream research subject for the International Relations and its branches. It is a commonly established understanding that the prominence of nation-states in politics have begun with the Westphalia Peace Treaties in 1648 (Baylis and Smith, 2001: 43; Jackson and Sorensen, 1999: 17). For the reason that the nation-state was based on a phenomenon that emerged in Europe in the 17th century, theoretical approaches in the International Relations discipline took nation-state as sovereign political entity within a clearly defined borders for granted (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999: 14-17). The traditional approaches in the International Relations theory came to recognize the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis. As Jackson and Sorensen stated "Even theorists who seek to get beyond the state usually take it as a starting-point: the state

system is the main point of reference both for traditional and for new approaches" (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999: 21).

With the decolonization of colonial empires in the first half of the 20th century, it is assumed that the spread of the nation-state model, which was being adopted by the newly-independent political entities, represented "the globalization of international society" of nation-states (Jackson, 2001: 45). This was indeed an almost global expansion of a model that was European in origin. Therefore, the adoption of the European model gave birth to a series of problems that proved to be a major cause for conflict in international relations. While those problems transcend the scope of this research in a great extent, it is possible to note that the Cold War generated a controlled atmosphere in which, problems and conflicts were granted meaning within a general clash in global scale.

There have been various deliberations on how the end of the Cold War affected the international relations. The approach within this conceptional framework is that the end of the Cold War culminated in an era that marked by globalization, thus presented problems in the main point of reference for theoretical approaches in the International Relations discipline that is the nation-state. While the term globalization could be associated with a great deal of aspects, it is possible to reach a satisfactory definition that is relevant for the International Relations, which depicts globalization as referring to "processes whereby many social relations become relatively delinked from territorial geography, so that human lives are increasingly played out in the world as a single place" (Scholte, 2001: 14-15). The relevance of globalization for the International Relations discipline is related to the effects of

those processes on the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis. The nation-state has three basic elements that are the sovereignty, territoriality and monopoly of legitimate violence. The sovereignty meant the absence of any authority over the nation-state, and territoriality implied the existence of borders that demarcated the extent of individual nation-states' reach. The nation-state enjoyed the monopoly of legitimate violence and war was regarded as an instrument in resolving conflicts among nation states (Jackson and Sorensen, 1999: 15; Jackson, 2001: 42).

The globalization affected the sovereignty aspect of nation-states, which have come to enjoy the concentration of power in their hands since the Peace of Westphalia (Mathews, 1997: 50). The globalizing economy through international economic organizations and multinational corporations have played a limiting role on nation-states' control of its domestic economy. Nation-states enjoyed the power of being a reference of identity for their citizens; however, increasing transnational links and rising local tendencies made possible by the globalization, caused people to seek identity references in both transnational and sub-national spheres (Mathews, 1997: 51-52). Finally, nation-states have been gradually losing their monopoly on the legitimate use of force, given the onset of unconventional conflicts in the post-Cold War world.

The focus of this research's conceptional framework is on the emergence of non-state actors that are involved in the use of force. While the non-state actors include a range of entities from corporations to NGOs, the unit of analysis in this study is the transnational non-state armed groups, which are frequently observed parties of the post-Cold War conflicts. Non-state actors is a significant phenomenon at the end of

the 20th century, and their emergence owes to the inability of nation-states to "impose the prepotency of state institutions at the state level" (Bruderlein et al, 2007: 2). The restrictions imposed upon nation-states in the globalization process contributes to this inability and thereby creating a situation where, as Hammes states, "In contrast to the ever increasing international and transnational aspects of economic and social activity, security is becoming much more local" (Hammes, 2007: 3). With the erosion of state monopoly on violence, non-state actors begin to fill the void by taking security issues in their own hands. This situation can go as far as to the "state failure", which constitutes a void in terms of security that led America to state that "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones" in the National Security Strategy of 2002. Ulrich Schneckener states "armed non-state actors are 1) willing and able to use violence for pursuing their objectives; and 2) not integrated into formalized state institutions" and proposes those categories for armed non-state groups: rebels or guerrilla fighters, militias or paramilitaries, clan chiefs or big men, warlords, terrorists, criminals, mercenaries and private security companies, and marauders (Schneckener, 2006: 25-27). For Vinci, non-state armed groups are "organizations that have the capacity for systematic military action" (Vinci, 2008: 299).

While the non-state actors are not a very recent phenomenon, their increasing participation in conflicts since the 1990s makes them a significant consideration for security studies (Kibaroğlu, 2002). The Cold War had ruled out the possibility of a total war between the factions, due to the nuclear deterrence. After the Cold War, the prospects of interstate war had little to promise as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had shown. Rather, the world witnessed increasing trend towards conflicts that non-state

armed groups have taken place. Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, Bosnia, Lebanon, Chechnya, Somali and large parts of Africa were clear examples of this trend. The September 11 events brought the issue of transnational armed groups to the forefront of the United States security agenda. The War on Terror that was declared after the 9/11 Attacks represented a challenge initiated by state actors against non-state armed groups, most importantly al-Qaeda, which forms the specific subject of analysis of this research.

2.2. The Asymmetry and Transnationality

The participation of non-state armed groups in armed conflicts raises the issue of asymmetry. The asymmetry in armed conflict, at the first glance, implies "wide disparity between the parties, primarily in military and economic power, potential and resources" (Stepanova 2008: 14-15). In this sense, many armed conflicts in history had elements of asymmetry, such as the superiority that the Nazi Germany had enjoyed in the initial process of the Second World War. The most striking moment of the display of asymmetry during the Second World War was perhaps the in which Britain tried to resist the German aggression between July 1940 and June 1941, when it had to deal with Germany alone.

This study employs the concept of the asymmetrical conflict in assessing the armed conflict between al-Qaeda and the United States of America, in a very general sense. Although armed conflicts always imply an element of asymmetry, the asymmetrical conflict between America and al-Qaeda include more than asymmetry in military

sense. Therefore, this study adopts the perspective of the asymmetrical conflict laid by Stepanova, that is

> an asymmetrical conflict is treated as conflict in which extreme imbalance of military, economic and technological power is supplemented and aggravated by status inequality; specifically, the inequality between a non- or sub-state actor and a state. (Stepanova, 2008: 19)

As stated, the asymmetrical conflict involves asymmetry beyond quantifiable elements such as military and economic capabilities. The status asymmetry in an armed conflict is reflected in the nature of adversaries. It determines the frame in which the parties shape their approach to the armed conflict. In an armed conflict that bears the asymmetry in both power and status imply a significant difference in the ways that the adversaries conduct their efforts. The state actor, at the first place, is required to hold accountability towards its own audience. Whether it is a democratic or an authoritarian state, the state has to ensure support from its domestic constituency (the voters or the power elites) on the need to carry on the confrontation (Mack, 1975). Besides, there are international factors that can shape the state's conduct of conflict in the case that it includes a transboundary dimension. First is the principal of sovereignty, which stands as a basic principle in relations among states despite the fact that it is prone to be eroded in the globalization process. Second is the reactions towards the state party to the conflict that might arise due to its tactical and operational preferences. An example for this is the reactions against America's use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, i.e. drones, against militants in the Pakistani territory, which both goes against Pakistan's sovereignty and causes civilian casualties. On the other hand, the non-state party carries on the conflict with little regard for norms or regulations about the conduct of conflict, i.e. *jus in bello*. Rather, it would be unnatural to assume that the non-state party would

consider itself bound by those regulations. Besides, the non-state party is not constrained by a constituency factor as much as the state party, although it dwells on a support base through its constituency. The lack of constraints and the disparity in military power might as well lead the non-state party to adopt tactical moves that the state party seeks to avoid, such as attacks that could result in high civilian casualties.

The asymmetry in both material and status sense characterizes the armed conflicts of the post-Cold War era. It is even more significant, considering the first decade of the 21st century. The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are the basis that the above statement rests upon. Al-Qaeda's challenge to America represents a similar case to those conflicts in the 20th century, that non-state armed groups challenged states in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Nepal, and various parts of Africa. An exceptional element in the latest incarnations of asymmetrical conflict is the increasingly significant transnational dimension.

The transnational aspect of asymmetrical conflicts in the onset of the 21st century covers several issues. Firstly, the geographical extent that the conflict is being conducted involves territories of multiple nation-states. The conflicts that America is involved in the Middle East cannot be confined to Iraq and Afghanistan alone. Through the facilities in communications and transportation provided by the globalization process, the non-state parties make use of the geographical extent in a beneficial way. Besides, the U.S. is involved in the Middle East through the CENTCOM, its theatre of operations, which possess the capability to exert military power in a transboundary scale.

Secondly, the non-state parties to the conflicts have a transnational character. In the Report by the Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research (HPCR) in 2007, transnational non-state armed groups are defined as "groups that use force, flow across state boundaries, utilize global communication and transportation networks, seek global influence and to communicate with a wider audience, and increasingly undertake military operations against dominant states" (HPCR, 2007: 18). As far as the Middle East is concerned, since the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, foreign volunteers to the conflicts have become a distinctive pattern.

As the Middle East example suggests, the transnationality of the non-state groups involve an ideological aspect as well. Transnational non-state groups define their political agendas, with no regard to the administrative boundaries. In various parts of the world, where the state boundaries have an artificial character, the emergence of ideologies that pay no heed to the boundaries disseminate both the activities and propaganda of non-state armed groups in an extensive geographical setting that boosts the ranks of non-state parties with recruits from a wide constituency.

2.3. The Element of Strategy in Asymmetrical Conflicts

Consistent with the main hypothesis of this study that proposes al-Qaeda's strategy as the primary factor that ensured its survival after 2001, the strategies that non-state armed groups in asymmetrical conflicts constitute a final section in this conceptional framework.

Carl von Clausewitz, in his seminal work, defined strategy as "the employment of the battle to gain the end of the war" (Clausewitz, 1873). Within his approach that places warfare in the framework of politics, Clausewitz seems to focus on the resort to actual battles. English military historian, B. H. Liddell Hart, defines strategy as "the art of distribution and application of military capabilities, in order to reach political objectives" (Hart, 2002: 249). Hart emphasized the utilization of military capabilities, of which battles in Clausewitz's understanding constitute an important but not the only aspect in wars. Another definition that is offered by Arreguin-Toft "refers to an actor's plan for using armed forces to achieve military or political objectives." (Arreguin-Toft, 2001: 99).

As far as the asymmetrical conflict between a state and a non-state actor is concerned, the definition of strategy in this study builds on the mentioned approaches and refers to an actor's plan for utilizing its assets in order to reach its objectives. In this definition, the assets of parties include both the military and non-military instruments that they have in disposal. This is especially valid if non-military aspects such as propaganda, psychological operations, and communications are taken into consideration. It might be argued that actors may develop a distinct strategy for each of those elements; however, for the sake of conceptional refinement, the strategy concept that covers those elements in an integrative way is preferred in this study.

The considerable success that non-state armed groups as weak parties have achieved in asymmetrical conflicts in the period following the Second World War stands as a deviation from the pre-Second World War period, in which superior military power

in asymmetrical conditions ensured victory, such as the British victory against the Sudanese, and the Italian victory in Ethiopia (Mack, 1975: 176). In the course of the 20th century, the Chinese resistance against Japan and the Vietnam resistance against France and America stand as early examples. Several points of importance can be derived from those instances that represent a set of principles of a strategy for non-state groups that have a potential for success.

Firstly, as Mack argues, a decisive military outcome did not determine the ultimate result of the conflict (Mack, 1975: 178). The forces of the non-state groups did not destroy their adversaries in the military dimension. Rather, they denied their adversary a chance of decisive confrontation. Mao Tse Tung's study of the guerrilla warfare confirms this: "There is in guerrilla warfare no such thing as a decisive battle". Secondly, those conflicts took place in a long period of time. The Chinese conflict took place from 1937 to 1945, and the Vietnam conflict lasted twenty years from 1955 to 1975. The length of the confrontation confronts the state actor with increased costs of maintaining presence and operations over time, which are political as well as economic (Mack, 1975: 184). Thirdly, as the conflict progressed, the state parties increased the scale of their military presence, which magnified the maintenance costs for the state party, and support for the non-state party. For example Mack mentions the French ordeal in Vietnam: "The initial military repression directed against the rebels achieved for the militants what they had been unable to achieve for themselves-namely, the political mobilization of the masses against the French" (Mack, 1975: 180-181). This means that, increased military commitments by the state party could backfire, given the extent that the non-state

party is able to exploit its political repercussions through successful use of propaganda.

The lack of decisive military clashes, the length of conflict and the support that the non-state parties can garner through propaganda form the principles of strategy that involves the usage of non-state party's assets in order to strike at "the political will" of the state party that is characterized by "war weariness" (Mack, 1975: 181). In this context, the strategy of the non-state party shows an indirect character in the way that Liddell Hart has outlined in his book (Hart, 2002). Therefore, the indirect approach by the weak party offsets the advantages of the strong party that it gains from having superiority in military, economic, and technological aspects. As repeated against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as well, the strategy that adopts an indirect approach carries a strong potential for the success of non-state party.

2.4. Assessment: Al-Qaeda's Struggle

Al-Qaeda is a non-state armed group that has emerged in the Middle East under a specific political and historical context. It possesses a transnational character in its several aspects. Those aspects are al-Qaeda's organizational structure and recruitment potentials, the geographical extent and the ideological aspect. Al-Qaeda's organizational structure is not confined to a single place. Its core leadership is claimed to be in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and its branches reach out beyond national boundaries. As it was the case during the Afghan Jihad, al-Qaeda has the potential to appeal to a multitude of nationalities. Therefore, its

cadre and rank-and-file consists of individuals from different countries. Besides, al-Qaeda's concern and theatre of operations transcends the scope of a single country. Al-Qaeda seeks to act on behalf of the Muslims, not a single ethnicity. It carries on its struggle in a wide geographical extend. Al-Qaeda's aims, therefore, related to its geographical constituency and ideology, involves all lands that Muslims live, regardless of administrative boundaries. Therefore, al-Qaeda is a transnational armed group engaged in a struggle against Middle Eastern states and America.

As mentioned above, the conflict between al-Qaeda and America has an asymmetrical nature. The asymmetry involves more than the relative situation of the parties in terms of physical power. The disparity between the adversaries' status implies another aspect of the asymmetry. The fact that a non-state group is pitted in a conflict against a state, demonstrates the asymmetry in status. Due to the disparity in status, the conduct of the conflict between al-Qaeda and the U.S. differs from conflicts between states. Al-Qaeda's course in the context of its struggle suits the asymmetrical nature of the conflict. As will be elaborated in the following chapters, al-Qaeda formulated the outlines of its strategy, according to the asymmetrical nature of the struggle. It sought to adopt an indirect approach in its actions. By initiating spectacular attacks, al-Qaeda intended to target the United States' will to carry on the struggle. It may be discussed further what al-Qaeda actually gained from the September 11 Attacks; however, it is clear that the symbolic nature of the targets showed an intention to emphasize the psychological damage that the attacks would inflict. Al-Qaeda, through its indirect approach, avoided a direct clash with the U.S. forces, except a brief period after the fall of Taliban at the end of 2001. Those points illustrate that the asymmetrical nature laid down the conditions that

would shape any strategy to be pursued, and the al-Qaeda leadership were well aware of those conditions and sought to formulate a strategy that would compensate for the disadvantages, and boost the advantages of the asymmetry.

CHAPTER 3

AL-QAEDA IN HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

As stated in the introduction chapter, the conventional wisdom and mainstream perspectives towards al-Qaeda focus on its religious ideology and worldview. However, this chapter seeks to verify the following hypotheses put forward in the introduction:

- Current approaches towards al-Qaeda in religious terrorism studies underrates its political and strategic nature

- Contextualizing al-Qaeda in political and historical senses is a prerequisite for understanding al-Qaeda's political rationale

3.1. The Conventional Wisdom on Al-Qaeda

The period after the 9/11 attacks were marked by a sharp increase in terrorism studies. While Cronin states that "a principal interest in terrorism virtually guarantees exclusion from consideration for most academic positions", numerous

works on terrorism have emerged in the political and intellectual climate in the aftermath of the September 11 (Cronin, 2002/03: 57). It is possible to consider this as a normal process since the attacks on the World Trade Center, as a terrorist attack on the US homeland on an unbelievably large scale, came to be regarded as an unprecedented event that caused a great emotional impact besides its actual and concrete effects. In this context, questions such as "Why did this happen?", "Who are the perpetrators?", "Why do they hate us?" remained prevalent and sought for answers.

The address by George W. Bush to the Joint Session of the Congress on 20th September 2001 laid down the basics of the official approach to al-Qaeda. In the speech George W. Bush describes al-Qaeda as terrorist practicing "a fringe form of Islamic extremism". According to Bush, the cause of the attacks is "the terrorists' directive" that "commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children". Bush also stresses that the al-Qaeda terrorists hate the American freedoms and "kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life". Another patterns in Bush's address is the distinction between Muslims and al-Qaeda:

> Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself.

Bush also states the analogy that places al-Qaeda besides the totalitarian movements of the 20th century. In this context, al-Qaeda terrorists

> are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions -- by abandoning every value except the will to power -- they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism.

Various official documents repeat similar basic patterns on al-Qaeda. In the preface of the document, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001 by the US Department of State, Colin L. Powell, the former Secretary of State of the US stated that, "When the terrorists struck on September 11, their target was not just the United States, but also the values that the American people share with men and women all over the world who believe in the sanctity of human life and cherish freedom". The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism that was released on February 2003 begins with the expression that:

> The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Pennsylvania were acts of war against the United States of America and its allies, and against the very idea of civilized society.

Based on the official approach, the official response crystallized as engaging in a "Global War on Terrorism" (GWoT), which first and foremost implied a military course of action against al-Qaeda. While the US waged GWoT in the overseas, it also adopted new legal regulations, i.e. the US Patriot Act, which invoked the security-freedom debate.

The academia's response to the questions "Who are the perpetrators?", "Why do they hate us?" and "Why did this happen?" poses three general categories that the review on the literature rests upon.

3.1.1. Religious Terrorism

Religious terrorism discourse, which was already developed in the wake of terrorist incidents in the 1990s, presented itself as an analytical tool to handle the puzzling

phenomenon of al-Qaeda. Religious terrorism rests upon the categorization of David C. Rapoport. David C. Rapoport, in his article conceptualized four waves of modern terrorism (Rapoport, 2004). The names Rapoport gave to each of the wave describe the "energy driving each". According to his analysis the first three waves are the anarchist wave in the 19th century, the nationalist wave after the First World War, and the New Left wave in the 1960s and 1970s. At the end of the twentieth century, the fourth wave has begun to unfold, which he names as the "religious wave" (Rapoport 2004:: 61). However, Rapoport contends that the religious element in the fourth wave had a distinctive Islamic character because of the rise of Islamic militancy after 1979 (Rapoport, 2004: 62-63). Major events at the end of the twentieth century such as the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the end of the Cold War, have provided the groundwork for establishing the rhetoric of "religious terrorism". As early as 1984, in the article, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions" (Rapoport, 1984: 658-677), Rapoport begins to delve deeper into the study of religious terror groups. He defines his subject of study as "terror" designated in the works of terrorologists as "holy or sacred" (Rapoport, 1984: 659). In this article, Rapoport analyzes the Thugs in India, the Assassins in the Medieval Islamic civilization and the *Sicarii* in the Ancient Jerusalem as antecedents of modern terrorism phenomenon. He stated that "Before the nineteenth century, religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror" (Rapoport, 1984: 659). From the nineteenth century onwards modern terrorist groups had religious dimensions as well; however Rapoport contends that "sacred terror, on the other hand, never disappeared altogether, and there are signs that it is reviving in new and unusual forms". (Rapoport, 1984: 659). Considering the period that Rapoport conducted his

studies for this piece (1981), it is reasonable that the Islamic resurgence that was witnessed after the Iran Islamic Revolution influenced his approach. Rapoport, after reminding that one of the key characteristics of terrorist violence is that the victim is not the actual target, rather the impact of the violence on society is sought after, states that for holy terror, "the primary audience is the deity" (Rapoport 1984: 660). In accordance with that he mentions the Hindu Thugs, who did not want any public witness to their acts of violence. In this sense, the act of violence for the deity could be interpreted as a ritual of sacrifice; therefore it is devoid of any political meaning. Furthermore, the purpose of holy terror, then, comes to be identified as a transcendental one (Rapoport 1984: 659). Another pattern Rapoport reveals in the article is found in his evaluation of Assassins. Assassins who were active in the Middle East between 11st-13rd centuries were Muslims. Rapoport points that "message-oriented religions such as Islam are inclined to assume a unilinear view of history that may be fulfilled when all humans hear and accept the message." (Rapoport, 1984: 665). Therefore, Rapoport claims Islam is one such religion and is likely to produce millenarian movements, which seek a major transformation in the world that will alter everything. In this respect, holy terror employs violence in order to bring about or hasten this transformation. This apocalyptic vision is shared by both Assassins and Zealots. After the historical analysis, Rapoport states that the terrorism literature misconceives the difference between holy terror and modern terror. In his view, the distinction between holy terror and modern terror involves nature and kind rather than scale (Rapoport 1984: 672). The patterns that he derives from the history constitute the nature of holy terror, which, as Rapoport concludes (Rapoport, 1984: 674), is reviving "especially in, but not exclusive to, the Middle East."

Mark Juergensmeyer recounts the terrorist incidents of Irish Catholic nationalists, Sikh and Kashmiri separatists, Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers, al-Qaeda, and Jewish and Muslim extremists and puts forward two characteristics that they share: "First, they have been violent –even vicious- in a manner calculated to be terrifying. And, second, they have been motivated by religion" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 4). Juergensmeyer, then, contends that "religion has supplied not only the ideology, but also the motivation and the organizational structure for the perpetrators" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 5). The pattern of religion as a justification mechanism that was also put forward by Rapoport, is echoed in Juergensmeyer's work as well. Juergensmeyer mentions that "the proportion of religious groups in the late 1990s increased from sixteen of forty-nine terrorist groups to twenty-sx of the forty-six groups" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 6). His definition for religious terrorism is "public acts of violence at the turn of the century for which religion has provided the motivation, the justification, the organization, and the world view" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 7)

For Magnus Ranstorp "a surge of religious fanaticism has manifested itself in spectacular acts of terrorism across the globe" (Ranstorp, 1996: 43). He refers to important incidents in the 1990s such as Baruch Goldstein's attack against a mosque in Hebron, the murder of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Tokyo subway attack, the World Trade Center attack in Manhattan, and the Oklahoma City bombing incident. He claims that "all (those attacks) are united in the belief on the part of the perpetrators that their actions were divinely sanctioned, even mandated, by God" (Ranstorp, 1996: 43-44). According to Ranstorp, "religious extremists are

unified in their justification for employing sacred violence, whether in efforts to defend, extend or avenge their own communities, or for millenarian or messianic reasons" (Ranstorp, 1996: 44). The causes for the rise of religious terrorism, for Ranstorp (1996: 46) are "the explosion of ethnic-religious conflicts and the rapidly approaching millenium". Another pattern in Ranstorp's analysis of religious terrorism is their perspective of the struggle. He puts forward that "in many ways, religious terrorists embrace a total ideological vision of an all-out struggle to resist secularization from within, as well as from without. They pursue this vision in totally uncompromisable holy terms in literal battles between good and evil" (Ranstorp, 1996: 51). According to Ranstorp, "this perception, in turn, is often used to justify the level and intensity of the violence" (Ranstorp, 1996: 52). Another pattern that is found in Ranstorp's analysis is the indiscriminate and lethal character of the violence it employs: "While the religious extremists uniformly strike at the symbols of tyranny, they are relatively unconstrained in the lethality and the indiscriminate nature of violence used" (Ranstorp, 1996: 54). Ranstorp concludes that "religions have gradually served to define the causes and the enemies as well as the means, methods and the timing of the violence itself" (Ranstorp, 1996: 62). Therefore, for Ranstorp, religious terrorism involves not only justification and motivation processes but also organizational structure and modus operandi as well.

Bruce Hoffman's works on terrorism contributes to the rhetoric of "religious terrorism". Hoffman wrote a paper in 1993, titled '"Holy Terror": The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative', which was published by the RAND Corporation. Hoffman's arguments in this paper served as a foundation for many works after the 9/11 attacks. In this paper, Hoffman, too, links the

contemporary religious extremists to the Thugs, the Assassins and the *Sicarii* (Hoffman, 1993: 1). Hoffman distinguishes "the holy terror" from "the secular terror" on the grounds that they have "radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and Manichean worldview that the 'holy terrorist' embraces" (Hoffman, 1993: 2). According to Hoffman, "terrorism assumes a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are thereby unconstrained by the political, moral, or practical constrains that seem to affect other terrorists" (Hoffman, 1993:2). For Hoffman religious terrorists are engaged in a "total war". Therefore, religious terrorists regard violence "as an end in itself" (Hoffman, 1993:3). Hoffman's analysis puts forward that religious terrorists seek to bring about religious and ritualistic "purification" for their respective communities and total destruction of the existing order, which proves their millenarian and apocalyptic worldview (Hoffman, 1993: 4-10). For Hoffman, the apocalyptic and millenarian views of religious terrorists effect their preference for indiscriminate attacks that would cause mass casualties, thereby increasing the risk of terrorists attaining the weapons of mass destruction (Hoffman, 1993: 11).

The September 11 Attacks have undoubtedly influenced the way terrorism is being considered. Bruce Hoffman (2003: 439) puts that

> "The fundamental nature and character of terrorism changed with 9/11 and moreover has continued to evolve since then. It is becoming increasingly difficult to categorize or pigeonhole as an identifiable phenomena, amenable to categorization or clear distinction."

He also argues (Hoffman 2003: 439) it would be too optimistic to claim that the end of al-Qaeda is near, because the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have greatly increased its sense of commitment and purpose. Hoffman is also adamant on the "nimble, flexible, and adaptive" nature of al-Qaeda, which made it easier for it to

ensure its survival after the destruction of its camps in Afghanistan (Hoffman, 2004: 551). According to Hoffman al-Qaeda adapted to the conditions in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and undertook a transformation (Hoffman, 2004: 552). For its global terrorism campaign, the facilities in Afghanistan were no longer needed. Instead, the dissolution of its central command and hierarchy made it assume a transnational, non-hierarchic character. Hoffman concludes that transnational terrorism phenomenon that al-Qaeda represents has evolved into "a more diffuse and amorphous character" which makes "the traditional way of understanding terrorism and looking at terrorists based on definitions and attributes given to al-Qaeda's evolution and development" no longer relevant (Hoffman, 2004: 556).

Morgan considers al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden as "the prime examples of the new terrorism" but he adds that "Islamic radicalism is not the only form of apocalyptic, catastrophic terrorism" (Morgan, 2004: 29). Morgan's assessments reflect the main arguments of the new terrorism that "terrorists' methods and perspectives" reflect this apocalyptic character, which states "terror and violence as an end in itself" (Morgan 2004: 30). Furthermore, Morgan mentions the lack of constraint on behalf of the new terrorists, which makes mass-casualty attacks possible. The lack of constraint, as Morgan puts, is brought about by the religious imperatives for terrorism that make "terrorists look at their acts of death and destruction as sacramental or transcendental on a spiritual or eschatological view" (Morgan 2004: 32).

Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin labeled the post-Cold War world as a "new age of terrorism" that begun in 1993 with the attempt to bomb the World Trade Center Buildings (Simon and Benjamin, 2001: 5). The authors mention the incidents, the attempt blow 11 airliners in Pacific in 1995, the east Africa embassy bombings, the terrorist attack attempt in the US and Jordan in the time of the millennium and the latest September 11 events and points out to the trend of preference for mass-killings in the "new terrorism." According to the authors (Simon and Benjamin 2001: 5-6), al-Qaeda as a "religiously-motivated" terrorist group would not avoid indiscriminate violence, unlike other terrorist groups of the past, because it does not have to enter a negotiation process that could be impeded by mass-killings, in which to discuss a "set of political demands." Because of the fact that al-Qaeda does not have a "plausible political agenda" it does not have any constraints on violence (Simon and Benjamin 2001: 6). Besides, Simon and Benjamin state that it is highly probable for al-Qaeda, which is a group that has maximal objectives and an eschatological worldview, and seeks the humiliation and annihilation of its enemies," to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

Jonathan Stevenson too, regards al-Qaeda as a part of the "new terrorism phenomenon" (Stevenson, 2001: 35). He claims al-Qaeda has an "apocalyptic vision" and "religious hatred" drives them to initiate deadly mass attacks. Those characteristics form a qualitative difference between al-Qaeda and old terrorist groups.

Audrey Curth Cronin states that in the post-9/11 world "a new phase of terrorist activity, the jihad era" has been taking place (Cronin, 2002: 38). In this era, as

Cronin mentions, "religious terrorism" has gained prominence and became more dangerous than other types of terrorism. For Cronin five characteristics make religious terrorism a dire international security problem (Cronin, 2002: 41-42). The first characteristic is the "Manichean worldview" of religious terrorists, which stresses the struggle of good against evil. The second is that the religious terrorists are less constrained in their use of violence. The third is that religious terrorists are "unconstrained by secular values or laws," because it is the system that they seek to overthrow. The fourth is that the religious terrorists are trying to replace the currents system through apocalyptic violence, due to their "alienation from the existing social system". Lastly, the popular support that al-Qaeda enjoys is so "dispersed in the civil society" that, it is nearly impossible to contain that support in order to keep it from reaching al-Qaeda. Cronin puts that al-Qaeda maintains all those characteristics and is a new type of terrorist organization(Cronin, 2002: 45).

Carter suggests that the September 11 events have made "the post-Cold War security bubble finally burst" (Carter, 2001: 5). What he means by bubble is the policies and strategies of US decision-makers on security matters of lesser importance, which he names as peace-making and humanitarian issues. However, Carter stipulates that "catastrophic terrorism" that was witnessed in September 11 events made its way to the agenda of the Bush Administration as an "A-list threat" (Carter, 2001: 6). As it can be easily observed in other scholarly articles as well, Carter lists the "catastrophic terrorism" instances as the September 11 events, the Oklahoma City incident in 1995, and Tokyo subway Sarin gas attack (Carter, 2001: 6-7). All those instances show how far the threat posed by terrorism to the

civilization can go, given "the availability of war-scale destructive power" through the advances in technology (Carter 2001: 6).

According to Rohan Gunaratna, al-Qaeda "has evolved into a movement of two dozen groups", in consistence with its "founding charter" by Abdullah Azzam, which states al-Qaeda as the "pioneering vanguard of the Islamic movements" (Gunaratna, 2004: 92-93). He claims that the September 11 events served as an inspiration and instigation for "local and regional Islamist groups worldwide" (Gunaratna 2004: 93). By pointing out to the fact that, terrorist attacks after September 11, 2001 were carried out by al-Qaeda's associate groups, Gunaratna) elaborates that the associate groups of al-Qaeda have received inspiration and incitement and form a serious threat (Gunaratna, 2004:93. It is also stressed in Gunaratna's article that the threat posed by al-Qaeda has increased due to the U.S. invasion of Iraq (Gunaratna, 2004: 97). That is because, firstly invasion and the following developments in Iraq has created a deep resentment among Muslims, from which al-Qaeda propagandists can benefit and secondly, Iraq has provided al-Qaeda militants a place in which they can gain valuable experience. Gunaratna underlines the significance of terrorism threat by signifying that it moved "beyond the al-Qaeda into the galaxy of violent Islamist groups" even to "motivated and resourceful individuals" such as Abu Musab al-Zarkawi (Gunaratna, 2004: 98). Therefore, Gunaratna concludes that terrorist threat posed by al-Qaeda will not end even if Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri is killed; because the inspiration and incitement that al-Qaeda has transmitted to other Islamist groups and new generations constitutes the main source of terrorist threat (Gunaratna, 2004: 99).

3.1.2. Deficiencies of Religious Terrorism

The literature on al-Qaeda suggests that, al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization is possible to analyze within the religious terrorism category. Accordingly, the religious terrorism is a distinctively "new" type of terrorism. Unlike previous terrorist groups, which utilize violence for their political objectives, religious terrorist groups employ "sacred" violence, in order to "bring about religious or ritualistic 'purification' for their respective communities and total destruction of the existing order, which proves their millenarian and apocalyptic worldview" (Hoffman, 1993: 4-10). They are "less constrained in their use of violence" (Cronin, 2002. 45) than their secular counterparts, because "they do not have to enter a negotiation process that could be impeded by mass-killings" (Simon and Benjamin, 2001: 6). Therefore, they conduct their attacks in an indiscriminate manner, driven by "an apocalyptic vision and religious hatred" (Stevenson, 2001: 35).

While religious terrorism scholars admit that every religion has extremist groups that resort to violence, political and militant organizations as well as terrorist groups in the Middle East constitute the focus of religious terrorism studies. That is mainly because terrorist groups in the Middle East, especially al-Qaeda, uses religious language and symbols in an overt manner. Therefore, religious terrorism implies a connection between Islam and violence. In this sense, many terms and concepts are employed in an interchangeable manner, such as "Islamic terrorism, Islamist terrorism, Islamist fundamentalism, Islamism, Political Islam, Muslim fanatics". Those terms fortify the assumption that al-Qaeda and similar groups are engaged in

a religious or holy war against their enemies. However, the utilization of those concepts as analytical tools brings about problems. Firstly, the Islam religion has over one billion adherents, which belong to more than one cultural, political and social heritage. Therefore, it is almost impossible to reach a generalized assumption about Islam, such as violence and terrorism is inherent in Islam. Secondly, those terms are misleading because they regard the religious rhetoric of the groups as a primary and defining characteristic. In this sense, religious terrorism studies undervalues, even ignores the political nature of terrorist groups utilizing religious rhetoric. Thirdly, by deeming religious terrorist groups have apocalyptic, non-political, therefore nonnegotiable objectives, religious terrorism studies leaves room for no response other than military engagement, suppression and elimination. And lastly, despite attempts at distinguishing the "True Islam" from the "corrupt" Islam that al-Qaeda claims to represent, the usage of such terms might alienate the public opinion in the Middle East and reinforce current prejudices and stereotypes against the people and countries in the region.

David C. Rapoport's categorization of the periods in the modern history of terrorism is built on the general ideological pattern that he identified in each "wave". For example, his categorization includes the Red Army Fraction and the Red Brigades, which have leftist orientation in terms of the political spectrum, in the third wave of "New Left terrorism". Similarly, certain groups within the national liberation movements of the early twentieth century belong to the "Nationalist Second Wave" of terrorism. Within this categorization, al-Qaeda takes place in the "Religious" fourth wave of terrorism along with groups and movements such as the Sikh separatists in India, the Jewish terrorists in Israel that assassinated Israeli Prime

Minister Rabin in 1995, Aum Shinrikyo in Japan that released nerve gas in the Tokyo subway, and the Christian Identity movement alleged to be associated with the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 (Rapoport, 2006:62). While such a categorization of the modern history of terrorism could prove useful in terms of historiography, it leaves many questions about international security unanswered. It is unclear as to how an ideological categorization of terrorist groups shed a light on potential tactics, operations and strategy of certain terrorist groups within a "wave"? Furthermore, the religious terrorism category goes beyond the purpose of the mere sake of historiography. Handling al-Qaeda within the analysis offered by the religious terrorism obscures its political nature. Such obscuration is achieved in two dimensions. Firstly, al-Qaeda's political rationale is neglected through the allegation of irrationality. And secondly, the radical religious dimension of al-Qaeda is overemphasized while depriving it of its political and sociocultural context.

By deeming that the aims of the religious terrorists are not utilitarian (Hoffman, 1993: 3; Jenkins, 2002: 5-7), unlike the aims of the secular terrorists, the analysis claims that the violence that was invoked do not necessarily refer to any political objective that seeks to amend a certain grievance. Therefore, the religious terrorists allegedly do not have any political objectives that they seek to achieve by coercing the political authority with violent attacks. That is because they allegedly seek "the attainment of the religious and racial 'purification' of their respective countries" (Hoffman, 1993: 6). As for al-Qaeda, "[H]is objective is not merely to murder as many of us as possible and to conquer our land. Like the Nazis or Communists before him, he is dedicated to the destruction of everything good for which America stands" (Podhoretz, 2004: 18). Furthermore, Richard Pipes, an emeritus professor on

history at Harvard University, claims that "The attacks on New York and the Pentagon were unprovoked and had no specific objective. Rather, they were part of a general assault of Islamic extremists bent on destroying non-Islamic civilizations. As such, America's war with Al Qaeda is non-negotiable" (Pipes, 2004). Reinforced by the general understanding that laid out by the religious terrorism analyses and officially sanctioned by Bush's statement that "These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life", al-Qaeda is regarded as a band of "madmen bent on wreaking havoc" (Mohamedou, 2007: 66). Mohamedou sums up the general fallacies of this approach as follows:

> (1) We do not know what Al Qaeda is, (2) Al Qaeda is made up of impoverished ragtags, alienated drifters merely channeling their free floating anger animated by homicidal animosity, and (3) Al Qaeda wants to destroy the Western world and its way of life. The logical conclusion of these three arguments is that (4) Al Qaeda's demands are unacceptable, since they are apocalyptic, nihilistic and irrational. (Mohamedou, 2007: 65)

Related to the first fallacy above, there indeed has been a lack of information about who the terrorists were or what al-Qaeda is. However, the other fallacies, which are reinforced by academic studies as well as popular journalistic best-sellers and official statements, further obscured al-Qaeda. In this way, al-Qaeda was successfully detached from the regional political and sociocultural context it arose from. Al-Qaeda's usage of religious rhetoric was not new in any sense, since the usage of religious rhetoric has been common in the Middle Eastern groups particularly after 1979. Popular figures in the Middle East, such as Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb in Egypt, and Mawdudi in Pakistan have been both conceptualizing and practicing what was later named as the Political Islam since the first half of the Twentieth century (Kepel, 2001: 30-38). The world witnessed more association of religious rhetoric with politics in the 1980s with the revolution in

Iran, the Mujahedeen resistance in Afghanistan, the Hizballah in Lebanon and HAMAS in Palestine. Terrorism experts already had started to think about "terrorism motivated by a religious imperative" (Hoffman, 1993; Ranstorp, 1996; Rapoport, 1984). Then, the sheer quality of the 9/11 Attacks was associated with al-Qaeda's religious rhetoric, since only a religious imperative could lead to such an act. John O. Voll stated that "the idea that the actions could have been undertaken by religious militants was clearly credible to almost everyone" (Voll, 2001: 1). Another commentator claimed that "the horrendous events of September 11 precipitated a head-on clash of two competing worldviews and societal orders: Muslim Theism versus secularized Western Humanism" (Taylor, 2002: 293). The magnitude and the suicidal nature of the attacks led to observers and analysts to emphasis the non-secular characteristics of the perpetrators. "The 2001 disaster took place at a time when experts had been defining a new form of terrorism focused on millennial visions of apocalypse and mass casualties" (Morgan, 2004: 29). "From early in the last decade, an increase in the proportion of terrorists groups with religious motivation seemed to correlate with increased lethality of attacks." (Simon and Benjamin, 2001: 6). "Today's terrorists increasingly look at their acts of death and destruction as sacramental or transcendental on a spiritual or eschatological level. The pragmatic reservations of secular terrorists do not hold back religious terrorists" (Morgan, 2004: 32).

While assessing terrorist attacks such as the 9/11, focusing on the elements of motivation and justification has produced thought-provoking insights into the mindsets of individual terrorists, such as Mark Juergensmeyer's monograph titled "Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence", which was

written in 2000 and updated in 2003. Juergensmeyer dismisses any strategic or political goal beneath the acts of religious terrorism; but rather he contends that such attacks posses dramatical, theatrical and symbolic characteristics (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 124-126). Symbolic attacks, therefore, "mimic religious rites" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 128) and can be considered as intended towards violence per se. This approach moves terrorism studies closer to individual and social psychology by emphasizing the individual conditions of motivation and justification. Within this framework, al-Qaeda loses its relevance for security studies, because due to its religious character, the implications of its attacks for international security and the immediate objectives sought by the perpetrator are no longer the concern. What is left is a cult-styled group of individuals, who are motivated enough by religion to undertake acts of even suicide terrorism and think of themselves engaged in a "cosmic war" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 148-167). At this point, the political and social context of the organization, the range and causes of its appeal, and the degree that their stated grievances relate to reality do not matter. So do the discussions related to policies for countering it.

3.2. The Historical Context

3.2.1. Al-Qaeda's Formation

Al-Qaeda[1] originated in the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet invasion, in the 1980s. Its leader Osama bin Laden is a member of wealthy bin Laden family, which was

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[1] The word "al-qaeda" means literally "the base."

close to the Saudi royalty. The mujahedeen's resistance against the Soviet Union was covertly backed by the U.S. through the cooperation of American, Saudi and Pakistani intelligence organizations. Osama bin Laden was closely and personally involved with the Afghan Jihad through the Services Office (*Maktab al Khidamat*) that established an international recruitment network for the Afghan Jihad in Peshawar. He also participated in actual battles that took place against Soviet troops, which earned him honor among the mujahedeen. During this period, Osama bin Laden met with Abdullah Azzam, a radical Islamist intellectual from Palestinian descent, who was influential on him on issues of ideology, Islam and jihad. When the Soviet invasion had ended, Osama bin Laden had significant personal and organizational contacts with mujahedeen from all around the world, who came to fight against the Soviet Union. Bin Laden utilized these connections in order to form a core of Arabs that fought in Afghanistan, as al-Qaeda (Gunaratna 2003: 26-27).

With the death of Abdullah Azzam who advocated building and fortifying an Islamic state in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden and his core followers' approach favoring conducting jihad throughout the Islamic world against apostate Arab regimes, remained as the sole option. Osama, through his devotion, leadership capabilities and immense wealth, acquired many followers among the Arab mujahedeen from all around the Arab world. In Gunaratna's words, these mujahedeen were the core of an "organization that would channel the energies of the mujahidin into fighting on behalf of oppressed Muslims worldwide, an Islamic 'rapid reaction force' (Gunaratna, 2003: 29).

Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, was a prominent member of the Egyptian faction among the Arab mujahedeen. Zawahiri, as an ideologue and advocate for international jihad, became the second chief of al-Qaeda. He is claimed to have a great influence on Laden to the extent that his "former lawyer Muntasir al-Zayyad have argued that Osama was transformed from a guerrilla into a terrorist by al-Zawahiri" (Gunaratna 2003: 34). And his rise in the ranks of al-Qaeda shows the prominence of transnational jihad approach.

The end of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan culminated in two course of action for mujahedeen groups that carried on the fight. First, various local resistance groups initiated a fight both among themselves and against the Soviet-installed Najibullah government for domestic political power. Second, Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, through the fighters from all around the Middle East that it organized during the Jihad, started to prepare for a campaign against what he saw as a threat to the Islamic World. The Soviet withdrawal gave a sense of confidence to bin Laden and his group, because they believed that they have defeated one of the two superpowers in the world (Gunaratna 2003: 29). Consequently, the Afghan Jihad presented Osama bin Laden and his core cadre a loosely-connected transnational contacts that will enable their transnational struggle, a self-confidence that boosted their determination for struggle and a war-torn country –Afghanistan- that they would utilize as a territorial infrastructure later on.

3.2.2. Al-Qaeda's Preparatory Period in the 1990s

Osama bin Laden and the Saudi Royal family had been enjoying close contacts after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The event that triggered the string of events which caused Osama distance himself from Saudi Arabia was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Following Iraq's invasion, Osama offered the Saudi King Fahd his assistance against the Iraqi threat, consisting of 5.000 veteran mujahedeen. Much to his dismay his offer was rejected and US troops were deployed in Saudi Arabia against Iraq (Gunaratna 2003: 37). The US presence in Saudi Arabia meant non-Muslim presence in the land of the two holy mosques for Osama bin Laden and the radical Islamist ideology in general. Osama began to express displeasure with the Saudi royal family's policies and corruption. He was expelled from the country in 1991 and his citizenship was canceled in 1994.

Bin Laden settled in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, after having to relocate from Sudan, where he had been under patronage of Dr. Hasan al Turabi. In Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and Taliban formed a relationship mutually beneficial to both. Al-Qaeda has established camps in Afghanistan and attached its veteran fighters to Taliban forces in their struggle against the Northern Alliance (Gunaratna 2003: 54). Al-Qaeda formed links with other Islamist groups and parties throughout its voyage from Sudan to Afghanistan. According to Gunaratna al-Qaeda, "after establishing links with about twenty Islamist groups engaged in guerrilla warfare and terrorism, he supported them with funds, training and weapons" (Gunaratna, 2003: 41). Besides, veteran mujahedeen from the Afghan Jihad who had ideological affiliation to al-Qaeda's cause served as liaison wherever they were, in the Arab

world. Osama's charismatic leadership capabilities, devotion, and honor gained through jihad against the Soviet invasion, helped him forge such contacts which would prove useful in initiating a large scale terrorism campaign against their enemies. Also, when Osama was in Kandahar in 2000, he married a Yemeni woman; therefore built contacts with Yemeni tribes (Gunaratna 2003: 65). The formal declaration of war was in 1998, when Osama succeeded in creating alliances with several radical groups. The World Islamic Front for the Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders were declared on 23 February 1998. Its signatories were Abu Yasir Rifa'i Ahmed Taha of Egyptian Islamic Group, Sheykh Mir Hamza of Jamiat-ul Ulema-e-Pakistan, and Fazlur Rahman of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh along with Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. The statement announcing the formation of the alliance called for killing the Americans and their allies, and put jihad as an "individual duty" for all Muslims.

Al-Qaeda's intentions were clearly put forward in this statement. On August 7, 1998 the two U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed on the eighth anniversary of the U.S. deployment to the Arabian Peninsula. The next target was a US destroyer, USS Cole, in Aden, which was hit by a boat filled with explosives on October 12, 2000. The attacks on September 11 were against the most visible symbols of the American hegemony. The World Trade Center and the Pentagon stood for the economic and military aspects of American dominance. Al-Qaeda gained enormous notoriety through the symbolic impact of the attacks, not the actual impact. Building on these symbolic gains, al-Qaeda was able to strengthen its alliances with groups from all around the Islamic world and become a source of inspiration for like-minded groups. The symbolic weight of the 9/11 Attacks, also,

ensured an interest towards al-Qaeda in both official and academic circles, albeit its struggle against the U.S.A. started years ago.

3.2.3. Al-Qaeda After 2001

The 9/11 Attacks caused an escalation in America's engagement with al-Qaeda. Before 2001, al-Qaeda had taken place among the US security concerns however, with the onset of Global War on Terrorism, the American efforts against al-Qaeda intensified. The American invasion of Afghanistan deprived al-Qaeda of its territorial infrastructure. Under the Taliban rule, Al-Qaeda had enjoyed the opportunity to create and maintain its headquarters and camps within Afghanistan. It also had a guerrilla unit named 055 Brigade, formed of fighters from all around the Middle East. The 055 Brigade was attached to the Taliban forces and helped it in its struggle against other factions in Afghanistan (Gunaratna, 2003: 78-80). Besides, America also engaged al-Qaeda in the financial field (Aydınlı, 2006: 301-302). On September 24, 2001, the Office of Foreign Assets Control froze almost $100 million associated with organizations and individuals linked to al-Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2003: 88). Al-Qaeda has also lost some of its experienced cadres. Most important of those are Mohamed Atef (responsible for military operations of al-Qaeda, killed in a missile attack in November 2001), Abu Zubaydah (March 2002), Abu Faraj al-Libbi (Alleged no. 3 of al-Qaeda,captured in Pakistan in May 2005), Saif al-Islam al Masry (Al-Qaeda Shura member, apprehended in Pankisi Gorge in Georgia in October 2002), Abd al Rahim al Nashiri (Allegedly responsible for the attack on USS Cole in 2000), Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (the mastermind of the September

11 Attacks), and Ramzi bin al-Shibh (organizer of the Hamburg Cell that carried out the September 11 Attacks).

Those developments were made possible by joint efforts of many states in countering terrorism. It meant that al-Qaeda, then, had to effort in a very limited environment. Faced against the American military engagement, al-Qaeda had to withdraw in order to avoid annihilation. Its retreated in the battles of Tora Bora in December 2001 and Shahi Kot in March 2002 and hid in the porous mountain border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda leaders chose to adopt a strategic retreat, because they would not afford being worn down. The asymmetric nature of the stand-off between al-Qaeda and the America forces at the end of 2001 dictated that it is vital for al-Qaeda to avoid being beaten, in order to survive and carry on its war. It is well-known that the weaker party in an unconventional conflict has to evade defeat in order to win in the long term. Even though al-Qaeda suffered losses and setbacks, the choice of strategic retreat would enable it to ensure that the war on terror would continue for a long time, therefore it would force the United States in a war of attrition. Al-Qaeda basically withdrew to fight another day, a choice that illustrates al-Qaeda leaders' strategic behavior.

The damage that al-Qaeda's core has suffered caused a shift in the organizational aspects of the group. Even though al-Qaeda has been acting as an umbrella above many diffuse groups in the Middle East, the developments after 2001 stressed that degree of diffusion between al-Qaeda's center and its affiliates and associated groups in various parts of the world. The al-Qaeda center started to have less direct control on the peripheral groups associated with it. Rather, through publishing video

and audio messages, the Al-Qaeda leadership provided general outlines and left tactical details to the local groups' initiative. This implied that al-Qaeda had "self-contained, mission-oriented strategic units in South Asia, Western Europe, East Africa, North Africa, Jordan and Iraq, the Gulf and, possibly, North America" (Mohamedou, 2007: 54). In this respect, al-Qaeda preferred deterritorialization as detachment from a definite territorial location and disappearance, rather than institutional presence (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 280). Mishal and Rosenthal depicts the new organizational aspect of al-Qaeda as "a dune organization" (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 275-291). The authors argue that "terrorist organizations acting in the manner described with respect to Al Qaeda, act in a dynamics of a fast-moving entity that associates and dissociates itself with local elements while creating a global effect" (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 282).

After 2001, al-Qaeda initiated terrorist attacks in over ten different countries. The most significant of those are the Bali bombing in 2002, the attacks in Istanbul and Riyadh in 2003, the Madrid train attack and the attack against Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 2004, and the London subway attacks of 2005. Besides those incidents, al-Qaeda was heavily involved in the situation in Iraq. The local al-Qaeda associate, from 2006 on, had a major part in the instability in Iraq, due to its spectacular attacks. Its origin was the Jamaat Tawhid wal Jihad founded by Abu Musab al Zarqawi from Jordan. Al Zarqawi attached its organization to al-Qaeda and renamed it as Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (al-Qaida of the Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers). It targeted the US forces, the Iraqi central authority and the Shiites, and contributed to the instability and sectarian strife in Iraq between 2006 and 2008.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is another affiliate of al-Qaeda, which showed increasing activity in the post-2001 era. The Saudi Arabian and Yemenite branches of al-Qaeda merged under the name of AQAP. Before the merger, the local al-Qaeda affiliates have initiated spectacular attacks in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Their merger led to an increasing risk of instability in Yemen. In 2009, it attacked the American consulate and fought against the Yemen military. Yemen also stands as a liaison point for Africa and the Middle East. Therefore, it poses a strategic importance for al-Qaeda for its geographical situation that provides connection between al-Qaeda's Afghanistan-Pakistan front, the Middle East and Gulf affiliates, and African allies.

Al-Qaeda activity has risen in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well. The exodus of Taliban and al-Qaeda militants from authority in Afghanistan to the border region of Pakistan has contributed to the survival of both groups in 2002. It also provided local radical groups in Pakistan their experiences and support. Besides, "These groups provided al-Qaeda and other groups with the logistics support to regroup in Pakistan, developing in the process a new coalition of terrorists" (John, 2005). It is possible to observe the creation of a local Taliban group in Pakistan, Tehrik-i Taliban Pakistan in this period. From 2006 to 2010 both terrorist attacks and insurgent activity in Pakistan have risen to high numbers. According to Anne Stenersen from the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, al-Qaeda, after it had regrouped in Pakistan, was involved in the insurgency in Afghanistan and terrorist attacks in Pakistani cities (Stenersen, 2009: 4). Pakistan's redundant attitude during the al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders' flight to the border region during the

American invasion of Afghanistan provided shelter for militants. Then, as America focused on the invasion of Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan grew dire, as the remaining international forces and the ineffective Afghan government proved weak against defeating the Taliban insurgency. Al-Qaeda and Taliban both enjoyed the lack of authority in Pakistan's tribal border region and Afghanistan. When the US attention turned to the Taliban insurgency in 2009, the Taliban had expanded its power throughout Afghanistan and al-Qaeda benefited from its links with the Taliban and various groups in both countries (Riedel, 2007).

3.3. The Political Context

While religious terrorism analysts strip al-Qaeda from its political nature and limit the scope of analysis to the violence per se, the elements of motivation and justification, and therefore the psychological and individual aspects, they obscure the relevance of al-Qaeda's strategic and political analysis. In order to shed a light on al-Qaeda's relevance for a strategic analysis, it must be put in a political and social context. The aim of this section is not to delve deeper into sociology of Middle East and religion. Rather, the political atmosphere beneath al-Qaeda's existence must be highlighted. Through this approach, it is possible to make sense of al-Qaeda's war against the U.S.A.

While seeking to place al-Qaeda in a political context, the study of actions and reactions by political actors both regional and extra-regional in the context of the Cold War is related to the concept of Middle East system as a subsystem (Gause III,

1999), in which the political actors include nonstate/substate groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Palestinian groups; as well as states. Considering the state actors, it should be emphasized that extra-regional powers such as Britain (until 1971, from then as a U.S. ally) France (at the beginning of the Middle East system), Soviet Union (until 1991) and the United States are concerned as well.

Throughout the last three decades of the 20th century, non-state groups in the Middle East gained significance due to three factors. With an in-depth approach, it is possible to notice that the Arab-Israel conflict had a great effect in the rise of non-state groups in the Middle East. The failure of conventional warfare against Israel and the loss of strategic depth because of Egypt's reconciliation with Israel led the Arab states adopt an unconventional approach in the Arab-Israel conflict. This approach involved sponsoring creating, sponsoring and manipulating non-state groups in Palestine and war-torn Lebanon. The Arab states' failure in the Palestinian question caused non-state groups act themselves on behalf of the perceived insecurities of the Arab people. Thus, the Arab-Israel conflict contributed to the legitimacy crises of the Arab states, while also causing them to adopt a different policy within the conflict. Another factor that marks the onset of non-state groups in the Middle East was the Saudi-Iranian conflict after 1979. The geostrategic bid for dominance of both states also involved the struggle for hegemony in the ideological context. Iran had a revolutionary rhetoric that called for revolution against un-Islamic rulers in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia relied on its oil wealth to spread its Wahhabi ideology. Both states The Saudi Arabia-Iran competition for prominence marked the 1980s and had significant influence on radical movements, since both

states fought over the primacy of their Islamic doctrine and supported Islamist groups in this context. Lastly, the Arab states lacked a depth and cohesion within their societies as well, which deteriorated the legitimacy crises. As the population rised in high proportions and intensified in urban areas, states failed to respond the needs of the people in an adequate way. Increasingly Middle Eastern states strengthened their security apparatus, rather than seeking to win popular support through concrete measures and reforms.

The October War of 1973 left a profound effect on the Middle East system. One of its consequences was the Egypt's changing position within the regional system. Anwar Sadat, who came to power after Jamal Abdul Nasser's death in 1970, initiated significant policy changes in many areas. After reinforcing his position against left-wing Nasserists and Marxists, he launched a concerted attack against the Israeli forces by crossing the Suez Canal that Israel had invaded in 1967, with Syria and Iraq. The Arab states gained initial success in the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights; however then they were faced with a heavy counter-assault by Israel. The Israeli forces were only 101 kilometers away from Cairo, when the U.S. put pressure on Israel in order to reach an armistice with Egypt. The U.S. pressure on Israel was partially influenced by the decision by the Arab members of OPEC to put forward an oil embargo against the United States and the Netherlands until Israel retreated from all occupied lands (Kepel 2000: 79). The October War had shown that oil was a formidable weapon in the Arab states. In the Middle East Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and the Gulf emirates had a significant boon in their wealth due to the rising oil prices in this process. Saudi Arabia was the country that benefited most from this situation. During the 1970s, it had utilized the oil wealth to spread its Wahhabi

doctrine of Islam through funding organizations such as the Muslim World League (Rabita al-Alam al-Islami), which was founded in 1962, in order to initiate charities, social aids, mosque constructions and distribution of books and written materials of the Wahhabi doctrine throughout the Muslim World. Thus, the Islamic creed in its most strict Wahhabi fashion started to take the place of Arab nationalism, which has undergone failure and dissolution (Kepel 2000: 79-87). Growing Saudi influence was translated into Saudi Arabia's bid for prominence in the region, especially after Egypt's isolation in 1979.

The year 1979 represents a turning point in the regional system and it is the year in which developments with profound impacts on the Middle East has taken place. The Iranian monarchy was overthrown by a revolution and an Islamic republic took its place. The Revolutionary Iran detached from the alliance with the U.S. and adopted a more proactive diplomatic stance. It sought to export its revolution and clashed with Saudi Arabia for prominence. Both states relied on their influence on the Islamist groups and movements. Iran supported militant groups throughout the Muslim world seeking to incite revolutions against un-Islamic governments. Iran's revolutionary message had quite a prestige among the Muslim peoples throughout the countries; however its appeal was restricted by two important phenomena. One is that the majority of Iran belonged to the Shia sect of Islam. The other is the Iran-Iraq War, which was launched by Iraq in 1980 and last eight years. In this confrontation Iraq was largely supported by Sunni Arab states, which grew wary of Iran's revolutionary rhetoric and discourse addresing Muslims. This support took forms of economic, political and military aid. Due to war against Iraq, the Iran revolution was identified with Shi'ism and Iran nationalism (Roy, 2005: 220-238).

Therefore, export of revolution was limited to radical militant Shi'a groups such as the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In 1980s, the geopolitical outlook of the Middle East represented a fertile ground for the growth of Islamist movements; especially radical militants. No longer having Egypt as a partner in the Palestinian conflict, the Arab states refrained from the idea of conventional military confrontation with Israel. That is because Egypt provided a second front in the Sinai Peninsula that forced Israel to divide its military forces and attention to another front. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, radical Arab states such as Syria and Iraq sought to employ non-conventional methods against Israel. After the revolution, Iran followed suit. The civil war-torn Lebanon since 1975 has been a breeding ground and haven for terrorist and militant groups, which received Iranian, Syrian and Iraqi support. Strategies of Syria, Iraq and Iran created a suitable environment for development of militant groups in Middle East. Besides that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 sparked a resistance in the country, which would be expressed as the Afghan Jihad in Islamic terms. The ongoing Jihad in Afghanistan received recruits i.e. mujahedeen, from all over the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia and Pakistani intelligence agencies cooperated with the CIA in order to facilitate the flow of recruits, arms, and supplies to the Afghan Jihad. Intended as a proxy war against the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War, the Afghan Jihad proved to be training grounds for radical militants – mujahedeen- from the Muslim countries. Besides,

The Saudi monarchy's legitimacy, which rested on the Wahhabi religious doctrine, the regime's custodianship of Islam's holiest shrines and the generosity provided by

the oil wealth suffered a tremendous blow when non-Muslim soldiers were dispatched upon the King's request in order to protect the country against Iraq. The Wahhabi ideological hegemony over the Arab World as well as the Saudi regime's legitimacy was being shattered in this context, since Saddam Hussein has been employing religious rhetoric for legitimizing its actions (Kepel 2000: 245). Non-Muslim, mostly Christian soldiers in the Arabian Peninsula during the Gulf War of 1990-1991 indicated the concrete presence of the West in the Middle East. The implications of this presence were significant. It radicalized the regional polarization in the interstate relations in the sense that the West's agenda for the Middle East, which consists of the security of Israel and the secure flow of oil to the world market, became more intertwined with particular agendas of regional states, therefore causing more visible Western interference that ignited much resentment around the region. Militant and non-militant Islamists alike, labeled the West's penetration in the Middle East as the return of the 'Crusaders.' The American military presence in Iraq held an important place in Osama bin Laden's statements as well. "The Arabian Peninsula has never -- since Allah made it flat, created its desert, and encircled it with seas -- been stormed by any forces like the crusader armies spreading in it like locusts, eating its riches and wiping out its plantations."

A major flaw of the modern state structures in the Middle East, especially those of Arab countries is that the control of the state mechanism is confined to members of a small, privileged group within the society. Saddam Hussein's regime relied on kinship allegiances centered on the town of Tikrit where Hussein was from. Similarly, the minority Alawite community in Syria is still in power. Syria and Iraq are the most acute examples in this regard, however apart from these two regimes;

the monarchical dynasties rule many countries in the Middle East, which show the same general tendency. These characteristics of regimes limit the political sphere to a distinguished group within the society; therefore curb the potentials for an encompassing identity beyond traditional identity references and exacerbate the crisis of legitimacy in the Middle Eastern countries. On the contrary, these states still exist today after five troubled decades and Olivier Roy emphasizes the incorporation of these states into the world order under the guarantee of the United Nations and International Law (Roy, 2005: 34-35). He also stipulates that even though the regimes might change in one way or another, the mechanism of the state remains because of "the presence of 'the state phenomenon' being more resistant to developments than it was thought before" (Roy, 2005: 35).

Valentine M. Moghadam refers to general demographic trends and statistics of urbanization and population growth in the Middle East after 1950 (Moghadam, 2008: 281-307). In these decades, the urban populations increase due to attractiveness of cities in terms of social and economic potentials they present, and difficulties of the rural life neglected by governments' policies favoring the cities (Moghadam, 2008: 282). However, as Kepel points out, the massive migration to the urban areas caused problems in housing, services, waste disposal, sanitation, and regulation of construction for urban planning and thus slums, makeshift residences, shantytowns constitute the outlying suburbs in Middle Eastern cities (Kepel, 2000: 71). Moreover, Moghadam expresses that "the economies of the cities cannot absorb their large urban populations, leading to unemployment, underemployment, and poverty among urban populations" (Moghadam, 2008: 284). Governments' policies oriented towards modernization of their countries included development of

education systems as well. In the region, except Saudi Arabia, the education systems are designed according to the Western style, which were improved in the period between 1950 and 1980 (Roy, 2005: 74). These developments culminated in increasing literacy rates and high school graduates. Young and educated segments of urban populations grew expectations about future careers and employment; however overall economic development trends of their countries were unable to meet those expectations. This situation proved to be a significant factor of the radicalization of urban youth in Middle Eastern societies (Roy, 2005: 75).

The Middle Eastern states' foreign policy decisions had an impact on their perspectives in the society as well. Most significant of those are Egypt's peace with Israel and Saudi Arabia's call for the American military support after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The former example led to the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's depiction as the "Pharaoh" by radical militants and his assassination in 1981 (Mandaville, 2007: 84). Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda detached its Saudi links after that incident and declared the Saudi regime as apostate. (Mandaville, 2007: 256). The states' weakness against perceived Western aggression and incursion (Israel and the USA) was coupled with their power against political dissidents in the domestic sphere. When the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan had ended, battle-hardened Arab militants returned their home countries and sought to replicate their success at the home front. In the first half of the 1990s, militant groups in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia waged terrorist campaigns against governments, which were brutally suppressed (Roshandel and Chadha, 2006: 20-26). Therefore, a number of groups and militants turned their focus on the "far enemy" (Gerges, 2005), since "their states were too weak to defend their citizenry, but equally too strong to be

overtaken" (Mohamedou, 2007: 45). This approach led to the evolution of al-Qaeda to an armed political group bypassing the state, after it has "concluded that given the current configuration of Arab politics, it is not possible to expect realistically the region's long-time-a-dying regimes to defend their populations' interests" (Mohamedou, 2007: 44).

In a nutshell, the *fin de siécle* Middle East states had failed in a number of critical issues. Notwithstanding their survival in the second half of the century, they had little success in responding to their societies' needs. They kept the rhetoric, however virtually abandoned the Palestinian cause. The regime that claimed to be the custodian of the Muslim holy sites allowed non-Muslims set foot in the Holy Lands. They kept their societies in a repressive fashion, while constantly curbing political dissidents. Their shortcomings resulted in non-state groups emerging and having an increasing level of activity. Therefore they became an integral part of the Middle East system, especially after 1990.

3.4. Assessment

Contextualizing al-Qaeda is an important requirement for making sense of its political rationale, which is an important factor for al-Qaeda to formulate its strategy. Its political rationale enables al-Qaeda to assess current conditions, define its capabilities and limitations, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses of its enemy. The following chapter goes through the elements of al-Qaeda's political rationale.

While this study handles al-Qaeda as a transnational non-state armed group, mainstream approaches and analyses on al-Qaeda depicts it as a religious terrorist group. This approach limits the scope of analysis on al-Qaeda to a great extent. While terrorism is a mode and method for al-Qaeda in its struggle, the religious terrorism studies take it as the trademark of al-Qaeda. This study, however, does not neglect al-Qaeda's attacks against civilian targets, nor seeks to adopt an apologetic stance towards it. Rather, its approach places terrorism in a general framework that is needed to understand al-Qaeda and its strategy.

The religious terrorism studies have limited the scope of al-Qaeda analysis to terrorism, and stripped al-Qaeda from a political character by pointing out the religious vocabulary that it uses. Despite all those deficiencies that the religious terrorism studies possess, the multiplicity of works on al-Qaeda since the 9/11 Attacks at least provides an extensive collection of factual information regarding al-Qaeda. That is why; this study relies on several pieces in religious terrorism studies that lay down a handful of factual information.

By making use of the factual information provided by religious terrorism studies, this study lays the elements of the context that al-Qaeda has emerged in. That context provided al-Qaeda with a great deal of experience and insight, which would be useful in the 1990s, when the group was preparing for a conflict. The first-hand experience on the Afghan Jihad of numerous al-Qaeda members affirmed the utility of guerrilla warfare approach and boosted the morale of the mujahedeen in many al-Qaeda militants' perspective. Believing that they bled the Soviet Union to death themselves, those fighters gained an immense self-confidence. In this context, their

local jihads in their respective home countries were repressed. Besides, at that point in which the Middle Eastern states seemed at the peak of their power, they were at their weakest period of their short history. Non-state as well as intra-state dynamics have eroded state's power in many areas. In the Middle East, the most severe repercussion was the de-legitimization of the current regimes through failure in social areas and the Palestinian question.

Al-Qaeda's strategy was guided by the context it emerged from. Failures of the local jihads in the beginning of the 1990s indicated that single focused and national struggles were doomed to failure. The al-Qaeda leadership, therefore, ruled out the organizational structure that those failed groups adopted. The context remarked the importance of guerilla warfare strategy as well. The victory against the Soviet Union was the prime example in this sense. Besides, the improvement of communication technologies in the Arab world, where the nation-state identities are vulnerable against the all-encompassing Arab and Muslim identity, enabled al-Qaeda members from around the world to get into touch with each other in a simple way. The context, provided guidance, experience and insights that contributed to the formulation of the strategy. A sound understanding of al-Qaeda's strategy, thus, requires an important deal of insight into the historical and political context.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRATEGY OF AL-QAEDA AFTER 2001

Although al-Qaeda's declaration of war was in 1996, the escalation of the conflict between al-Qaeda and the U.S.A. begins after September 11, 2001. Whereas George W. Bush has declared that the War on Terrorism starts with al-Qaeda but targets "every terrorist group of global reach", the actual practice since 2001 proves otherwise. America's engagement with some other terrorist groups has been reluctant to say the least. Therefore, the conflict between the U.S. and al-Qaeda forms the main axis in the Global War against Terrorism. America's initial success in this conflict matched with the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, therefore culminated in American grandiose plans for regime change in the Middle East. The initial front of the conflict in Afghanistan soon remained out of American focus. The invasion in Iraq consumed the American efforts and resources. Besides, the United States' increasing material presence in the Middle East only fueled resentment and injustice felt by the local population. It drew reaction and criticism not only from the Middle East but also from other parts of the world. Moreover, hopes for a solution to the Palestinian question sank low as the HAMAS faced Israeli and international

isolation when it won the elections of 2006. The conduct of the global war on terrorism by the United States led to a stalemate after al-Qaeda restored itself in this period.

This chapter seeks to highlight the conduct of the current conflict by al-Qaeda. By deeming al-Qaeda a party to this conflict, this study dismisses the arguments posed by mainstream al-Qaeda and religious terrorism analyses posing it as an irrational cult of madmen utilising violence per se. Rather, the first section in this chapter is devoted to the political rationale beneath al-Qaeda's actions. The definition of its constituency and enemy, its reasons for going to war and the decisive factor of asymmetry are subjected to analysis in order to outline al-Qaeda's political rationale. Then the major elements of al-Qaeda's strategy after 2001, namely the communication element and the conduct of warfare will be handled.

The following hypotheses that were presented in the introduction will be verified in this chapter:

- The communication and the conduct of warfare are elements of Al-Qaeda's strategy in the post-September 11 period that compensated for the asymmetrical condition al-Qaeda faced.
- Al-Qaeda's political rationale covers a significant place in its strategy under the post-2001 era conditions.

4.1. The Political Rationale

4.1.1. Al-Qaeda's Casus Belli

Al-Qaeda's war against the United States of America and its terrorist attacks in this framework are assessed in very different ways. Considering that armed groups initiate in terrorist attacks for purposes of political change (Crenshaw, 1981: 379), it is a point of some concern in deliberating how al-Qaeda's use of violence relates to any political concerns. As such, the difficulty in formulating such a relation brought about different approaches such as Cronin's (2002/03) explanation, which was influenced by the religious terrorism literature, that puts "religious terrorists engage in violent behavior directly or indirectly to please the perceived commands of a deity". Moreover, the overtly symbolic character of al-Qaeda attacks, especially the 9/11 Attacks, led Mark Juergensmeyer to state that such spectacular attacks are to be seen as "dramatic events" that are "intended to impress for their symbolic significance", not as a tactic towards a strategic goal (Juergensmeyer, 2003: 125). Other explanations include Michael Doran's conviction that al-Qaeda sought to provoke the United States into a conflict in order to polarize the Islamic world and show the Muslims that their rulers are Western cronies (Doran, 2002). According to Gunaratna, the attacks were against the American economic, political and military power (Gunaratna, 2003: 67). And for Mohamedou, the September 11 Attacks was "a military act designed to surprise and gain the tactical and psychological upper hand" (Mohamedou, 2007: 64). As far as the al-Qaeda leadership was concerned, the recurrent theme is reciprocation. Osama bin Laden states in his October 2001 address that "What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years." In another statement in November 2002, he

puts that "reciprocal treatment is part of justice" and remarks that their attacks are only "reactions and reciprocal actions" against what he deems as aggression by the United States. Yet in 2004, Osama bin Laden reveals that after he reflected on "the oppression and tyranny of the American/Israeli coalition" in Palestine and Lebanon, he concluded that they should "punish the aggressor" as a warning and deterrent.

As stated above, the al-Qaeda leadership depicts the terrorist attacks against the U.S. as a reciprocation. It considers itself in a war with America and it initiates attacks in this framework. As the word "reciprocation" suggests a pattern of mutual attacks, it is important to point out towards the background that causes al-Qaeda to declare war. Osama bin Laden issued a statement in August 1996, titled "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places". In this document, grievances against America and the Saudi regime is strongly remarked. Considering the fact that Osama bin Laden was a Saudi citizen prior to 1994, and he was in contact with the Saudi dissidents opposing the regime and the U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia, the document of 1996 includes many convictions against King Fahd's regime as well. Nevertheless, Osama bin Laden's focus on the "Crusading Americans" takes a bigger place in the document. Bin Laden echoes Ibn Taymiyya of the 13th century and calls for action against "the Great Kufr" along with "the Kufr" that is the local rulers. Bin Laden considers the Saudi regime as a puppet of America, which he considers as the invader of the holy lands, as well as responsible for many wrongs in the Middle East. Therefore, he sums up those wrongs as follows:

> It should not be hidden from you that the people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators; to the extent that the Muslims blood became the cheapest and their wealth as loot in the hands of the enemies. Their blood

was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Cashmere, Assam, Philippine, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya and in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience. All of this and the world watch and hear, and not only didn't respond to these atrocities, but also with a clear conspiracy between the USA and its allies and under the cover of the iniquitous United Nations, the dispossessed people were even prevented from obtaining arms to defend themselves.

Osama bin Laden's concerns, therefore, can be attributed to a greater scale than the mere opposition to the regime in Saudi Arabia. He mentions not only the half-a-century old Palestinian question and the recent Gulf War of 1991 and its aftermath, and also he remarks the incidents, in which he considered the Muslims are facing aggression carried out with the direct or indirect U.S. complicity. Two years later in February 23, 1998, another statement was published, this time by al-Qaeda and a number of other organizations. It was titled "World Islamic Front Statement: Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" and signed by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri of the Egyptian Jihad Group, Abu-Yasir Rifa'i Ahmad Taha of the Egyptian Islamic Group, Shaykh Mir Hamzah of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan and Fazlur Rahman of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh. This document remarks the following points:

> First, for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples.
> If some people have in the past argued about the fact of the occupation, all the people of the Peninsula have now acknowledged it. The best proof of this is the Americans' continuing aggression against the Iraqi people using the Peninsula as a staging post, even though all its rulers are against their territories being used to that end, but they are helpless.
> Second, despite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people by the crusader-Zionist alliance, and despite the huge number of those killed, which has exceeded 1 million... despite all this, the Americans are once against trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation.

So here they come to annihilate what is left of this people and to humiliate their Muslim neighbors.

Third, if the Americans' aims behind these wars are religious and economic, the aim is also to serve the Jews' petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there. The best proof of this is their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal crusade occupation of the Peninsula.

These points reflect insecurities not only perceived by individuals considered to be on the fringes of the Middle Eastern societies, but also circulated through the press, political activists, political leaders even statesmen, public opinion leaders; therefore it constitutes a major part of the Middle East public opinion regarding the U.S. position in the Middle East. A recent opinion poll conducted by Gallup on the U.S. image in Middle East/North Africa reveals that the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq would be a major step for enhancing the U.S. image.[2] This result stresses the significance of the way that the U.S. military presence in the Middle East is being considered. In the statements quoted above and in many other messages, the al-Qaeda leadership recurrently refers to the elements of American Middle East policy and the sense of injustice and victimhood invoked by those issues. Therefore, al-Qaeda grounds its activism on perceived insecurities in the Muslim world and the Middle East. While concerns for the American policies in the Middle East are shared by various other groups, al-Qaeda has adopted to approach those concerns in a regional and transnational sense and respond in a global reach. The regional states are no longer able or willing to make a progress on amending those insecurities; al-Qaeda, therefore, bypasses the state (Mohamedou, 2007: 44) and engages both the local rulers and foreign presence in the Middle East.

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[2] The report of the poll is available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/114007/opinion-briefing-image-middle-east-north-africa.aspx, as of June 10, 2010.

It is also a fact that the United States has been involved in Middle Eastern crises in a rising scale for the last two decades of the 20th century. From 1980 to 2001, America engaged in 102 military operations abroad, and 29 of them is in the Middle East, ranging from Libya to Iran. The most striking of those operations are Operation Desert Storm, Desert Shield and Desert Fox and the enforcing no-fly zones in Iraq, the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998, and the deployment of U.S. troops to Somalia. While the U.S. reasons might differ according to the instance, al-Qaeda depicted them as aggressions against the Muslim world. The American operations in the onset of the 1990s started the extensive American military presence in the region, which at times initiated in offensive operations, as mentioned. Besides, al-Qaeda considers the U.S. as responsible for the state of affairs in the Palestinian Question and the oppressive nature of the local regimes due to its support for Israel and the Arab states, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Palestine issue has been a concern for a wide range of political groups and ideologies from the Arab nationalism and Baathism to the Political Islam. For the al-Qaeda leadership, the U.S. is responsible for the plight of the Palestinians through its support of the Israeli occupation.

In the interview by Peter Arnett of the CNN in March 1997, Osama bin Laden puts forward a very clear picture of the situation and concludes that because of the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia, and aggressive American policies that shows its "arrogance, haughtiness and transgression of all bounds that is not witnessed before by any power in the world", they have declared war on the United States. The al-Qaeda leadership, therefore, laid the grounds for their casus belli on the American foreign policy towards the Middle East. In this framework, certain grievances and

points, some of which may as well be regarded as the U.S. scapegoating, led al-Qaeda to start the engagement with America in a transnational and global scale, for the aim of driving the U.S. from the Middle East. At this point, the assessment of the extent that al-Qaeda's concerns about the U.S. presence, is irrelevant. Those concerns are built on a perspective that is common in the Middle East as the polls suggest. Therefore, it is a political decision on the part of al-Qaeda, whether to go to war for those concerns. Its leadership clearly puts forward the arguments, which are all related to the Middle Eastern politics. Al-Qaeda's decision and reasons for going to war reflects the general trend in the post-Cold War world, in which non-state actors substitute state actors in some aspects.

4.1.2. The Constituency

Robert Fisk, in his interview with Osama bin Laden in July 1996, rejects his analogy between Europeans resisting German occupation in the Second World War and al-Qaeda fighting against the U.S. on historical and moral grounds. He contends that "the Americans have never murdered a single Saudi". The ordinary mindset that Fisk exemplifies faces difficulties in interpreting the transboundary identification in the Middle East, especially among the Arabs. When the al-Qaeda leadership mentions the injustices harbored against the Muslims, they act on the transboundary identification of the Muslim nation, i.e. the Muslim Ummah, regardless of state frontiers. Likewise, Palestine holds a distinctive place in Osama bin Laden's rhetoric, not only because of the prospects of raising support among the Palestinians but also due to the centrality of the Palestinian cause in the Arab mind throughout

the 20th century. While the statements of al-Qaeda in the onset of its war against the U.S. focus on the American presence in Saudi Arabia, i.e. the Holy Lands, al-Qaeda's reasons for going to war are by no means limited to the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, when an al-Qaeda statement mentions the American invasion of Muslim lands, it goes beyond the direct American presence in Saudi Arabia and encompasses the indirect responsibility of the U.S. in Palestine through Israel, and in other Muslim countries through its support of the apostate regimes.

The constituency concept covers the scope of both the geographical extent that is the subject of the concerns, the strategic depth and the extent of the objectives. The al-Qaeda leadership defines its territorial constituency as the Muslim world, including all the countries that Muslims indigenously inhabit. Osama bin Laden and other top figures make reference to the Islamic nation as a whole. The al-Qaeda leadership is concerned about the insecurities and injustice caused by the U.S. behaviour and policies in the Islamic world, which includes non-Arab regions as well. The Afghan Jihad in the 1980s and al-Qaeda's relationship with Taliban and Kashmiri groups underscored the inclusion of South Asia for al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda contacts and affiliates in Africa and Southeast Asia show that the al-Qaeda leadership considers its territorial constituency wide enough to cover those places. They consider the American presence in any part of the Islamic nation as an aggression against the Muslim people, regardless of ethnicity, country of origin and state borders. This transboundary identification of al-Qaeda with the Islamic nation as a whole owes to the original understanding of the Muslim ummah in the Middle East. The Islam religion, which "understands itself in universalist terms" (Mandaville, 2007: 276) regards the issues of nationality, ethnicity and race insignificant when compared to

the identification with Islam. Whereas the wide range of the expansion of Islam prevented the Muslim transnationalism to refer to a single political entity, there has existed a potential towards that (Mandaville, 2007: 277). The transnational character was further reinforced when the European superiority imposed itself upon the Islamic world and the Muslim lands came to fold under Western dominance. Western dominance and superiority served as a "Christian other", reminded the Crusades in the medieval times and therefore came to be regarded in all-encompassing civilizational terms. However, the transnational identification suffered setbacks in the beginning of the 20th century, when the Caliphate was abolished and the resistance against the Western superiority included nationalist elements (Mandaville, 2007: 279). The particular state identities that were developed throughout the formation of Middle Eastern states are important; however the idea of the Arab nationalism, in line with the Ummah understanding, came to encompass more than mere particular identification with the territorial state. In this sense, the Arab nationalism of the mid-20th century carried elements from the Ummah identity, therefore included transboundary elements, albeit restricted to the Arab identity. In this process, the onset of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel from 1948 onwards served as a cause among the Arabs and even among the Muslims from all around the world that involved a sense of commonality beyond borders.

The period in which al-Qaeda has crystallized represents a significant rise in Muslim transnationalism. This phenomenon rests on the ummah identity from the past carried throughout the 20th century by common causes in the Muslim world. On this background, important factors contribute to the concept of the Muslim Ummah or

nation in Osama bin Laden's rhetoric. First of all, the repressive character of particular states coupled with their inability in providing security and welfare to their societies reduced the appeal of particular state identities and nationalism. This point is related to the legitimacy crises of states, mentioned in the previous chapter. Second, the Political Islam has begun to spread its influence throughout the Muslim world as a political alternative. While many Islamist groups adopted a local agenda within the borders of their respective states, existence of groups such as al-Qaeda and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Mandaville, 2007: 265) put forward political agendas bypassing current borders. Third, the globalization process that is involved with the greater use of travel and communications technologies, "bring far-flung corners of the Muslim world into greater contact with each other" (Mandaville, 2007: 299). Therefore, the advantages of globalization reinforce the sense of awareness and identification with a global entity. Lastly, actual developments in the Muslim world contributed to the Ummah awareness. A landmark event in this sense is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Afghan Jihad included fighters from all around the Muslim world, and its success raised awareness and concerns for their crises involving Muslims, such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq.

Al-Qaeda's definition of its constituency as the whole Islamic world implies that it considers the geographic extent not only as the scope of its grievances but also as the scope of its operational conduct. Therefore, such an approach enables al-Qaeda to capitalize on its database of contacts throughout the Muslim world that Osama bin Laden had created during its efforts in the Maktab al Khidamat in the Afghan jihad. In this way, al-Qaeda is able to benefit from its human resources in a more advantageous way. The enlarged operational area of conduct, supported by al-Qaeda

contacts in various countries enables al-Qaeda conduct a guerrilla warfare strategy on the elements of "dispersion, concentration and constant change of position" (Mao Tse Tung, 1989). In the face of asymmetrical pressure from the U.S. al-Qaeda had to dismantle its concentration in Afghanistan and disperse in a geographical setting. This was made possible by the definition of the Islamic world as al-Qaeda's constituency, which both makes the defensive dispersing approach possible and causes the adversary to over-extend its defensive capabilities; thus enabling al-Qaeda to probe for weaknesses.   The idea of Muslim nation as al-Qaeda's constituency contributes to its strategic depth from another point as well. Al-Qaeda's infiltration among the Muslim expatriates through Islamic NGOs and charity organizations is well known and claimed to provide strategic depth to al-Qaeda in the Western countries (Gunaratna, 2003: 9). To some extent, this is made possible by the "meaning-making and identity constitutive" effect that the idea of a Muslim nation has over the Western Muslims (Mandaville, 2007: 263). The Western Muslims, who share a dual identity experience, such as the second generation migrants are considered having "an apparent tension between being, for example, simultaneously both British and South Asian" (Mandaville, 2007: 263). The idea of a Muslim nation, therefore, relieves such a tension, and empowers the individual through detaching him/her from its current society. Al-Qaeda's adoption of the whole Muslim nation as its constituency, thus, grants it the opportunity to address those migrants in a meaningful way.

As far as al-Qaeda's objective of ending the U.S. military presence and aggression in the Muslim world is concerned, its wider constituency represents the rationale that al-Qaeda has adopted in its current engagement with a superior force. That

rationale is reflected in the debates that reflects a turning point in al-Qaeda's history. Abdullah Azzam, who provided the theoretical guidance during its formative years in the 1980s, was in favor of limiting the efforts to build an Islamic state in Afghanistan. Whereas, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri argued for utilizing the experience and potential gained during the Afghan Jihad to pursue a transnational agenda, covering the whole Muslim world. With the assassination of Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri's approach gained prominence in al-Qaeda's historical course. Abdullah Azzam's vision of al-Qaeda as "an organization that would channel the energies of mujahidin into fighting on behalf of oppressed Muslims worldwide" (Gunaratna, 2003: 29) required al-Qaeda, under the circumstances of being the weak actor in a possible asymmetrical conflict, to adopt a guerrilla warfare strategy that argued for dispersal rather than concentration. Azzam's ideas of revolution in one country, thus, were risky as they would expose the organization to the possible utilization of immense destructive power by the U.S.A. Osama bin Laden's wider approach of engagement in the whole of the constituency favored its guerrilla warfare strategy in a regional scale.

Since al-Qaeda is engaged the American presence in the Middle East, the nature of the U.S. presence required al-Qaeda to have a wider constituency. The U.S. presence in the Middle East implies the American influence, that al-Qaeda opposes, in a transboundary scale. The American military bases in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf provided the U.S. with the potential to project its power in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf and Iran. This potential was already realized in Iraq in the operations Desert Storm, Desert Fox and Iraqi Freedom. Besides, the American military presence in the Mediterranean, which is at the periphery of the Muslim

world, through the Incirlik base in Turkey and the U.S. Sixth Fleet based in Italy gives the U.S. the power projection ability over the Mediterranean coasts of the Muslim world. This situation was realized in the U.S. engagement with Libya and military operations in Lebanon in the 1980s. Moreover, from the al-Qaeda perspective, it implies the liaison of America and Israel, which threatens Palestine and Lebanon. Therefore, for al-Qaeda, who engaged an adversary with transboundary power projection capability, needs a wider constituency for its objective of driving out the U.S. presence.

The definition of the constituency by al-Qaeda reflects its rationale through the selection and employment of its general strategic choice, and through the audience it addresses.. Al-Qaeda conducts its engagement with the U.S. with a guerilla warfare approach. This approach requires a wider constituency to employ much needed strategic depth against the U.S. Moreover, its casus belli is based on the U.S. military presence in the Middle East, which has a transboundary power projection capability. Having analyzed the background and the spatial dimension of al-Qaeda's political rationale, the next sub-section will evaluate al-Qaeda's choice of tactical moves.

4.1.3. Asymmetry and Terrorism

The current conflict between the U.S. and al-Qaeda has an asymmetrical nature. The asymmetry first and foremost is obvious in conventional military capabilities of the parties to the conflict. The power disparities between the adversaries have an

extreme quality. That is the al-Qaeda fighters face a superior military power, endowed with technological sophistication that has transcended its predecessors as the hegemonic power. Besides, the asymmetrical nature has a qualitative nature that is status asymmetry (Stepanova, 2008: 19). It implies that the sides in the conflict are actors of different status, and fits the conflict between the U.S. as the state actor and al-Qaeda as the non-state actor. The nature of the asymmetry in the conflict between the U.S. and al-Qaeda includes ideological disparity as well, which is to the advantage of al-Qaeda. It endows al-Qaeda with a power of mobilization and indoctrination through its radical ideology, therefore enables it to acquire a more efficient way of utilizing its human resources (Stepanova, 2008: 21).

From the time of the declaration of war, the al-Qaeda leadership is aware of the imbalance of forces in this conflict. In the statement of declaration of war in 1996, Osama bin Laden mentions the situation in terms of military disparity and outlines the general framework for actual engagement with their enemy:

> Today your brothers and sons, the sons of the two Holy Places, have started their Jihad in the cause of Allah, to expel the occupying enemy from of the country of the two Holy places. And there is no doubt you would like to carry out this mission too, in order to re-establish the greatness of this Ummah and to liberate its' occupied sanctities. Nevertheless, it must be obvious to you that, due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted i.e using fast moving light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other word to initiate guerrilla warfare, were the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it. And as you know, it is wise, in the present circumstances, for the armed military forces not to be engaged in a conventional fighting with the forces of the crusader enemy (the exceptions are the bold and the forceful operations carried out by the members of the armed forces individually, that is without the movement of the formal forces in its conventional shape and hence the responses will not be directed, strongly, against the army) unless a big advantage is likely to be achieved; and great losses induced on the enemy side (that would shaken and destroy its foundations and infrastructures) that will help to expel the defeated enemy from the country.

Bin Laden is clear on the futility and self-destructiveness in fighting a conventional war against America. He, therefore, points out the necessity of utilizing "fast moving light forces that work under complete secrecy". This approach suits the general strategy of guerilla warfare that he puts forward. Fast moving, light forces are required to implement the dispersal of forces in within the constituency and the indirect approach that is evident in bin Laden's call to avoid conventional confrontation is an indispensible element in any strategy that is to be followed when facing materially superior enemies (Hart, 2002: 281-288).

Within the confines of al-Qaeda's strategic approach, terrorism takes place as a tactical and operational choice. However, as a part of the misunderstandings and misrepresentations of al-Qaeda, terrorism came to be regarded as its main operational venue. Such fallacies stripped al-Qaeda's terrorist tactics of their part in its overall strategic approach. Moreover, such a focus on terrorism is well misplaced because in analytical context, it represents nothing except being a method of conflict. It is without doubt that this is not to say studies in terrorism have no relevance to international security. Rather, the position adopted here is that terrorism should not be detached from its overall political context for the sake of relevance in the international security studies. For al-Qaeda, who is determined to fight foreign presence in the Muslim world for establishing a polity along the lines of their ideology, resorting to terrorism implies "a strategic reaction to the absence of military reciprocity in its war with the United States, as well as the asymmetrical evolution of methods of war-fighting" (Mohamedou, 2007: 77). The logic behind al-Qaeda's preference for terrorism is clear in Abu Musab al Suri's analysis, who is a significant theorist within the ranks of al Qaeda. In his book "The Global Islamic

Resistance Call"[3] he reviewed "the ways and methods of jihad during the Jihadi current (1963-2001)" and considers that the standards of the time has fundamentally changed and this change made the old methods of confrontation obsolete (Lia, 2008: 357). Therefore, he moves on to "design a method of confrontation, which is in accordance with the standards of the present time" (Lia, 2008: 359). Al-Suri deserves particular attention, because he adopts a style of strategic thinking based on the lessons from the past and building on the careful analysis of the present in a purely secular way. After analyzing the current conditions at the time of his writing in 2004 that are the points he derived from the display of American military might, he concludes that:

> .. the basic axis of the Resistance's military activity against America and her allies now, must lie within the framework of 'light guerilla warfare', 'civilian terror' and secret methods, especially on the level of individual operations and small Resistance units completely and totally separated from each other. (Lia, 2008: 373)

Based on this conclusion, Al-Suri discusses two viable options for a method of confrontation with their enemies: "the Open Front Jihad" and "Individual Terrorism Jihad" (Lia, 2008: 374-419). Al-Suri is steadfast in emphasizing the necessity of adopting "Individual terrorism jihad" as a strategic choice. Under the condition of power disparity, Al-Suri prefers terrorism to open front approach because, "the presence of the enemy over a wide area makes harder for battle fronts to emerge" and the advanced technology of the enemy "declines the open front approach and confrontation from permanent positions" (Lia, 2007: 391-392). Al-Suri, also, evaluates terrorism as a strategy for deterring the allies of America. He studies the March 2004 attack in Spain as "a case study of the political impact of military deterrence" (Lia, 2008: 416). Abu Musab al-Suri's influence on the higher ranks of

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[3] A lengthy piece of excerpts from al-Suri's book (originally in Arabic) is presented in "Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mu'sab al-Suri" by Brynjar Lia.

the al-Qaeda leadership is not clear to the full extent; however, it is possible to claim that his approach clearly fits into the general outlines that Osama bin Laden provided in his declaration of war in 1996. Besides, the U.S. government presented a $5 million reward for information leading to his arrest, which might indicate his position within al-Qaeda.

The lack of military balance limits the options for al-Qaeda to act in accordance with its "reciprocal treatment" policy against the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East. Osama bin Laden has repeatedly emphasized this point: "Just as you kill, you will be killed. Just as you bomb you will be bombed" (November 2002), "What happened on 11 September and 11 March is your goods returned to you" (April 2004). The reciprocal treatment, and depicting terrorist attacks as "reaction" are common themes in Osama bin Laden's statements. For him, as long as the U.S. presence is the Middle East persists, al-Qaeda will continue its war through similar attacks. He constantly mentions recent incidents in which Muslim civilians are harmed or killed, thus he states that al-Qaeda attacks are reactions to the aggression by the U.S. Therefore, terrorist attacks constitute a way for al-Qaeda to carry on its conduct of warfare and deny the moral superiority of its enemy through claiming that its terrorist attacks carry the same character as the U.S. policies in the Middle East. The al-Qaeda leadership seek to limit the negative effects of spectacular al-Qaeda attacks that cause civilian and Muslim casualties by reminding and emphasizing the atrocities that are claimed to be committed by America and Israel in the Middle East.

The employment of terrorism as a strategic choice reflects a rational decision on the part of al-Qaeda. This decision foremost, reflects the assessment of the asymmetry between itself and America in military capability. From the onset of the war to al-Suri's analysis in 2004, the current assessment prevailed and directed al-Qaeda's efforts. The individual cells within al-Qaeda's constituency and among the Muslim expatriates in the West carried out a string of attacks: the first World Trade Center bombing (1993), the bombing of a Saudi-American base in Riyadh (1995), the assault on the al-Khobar towers that the U.S. forces inhabited (1996), the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), the attack on the USS Cole warship in Aden, Yemen (2000). Within the confines of its guerilla warfare strategy, its terrorist attacks relate to goals of defeating the U.S. and driving it out of the Muslim world. It is irrelevant to discuss that engaging in a war with the U.S. as the sole super power in the world make sense in a rational manner. The fact that al-Qaeda went to war with the U.S. does not indicate a distance to rational analysis on the part of its leadership. Having considered the case of Vietnam, the U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon in 1983 and from Somalia in 1995, both of which follow deadly attacks against American forces, the al-Qaeda leadership is resolute in their analysis that engaging in a similar style of warfare that encompasses both the whole of the Muslim world and the West when the opportunity presents itself, would yield themselves victory.

4.2. The Communication Element

This subsection develops on the argument that communication has been an integral part of al-Qaeda's strategy from the onset of the conflict on, and even more so in the post-9/11 period. In that period, the world received statements by al-Qaeda leadership that addressed its followers, the Muslims and the Western publics. Besides the statements, the al-Qaeda leadership has issued threats, offered explanations and legitimizations and even engaged in discussions about their violent methods. In the meantime, both Western and Middle East media had shown interest in al-Qaeda, while research centers, both official and unofficial was established in order to evaluate al-Qaeda's communication strategy, such as The Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Intelligence Group, the Nine Eleven Finding Answers Foundation (NEFA), and the Intelligence Summit.

It has been mentioned that, since the beginning of the conflict in 1996, the al-Qaeda leadership developed an interest in publicity and communication. A report prepared in January 2004 by Foreign Broadcast Information Service,[4] a component of the Central Intelligence Agency, which is marked for official use only, compiled al-Qaeda statements from 1994 to 2004. Among the eighty seven media appearances that the report compiled, fifty two of them (13 interviews, 39 statements and messages) were dated before September 2001, and thirty five appearances (2 interviews, 33 statements and messages) were after September 2001. Before 2001, interviews with Osama bin Laden counted a high number compared to the period after 2001, which is quite natural, considering the disappearance of bin Laden.

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[4] The report is available for downloading on http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ladin.htm, as of July 2010.

Among the interviewers, notable journalists and media organs such as Robert Fisk, Peter Bergen, Peter Arnett, CNN, Times, ABC, CBS, The Independent, take place, along with the Middle Eastern and Arabic media organs and journalists. The interviews' content are comprehensive and Osama bin Laden expresses al-Qaeda's position in a convenient way. In this period, Osama bin Laden has just started al-Qaeda's engagement with the U.S., and he sought publicity in order to draw attention from both Middle Eastern and Western publics. He acquired the attention he sought after the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Statements and messages in this period include contents such as reemphasizing the call for jihad, responding to particular events, statements and accusations, delivering specific messages to specific audiences, praising attacks against America and undertaking responsibility for certain attacks. Those statements and messages ensured Osama bin Laden's place on the public and media agenda and therefore contributed to al-Qaeda's reputation and through spectacular attacks, its notoriety.

With those concerns at hand, the communication practice of al-Qaeda involved the excessive usage of the internet. According to the The 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, "The Internet provides an inexpensive, anonymous, geographically unbounded, and largely unregulated virtual haven for terrorists", and al-Qaeda is no exception. Most of the al-Qaeda communications materials are distributed online, from websites, who share or at lease sympathetic to al-Qaeda's worldview, as well as the Al Jazeera Network. Gabriel Weimann, who studied the internet usage by terrorist groups, puts that "The great virtues of the Internet—ease of access, lack of regulation, vast potential audiences, fast flow of information, and so forth—have been turned to the advantage of groups committed to terrorizing

societies to achieve their goals" (Weimann, 2004: 11). David H. Gray's comparison shows that the use of the internet brings the same advantages as the territorial safe havens: "fundraising, communications, training, recruiting, planning and logistics (Gray, 2009: 399). Throughout the first decade of the 2000s, al-Qaeda benefited from internet usage in an efficient way, especially for its communications.

4.2.1. The Importance and Utility of Communication

As the figures that the FBIS report suggest, the media appearances of the al-Qaeda leadership has an upward trend after 2001. Between September 2001 and January 2004, the al-Qaeda leadership transmitted thirty three messages compared to the thirty nine in the seven years from 1994 to 2001. With the September 11 Attacks and the onset of the War on Terror by America, the escalation of the conflict had a leap and this is evident in the proliferation of messages. This might suggest that al-Qaeda's conduct of the conflict involves transmitting messages and statements through the usage of media. Before going through the place of media in al-Qaeda's war, it is necessary to review some particular conditions that endowed the media usage with an importance. As mentioned various times, the American invasion in Afghanistan destroyed the physical infrastructure of al-Qaeda in this country, which had negative effects on al-Qaeda in terms of its efforts in training, communication, indoctrination, and overall management. At this point, it is even claimed that those developments represented "the last vestiges of al-Qaeda" (Ranstorp, 2002). Amidst those events, in line with the War on Terrorism, America ensured the support of the most of the states in the international arena, including many states in the Middle

East, thus a restrictive international counter-terrorism environment challenged al-Qaeda. As Middle Eastern and European states, under the U.S. influence, hardened their stance on counter-terrorism, al-Qaeda found harder to disseminate its propaganda via the traditional means it used to utilize. These traditional means included the Islamic charities and NGOs in Europe and the Middle East (Gunaratna, 2003: 8). They were useful to al-Qaeda for fundraising, recruitment and propagation of its worldview. After September 2001, these organizations were deprived of the convenient environment that they enjoyed, thus al-Qaeda has lost an important element of its periphery. As a result of those developments, al-Qaeda leaders had to rely more on the communication component of their strategy.

4.2.2. Survival

Four years after the American invasion of Afghanistan, in July 2005 Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq that I say to you: that we are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma". Al-Zawahiri's words relate to a very significant aspect in al-Qaeda's war with America. The media battle that covered more than half of the war involved various concerns of al-Qaeda.

Firstly, al-Qaeda had to insist its existence after the initial defeats in 2001 and 2002. It had to prove that the core groups that faced the American military might survived the ordeal and was carrying out its struggle. For the al-Qaeda leadership, this point

was important for both its friendly and hostile audiences. Especially in 2002, the al-Qaeda leadership transmitted sixteen messages. A close number of messages and statements was only in 1998, when the World Islamic Front statement was published and the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania took place. Through those statements and messages in 2002, Osama bin Laden denied victory to America, wowed to revenge the invasion of Afghanistan and proclaimed the continuation of the war. He emphasized that despite the American victories in the battles, it failed to reach its objectives of killing al-Qaeda and Taliban leadership and creating a centralized, stable polity in Afghanistan. Besides, the messages and statements in 2002 addressed the Muslims as well. Osama bin Laden warned the Muslims about the length of the current engagement with America and reiterated the call for jihad. Moreover, the al-Qaeda leadership started its address towards the peoples of America and Europe in 2002, explaining them its own reasoning behind the war. Therefore, in the immediate period after the September 2001, al-Qaeda's emphasis towards communication coupled with its attacks in October 2002 in Yemen, Kuwait, and Bali against America and its allies ensured its existence after the initial defeats in 2001.

4.2.3. Propaganda

The American invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq provided al-Qaeda with a suitable environment for propaganda. The situation presented al-Qaeda with several opportunities In al-Qaeda's worldview, the increased American presence in the Middle East through Afghanistan and Iraq would be regarded as a confirmation for

their claims regarding the Crusaders' war on Islam. Besides, the availability of graphic footage showing the American forces in various situations further reinforced al-Qaeda's claims. The occurrence of collateral damage or civilian casualties worsened the American image and gave impetus to claims of American atrocities in the Middle East. Those opportunities became an integral part of the al-Qaeda propaganda. Before 2001, the al-Qaeda messages reiterated the massacres in Lebanon and against the Palestinians, and the killings in Iraq due to the U.S. embargo and airstrikes. The increasing availability of such developments as a result of the increased American presence, therefore, fueled grievances against the U.S. Al-Qaeda found itself in a fertile territory for propagation.

In order to capitalize on the propaganda opportunities presented after 2001 and 2003, al-Qaeda needed to focus its efforts on communication. Al-Qaeda has never claimed to be or sought to be a mass movement; nonetheless it needs support from the Muslims. It seeks to spread its worldview regarding the Muslim rulers as apostates, and the Americans as the crusaders that seek elimination of Islam. The al-Qaeda leadership has multiple times stressed their intentions to incite the umma against the local rulers and the Americans. Actually the incitement of the Muslim people is so important that it even has the potential of realizing the aim of driving the U.S. out of the Muslim world. At the least, it provides recruits for the diminishing ranks of al-Qaeda, thus further reinforcing al-Qaeda's human resources. According to Abdul Hameed Bakier, jihadi websites post materials explaining the virtues of joining the jihad and shows ways for enthusiasts on how to become a member of al-Qaeda (Bakier, 2008). *Internet World Stats* website provides the information that the internet usage in the Middle East has risen in almost 2000

percent in the 2000-2010 period, from 3,284,800 users in 2000 to 63,240,946 users in 2010. This tremendous rise indicates an increase in potential audience of al-Qaeda through those websites that has been founded by al-Qaeda members or sympathizers. Although it may be very difficult in defining a number of websites publishing along al-Qaeda's worldview, the dynamic nature of the internet (Weimann, 2004: 2) and the anonymity it provides makes it a convenient medium for transmitting al-Qaeda's worldview and defining recruitment potentials. Therefore, al-Qaeda compensates for its inability in propaganda in physical world with a focus on conquering the minds of the Muslim people on the cyberspace.

4.2.4. Conduct of the Confrontation

Al-Qaeda's focus on communications after 2001 provides it an opportunity in an organizational aspect. The current conditions of international persecution against al-Qaeda made the operational conduct of the core leadership through maintaining contacts a difficult process, since it was subjected to monitoring and interception, which could potentially have security repercussions. However decentralized and dispersed it might be, the core leadership felt the need for providing a strategic conduct of the confrontation. That involved the undertaking of responsibility for specific attacks, issuing further threats, and placing dispersed attacks over a wide area that seemed distant from each other in the overall strategic context of the confrontation with the U.S.

Al-Qaeda's terrorist tactics involve the usage of communication in a high degree. That is because, terrorist attacks, regardless of its immediate target communicates a message of the perpetrator to the entire world through the mass-media. Therefore, the acts of terrorism have a wide, even global audience, considering the utilization of internet in order to broadcast the message, where television access is not present or limited. In this way, the perpetrator achieves its immediate goal of invoking fear and intimidation in its hostile audience. Besides, it demonstrates its power and capabilities to its friendly audience. Al-Qaeda's terrorist tactics are inspired from the attacks against the American forces that led to their withdrawal such as the attacks in Lebanon in 1987. Thus, in order to have their desired impact on the U.S. government, the attacks should be publicized. Consistent with al-Qaeda's goal that is the withdrawal of the U.S. troops, the coercive effect of terrorist attacks on both general public and the government is magnified through the media attention. When looking at the number of al-Qaeda statements over time it is seen that a streak of statements are issued after the attack. In those statements, the al-Qaeda leadership either takes responsibility, or praises the attack and conveys that much more attacks are to come unless the U.S. and its allies retreat from the Muslim lands. For instance, in 2002, al-Qaeda attacks took place in Bali, Kuwait, and Yemen against the U.S. and its allies. After that, al-Qaeda leadership transmitted three messages, one praising the attacks, the other two addressing the American and European peoples. Likewise in 1998, after the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzanya, and the ruling by the World Islamic Front, the al-Qaeda leadership issued statements emphasizing the call to jihad.

It is a fact that al-Qaeda leaders have not yet created the impact on the U.S. public and the government that will lead them out of the Muslim world however, the al-Qaeda statements in these period placed the attacks in a strategic context, and contributed to the war for the Muslim minds.

4.2.5. Assessment

The communication element in al-Qaeda's strategy involves the use of mass-media and internet with great efficiency and in an increasing trend. The al-Qaeda leadership continues to issue statements and messages, in which they respond to allegations, mourn for their lost comrades, threaten the U.S. and its allies, and present an evaluation of current developments. Besides Osama bin Laden, some other leaders and figures within al-Qaeda started to appear in video messages and statements as well. The Internet usage by al-Qaeda enabled the conveying of these messages. Besides, the presence and proliferation of pro-al-Qaeda websites, considering the rise of the internet usage in the Middle East, widened al-Qaeda's audience within its constituency. In this way, al-Qaeda acquired the opportunity to appeal to internet users, thus, it had the capacity to reach sympathizers. These factors contributed al-Qaeda's efforts to bypass the international restriction imposed upon it. The cyberspace, through its anonymity, lack of regulation, and opportunity to reach potentially a global audience, has enabled al-Qaeda to conduct its propaganda and engage in recruitment throughout its constituency, therefore it presented aş-Qaeda another element of strategic depth. Communication

complements al-Qaeda's use of force in compensating for the asymmetrical condition it faces (Bockstette, 2008: 5).

4.3. The Conduct of the Warfare

Warfare, i.e. the use of force, represents another integral part within al-Qaeda's strategy. Al-Qaeda's conduct of warfare, especially terrorist tactics that it prominently resorted to, generally attracted widespread attention. Especially with the September 11 Attacks, terrorism came to be the hallmark of al-Qaeda. Major attacks by al-Qaeda after 2001, such as the Madrid, London, Istanbul and Riyadh attacks further fueled this view.

4.3.1. Analytical Pitfalls

While looking through al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks in an international security perspective, it is useful to avoid certain distractions. Firstly, relying heavily on the religious rhetoric of al-Qaeda has the risk of moving away from a sober analysis. As the religious terrorism studies, that were examined in the second chapter, represented, such an approach came to portray al-Qaeda as an exotic entity, which is distinctively new and has the tendency to create catastrophic developments. This approach, then, magnified and inflated the threat posed by al-Qaeda to enormous levels and acquired the risk of reinforcing the official positions to depict the current conflict between al-Qaeda and the U.S. as a fight between good and evil. The speech

by George W. Bush on September 16, 2001, vowing to carry on "the crusade" and "rid the world of the evil-doers" raises suspicions about the common points that the both sides of the conflict share. Therefore, treating al-Qaeda as evildoers determined to kill on a mass scale, deprives al-Qaeda from any notion of strategic thinking. In this way, it is no longer possible to have anticipatory efforts on al-Qaeda, because it acts on the commands of its deity, rather than according to a set of objectives. In line with this reasoning, the fact that al-Qaeda aims to defeat America in military sense and rout it out of the Muslim lands in order to establish a polity in its image can be regarded as rumblings of a madman, which simply go against the reality of the American superior military might. All those elements of the approach consequently means the rejection of the classical maxim of conflict, "Know your enemy". after ten years of the intense American engagement in the Middle East, it could be argued whether the U.S. policies in the Middle East in this period was built on similar rejections and inefficient perspectives, given the current situation in Iraq, Afghanistan and against al-Qaeda. In short, the first distraction is the practice of focusing on religion and ignoring politics and strategy in dealing with al-Qaeda.

The second distraction is upholding a perspective that involves a limited focus on terrorism in studying al-Qaeda. This view, while placing an emphasis on al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks, stresses only the destructive nature of those acts and ignores the message al-Qaeda tries to convey and addresses the strategic direction that al-Qaeda sought in an insufficient way. The targeting of civilians and the potential of the Weapons of Mass Destruction usage are important elements within this specific perspective. It has the risk to underrate the general pattern and strategic direction beneath the terrorist acts. In this way, terrorist acts could be analyzed as separate

and distinct events, while their interconnectedness within a general framework receives little attention. In order to grasp the security and political challenge of al-Qaeda, this approach has to broaden its perspective and treat the terrorist acts by al-Qaeda not as single, separate and distinct events, but as acts loaded with a message that goes beyond the immediate destructiveness, and interwoven within the political and security challenge that al-Qaeda poses in the Middle East.

4.3.2. The Guerilla Warfare Approach

4.3.2.1. Basic Characteristics of the Guerilla Warfare

Al-Qaeda's conduct of warfare possess the characteristics of a guerilla warfare approach in a regional even a global scale upheld by a non-state actor without a physical territorial basis, under the conditions of power disparity and organizational covertness. In order to compensate for the asymmetry of the conflict in the areas of power and status, al-Qaeda resorts to the guerilla warfare approach, intended to wear down the American will to maintain its presence in the Muslim lands. Therefore, al-Qaeda's attacks against both civilian and military targets are aimed at eroding the U.S. resolve by attacking in an unconventional and spectacular manner and causing casualties in large numbers as well as targeting the symbols of the American prominence. Al-Qaeda attacks take place in both regional and global scale. Its attacks in the Western countries intend to force policy decisions on the part of America and its allies. Although debates and doubts are well underway about what exactly al-Qaeda sought with the 9/11 Attacks, whether it was intended to provoke

America into confrontation in the Middle East (Doran, 2002; Sedgwick; 2004) or it was an act within the "cosmic war" understanding of al-Qaeda (Juergensmeyer, 2003; Attias, 2004) or it was an act related to the religious mindset of al-Qaeda, imitating the Muslim prophet Muhammad's way of conducting warfare (Habeck, 2004). Regardless of the debates, the actual facts show that the U.S. engaged in a confrontation in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and Iraq, which, despite initial successes, proved to be a stalemate. This situation indeed presented al-Qaeda with plentiful opportunities that are an anti-American atmosphere in the Middle East and an increasing American presence in the Muslim lands. Al-Qaeda's propaganda efforts and conduct of operations were boosted by these developments.

As mentioned above, the guerilla warfare approach is an attempt at wearing down the will of America to continue its policies in the Muslim world. This point is stressed in al-Qaeda leaders' statements. For example, Abu Musab al-Suri states that "the jihad of individual or cell terrorism, using the methods of urban or rural guerilla warfare, is fundamental for exhausting the enemy and causing him to collapse and withdraw" (Lia, 2007: 371). Similarly, bin Ladin argues in November 2004 that

> All that we have to do is to send two mujahidin to the furthest point east to raise a piece of cloth on which is written al-Qaida, in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses without their achieving for it anything of note other than some benefits for their private companies. (Al Jazeera, 2004)

Osama bin Laden, who is an engineer himself, is adept at practical aspects of their war, rather than ideological or religious aspects. His focus on economy originates in both his practical tendencies and his experience against the Soviet Union. In the same speech in 2004, bin Laden reiterates their experience in "using guerilla warfare and war of attrition" that "bled Russia for 10 years". Building on the previous

experience, the focus of al-Qaeda includes drawing the U.S. into a war of attrition, in which its economy will be severely strangulated due to its increased commitments. Al-Qaeda's approach indeed turns the current conflict to a war of attrition, through denying the U.S. a decisive victory.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the guerilla war approach is that it enabled al-Qaeda to cheat death. Thus, it extended the conflict over a long period of time, dispelling pledges by George W. Bush that the al-Qaeda will be destroyed and its leaders will be brought to justice. Hence, at the end of 2009, Barack Obama kept uttering the same objectives of the U.S., in the speech that he outlined his Afghanistan strategy. It is impossible not to notice that after eight years, the war is still on and al-Qaeda avoids getting disrupted, dismantled and destroyed. From the initiation of the conflict by al-Qaeda in 1996, it is probable that its leadership has envisaged such a situation. Osama bin Laden's remarks that they need fast moving light forces operating in secrecy in a guerilla war that they would undertake signifies the resolute position adopted by the al-Qaeda leadership. Similarly, Abu Musab al-Suri, after going through the reasons of militant groups' failure in the Arab countries, reiterates the need to learn from their mistakes and stresses that their "Tora Bora mentality has to end" (Lia, 2007: 359). Consistent with this¸ al-Qaeda's dispersion and disappearance after 2001 has provided that al-Qaeda could avoid a concentration of the U.S. force upon itself. In this respect, avoiding a decisive actual confrontation with the U.S. would make up for al-Qaeda's relative weakness against the U.S. military power.

The guerilla warfare approach that is presented here is prone to several specifications according to several authors (Ganor, 2002; Schmid, 2004). Ganor notes that the targeting issue has a definitive importance in branding an activity as terrorism or guerilla activity. For him, terrorist activity targets civilians, whereas if the attack targets military installations it is a guerilla activity (Ganor, 2002: 296). Ganor does not insist on clarifying a definition in this regard; obviously due to the fact that this represents a common pitfall in terrorism definition efforts. Rather he points out that, organizations "engage in terrorism or in guerilla activities according to their own operative limitations or circumstances" (Ganor, 2002: 297). Schmid, however, refers to the legal groundwork in categorizing combatants. In his view, abiding by the rules of engagement within the Laws of War set by the Hague Regulations and the Geneva Conventions is a primary condition for any struggle to be defined as warfare, and the guerilla warfare is distinguished from terrorism in this respect (Schmid, 2004: 203-204). This contrasts with Chipman's view that "within Mao's guerilla strategy, terrorism is a basic tactic" (Chipman, 2003: 166). The legal approach that Schmid espouses is related to the legitimization of the use of force. Al-Qaeda's rejection to abide by the Laws of War depends on its indifference towards the established legislation about the onset and conduct of war, i.e. Jus in Bello, Jus ad Bellum. While al-Qaeda's legitimization of its use of force depends on the religious aspect of its worldview, this does not mean that rejection of the current Laws of War is a defining factor in so-called religious terrorism of al-Qaeda. Rather, this pattern can be attributed to the "metamorphosis of conflict" that characterized the birth of a "fourth generation of war" (Mohamedou, 2007: 24). This phenomenon is directly linked to the loss of monopoly by nation-states over the legitimate use of force. The guerilla warfare approach with terrorist tactics is a result of the status

asymmetry of the conflict. There is no clear reason as to why al-Qaeda, as a non state actor in an environment in which the nation-states lose ground on the monopoly of violence, should abide by the Laws of War, since its legitimization of the violence rests on fundamentally different grounds.

4.3.2.2. The Scale of the Guerilla Warfare

The guerilla warfare that al-Qaeda wages is on almost a global scale. This issue provides a large area of confrontation for al-Qaeda. As it was mentioned, at the formation stages of al-Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam's "revolution in one country approach" and Osama bin Laden's "world revolution approach" competed for prominence. With Azzam's death, bin Laden's image has shaped the group's overall attitude. The large area of confrontation enables al-Qaeda to avoid facing the U.S. military power in a concentrated sense. Moreover, the dispersion of al-Qaeda's assets throughout the entirety of the confrontation area gave it an operational flexibility, which means that al-Qaeda could revise its operational priorities, and avoid or prefer actual engagement in a given space. The operational flexibility is bolstered by the de-centralized approach that al-Qaeda adopted, which prevents the operational process being bogged down in a rigidity (Mishal and Rosenthal, 2005: 288).

Al-Qaeda's dispersion of assets in a large constituency is made possible by al-Qaeda's core cadre's relations with groups and movements that share al-Qaeda's worldview. The Afghan Jihad in the 1980s has already provided Osama bin Laden

with a number of contacts among the foreign fighters that have come to Afghanistan. Bin Laden's prestige amongst these foreign fighters has become an opportunity for him to capitalize on, after the foreign fighters returned to their respective countries.

The presence of regional contacts and the disruption of al-Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan led to a process in which the 'mother al-Qaeda, al Qaeda al Oum', in Mohamedou's expression 'encouraged the proliferation of mini-al-Qaedas' that are 'connected loosely' to the mother al-Qaeda (Mohamedou, 2007: 54). Gunaratna names those mini al-Qaedas as associate groups and specifies that "While associate groups attack tactical targets, strategic targets are al-Qaeda's responsibility" (Gunaratna, 2003: 127). Besides, local groups affiliate themselves with al-Qaeda, given its ideological appeal and tendency to engage America in a geographically wide and diffuse area. For example, the Algerian groups the Groupe Islamique Armed (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC: Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et el Combat) are significant associates of al-Qaeda, which enable it to operate in Europe (Gunaratna, 2003: 153). Other than the Algerian groups, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines, Harkat-ul Mujahidin, Jaysh-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba in Pakistan and Kashmir, the Tawhid group of Abu Musab al Zarqawi in Iraq, Jamaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and Taliban in Afghanistan are groups that are affiliated with al-Qaeda. Driven by al-Qaeda's ideological appeal, these groups benefit from the training and funding opportunities that al-Qaeda presents (Gunaratna, 2003: 222-292).

Through its affiliates and associates, al-Qaeda is endowed with sufficient assets to conduct the confrontation on a global scale. It provides a strategic framework for its associates' attacks and fits them into a general resistance against the U.S. incursion to the Muslim lands. This is evident in Osama bin Laden's praise of the several attacks in 2002, In that message of November 2002, Osama bin Laden states that

> The incidents that have taken place since the raids of New York and Washington until now -- like the killing of Germans in Tunisia and the French in Karachi, the bombing of the giant French tanker in Yemen, the killing of marines in Faylaka and the British and Australians in the Bali explosions, the recent operation in Moscow, and some sporadic operations here and there -- are only reactions and reciprocal actions.

And he puts that attacks such as those will go on as long as the Western aggression in the Muslim lands persists. It is not known whether those attacks that bin Laden have mentioned are carried on with a full guidance and direction of the al-Qaeda core leadership, nor does it matter. Within the framework of the confrontation, the al-Qaeda leadership is adept at presenting all those attacks in a strategic perspective.

4.3.2.3. Current Fronts of the Guerilla Warfare

Since al-Qaeda's constituency is the lands where Muslims dwell, the current conflict between it and the U.S. takes place on an enormous geographical scale. Al-Qaeda has originally started the engagement with America not on a single line of offense or defense but on an entire theatre of operations. From 2001 on the conflict started to take a two-pronged aspect within this theatre. Beside terrorist attacks in both the Muslim lands and the West, actual fronts have been introduced to the conflict. After 2003, insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan represented two main area of operations for al-Qaeda. Then, in 2007, Pakistan was added to those fronts.

Despite the disadvantages of an open engagement with the U.S., the presence of al-Qaeda in those fronts is in consistence with al-Qaeda's guerilla warfare approach. In Abu Musab Al-Suri's analysis, the overt engagement of al-Qaeda in specific locations is dubbed as the Open Front Jihad. Al-Suri states that:

> While it is possible to perform individual Jihad anywhere in the Arab and Islamic world, even all over the world, because this is not dependent on certain conditions where it takes place, the Open Front Jihad (jihad al-jabahat al-maftuhah) is dependent on strategic preconditions that are necessary in order to succeed. (Lia, 2007: 374)

In al-Suri's analysis, such preconditions that are necessary for the Open Front Jihad are factors related to geography, population and politics. As far as the countries Afghanistan-Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen is concerned, the preconditions are well met to enable an initiation of the Open Front Jihad. Those countries are convenient in terms of geography and population. They are large countries without well fortified borders, thus they are difficult to siege and contain. Except Iraq and Afghanistan, in which there is tangible foreign military presence, in Pakistan and Yemen, governments suffer from the lack of support on the part of a certain segment of their population. The populations of those countries are also affected from the general circumstances following the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. As its appeal has risen after the U.S. invasions, al-Qaeda devised ways of influencing and penetrating into those countries' population without much difficulty.

The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan are interconnected to each other. This is evident in the resurgence of Taliban after 2006. The increased Taliban activity in Afghanistan and the militant presence in its border with Pakistan, caused

radicalization among the Pashtun tribes of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province[5]
Taliban, which culminated in the formation of a Pakistani Taliban (Rana, 2009).
Besides, Pakistan already had its militant groups, especially for its covert activities
in India-administered Jammu-Kashmir (Ahmad, 2004). Also it is known that some
institutions of the Pakistani establishment had an involvement in Taliban's rise to
power and dissident voices had been heard within the Pakistani state institutions
after General Pervez Musharaf decided to support America in its Afghanistan
campaign (Oakley and Gady, 2009). As Pakistan failed to adopt a staunch stance
towards militant groups in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, al-
Qaeda and Taliban leadership found refuge in the border regions.

Al-Qaeda, while already having ties with the Afghan Taliban, started to spread its
influence amongst the Pakistani groups as well. The local groups and al-Qaeda have
developed a kind of mutually beneficial relationship. Al-Qaeda assists local groups
in terms of training and actual fighter support, while local groups' activities present
al-Qaeda with propaganda opportunities. Besides, al-Qaeda's larger strategic vision
frames the tactical moves by local groups such as Taliban, in its general
confrontational perspective. It means that while a specific, local victory in
Afghanistan would mean a significant development for a local Taliban group albeit
in a narrow sense, al-Qaeda possesses the outlook, vision and intellectual capacity to
enhance that victory as a great achievement for the Muslim nation, i.e. the Ummah.
Al-Qaeda has already depicted some developments in the past in a similar fashion
claimed above. The lessons and messages that al-Qaeda has derived from the
Hezbollah's bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in 1983, and the attack by local

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[5] It is renamed as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in 2010.

militants against the U.S. forces in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1995 has been translated into a strategic approach by al-Qaeda.

In Iraq, the insurgency consisted of various elements and some of them such as the Baathists and Shiite militias were considered unfit for an al-Qaeda penetration. However, the Iraqi Sunnis, from which the ruling class hailed from since its independence, were ousted from political power and posed a high potential for an al-Qaeda affiliation. The Iraq insurgency proves to be an important instance on the ways that al-Qaeda co-opts local movements. The Islamic State of Iraq, which is considered the al-Qaeda associate today originated in Abu Musab al Zarqawi's organization, Jamaat al-Tawhid wal Jihad.

Abu Musab al Zarqawi held a notorious reputation in Iraq due to his cruel and even brutal tactics, such as mass-casualty bombings and beheadings. His group pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and was renamed as al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers in October 2004. It is responsible for high profile suicide bombings and the sectarian conflict that heightened the instability in Iraq between 2004 and 2007. After al Zarqawi's death in 2006, Ayyub al Masri from Egypt has assumed the command and the group was renamed the Islamic State of Iraq at the end of 2006.

Al-Qaeda has been inciting Muslims to travel to Iraq and fight the Americans for quite some time. From 2003 on, the call to jihad in Iraq represents an important theme in al-Qaeda statements. Iraq represents a dual importance for al-Qaeda. Firstly, it constitutes a part of al-Qaeda's conflict with the U.S. in a local aspect, second, it serves as a "springboard for a wider regional conflict" (Al-Shishani,

2005). The Amman attacks in November 2005 by al-Zarqawi's group represent the secondary dimension. In this respect, it is obvious that Iraq provided al-Qaeda to fight against both the "far enemy" and the "near enemy" (Gergez, 2005).

4.4. Assessment

The guerilla warfare approach constitutes another significant element of al-Qaeda's strategy. Osama bin Laden announced the adoption of this approach in the declaration of war by al-Qaeda in 1996. Within al-Qaeda's strategy, the guerilla warfare involved several elements. These are

- Broadening the area of confrontation to a great geographical extent by the dispersion of al-Qaeda forces,

- Denying the enemy (the United States) a decisive victory by avoiding direct confrontation with its superior military force,

- Extending the confrontation over time for wearing down the enemy in military, economic and political sense, restoring the damage that al-Qaeda initially suffered and making excessive use of propaganda material,

- Engaging in local insurgencies against the enemy in order to take advantage of specific opportunities that local situations present.

Those elements, which are derived from the practices of al-Qaeda after 2001, comprise a pattern that helped compensate for the asymmetry it faced. That pattern involved but was not limited to terrorism. Rather it allows for a meaningful and satisfactory analysis through taking into consideration the guerilla warfare approach declared by Osama bin Laden and outlined by Abu Musab al-Suri.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As explained in the introduction part, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the effects of the strategy on the survival of al-Qaeda in the post-2001 period. In a general evaluation in the framework of the questions that are mentioned in the introduction part, the stated results can be listed as:

The contemporary asymmetrical conflicts in the onset of the 21st century pose an important challenge for international security. Those conflicts have a significant asymmetrical nature in terms of elements of quality and quantity. The quantifiable elements are military, economic and technological disparities between the parties to the conflict. The element that has a qualitative nature is the difference of status between the parties. Conflicts take place between states and non-state armed groups, which have significantly risen in significance at the end of the 20th century. Such conflicts are not recent phenomenon in international politics. In the period following the Second World War, asymmetrical conflicts took place in various parts of the world against former colonial empires and the United States of America in the context of decolonization. The striking element is that in these conflicts non-state

armed groups, the weak parties, have scored victory against highly industrialized powers, the strong parties. The Chinese resistance against Japan, the Vietnam conflict against France and the United States of America are the earlier examples of victory. The Afghan mujahedeen resistance against the Soviet Union is another example of victory that was based upon certain strategic principles derived from the earlier examples.

Those strategic principles constitute the outline of strategy for non-state armed groups. Such a strategy involves several elements. The major basis for this strategy is an indirect approach. It includes the absence of direct, decisive, military confrontation, the length of the conflict and the broadening of conflict through an excessive military approach by the state party that backfires as main elements. Through this approach the major blow of the non-state party is directed at the political will of the state party to carry on the conflict. Under the conditions of the asymmetrical conflict, these strategic principles serve the non-state group to offset the disadvantages it faces. Al-Qaeda engaged with the United States of America under such conditions. Consistent with the strategic principles stressed above, al-Qaeda guided its actions and reactions in a way that benefited itself under the asymmetry. Thus, it was able to derive advantages from the course of conflict in the Middle East. Al-Qaeda's strategy of guerilla warfare on a regional scale ensured the longevity of the conflict. Thus, as time progresses, the will of the U.S. to carry on the struggle against al-Qaeda was distracted if not diminished. Throughout this period, consistent with the guerilla warfare strategy, al-Qaeda offered no opportunity for a direct confrontation to the United States. Al-Qaeda, basically avoided direct clashes in order to ensure its survival. This point is very well

consistent with the indirect approach. According to the guerilla warfare strategy, al-Qaeda dispersed its forces in its constituency for both avoiding the US power projection and forcing to enemy to over extend its defensive capabilities. Therefore, al-Qaeda sought to turn the disadvantages of the asymmetrical conflict into advantages for itself, through applying and articulating a guerilla warfare strategy.

An evaluation of the strategy of al-Qaeda and its conflict with the U.S. within this conceptional framework is hampered by the overall understanding and traditional approaches towards al-Qaeda. The conventional understanding of al-Qaeda, generally, places it within the confines of religious terrorism. It focuses on the religious rhetoric and ideological aspect of al-Qaeda. It goes to the extent that individual motivation for terrorism is taken into consideration. Therefore, it detaches al-Qaeda from its political and historical context. Through depriving al-Qaeda from a political perspective, the conventional understanding implies that a political rationale is irrelevant to al-Qaeda, which is a religious terrorist group that performs violence per se. Nevertheless, certain works within the religious terrorism studies are helpful because they provide a great deal of factual information related to al-Qaeda. However, this study diverges from the religious terrorism studies in the way that the factual information is evaluated.

In order to evaluate the strategy of al-Qaeda, the study went through the historical and political developments at the end of the 20th century that are relevant to the emergence of al-Qaeda. After al-Qaeda's genesis has been deliberated, the research on the political context has revealed a general pattern in the *fin de siécle* Middle East that is the shortcomings of the Middle Eastern states in various dimensions that

led to the rise of non-state actors in the region. Al-Qaeda is a part of this trend that intended to substitute for states' failure in a general sense. Therefore, the context that al-Qaeda has emerged from is rich in elements that provide al-Qaeda experience and insights.

After placing al-Qaeda within the historical and political contexts, the study moved on to handle its strategy. Al-Qaeda's political rationale was deemed as an underlying element in its strategy, which guided its actions and reactions within the onset of the conflict in 1996 by itself. Al-Qaeda's reasons for going to war, the constituency that it primarily addresses, and the tactics it adopted under asymmetrical conditions reflect its political rationale. The communication is another important element within al-Qaeda's strategy. For survival concerns, propaganda needs and the conduct of its assets al-Qaeda focused on communications. Therefore, it has found the opportunity to bypass the international restrictions imposed upon it by intensifying its communication efforts, mainly through Internet usage. Al-Qaeda's conduct of the war represents a guerilla warfare approach. As the final but not the least important element of its strategy, this approach involves more than terrorism. Al-Qaeda, adopting the guerilla warfare approach, engages America in a wide geographical extent; however it avoids a decisive confrontation with it. Correspondingly, al-Qaeda seeks to extend the confrontation over time in order to wear down the U.S. political will to continue its presence in the Middle East. This element provides al-Qaeda with a breathing space after its initial setbacks in 2001. Al-Qaeda also makes use of local insurgencies in the Middle East, in which it adopts both a terrorist and an open front approach.

Finally, if a general evaluation is to be made within the framework of the hypothesis mentioned in the introduction, these solutions could be reached:

Within the conceptional framework involving asymmetrical conflicts between state and non-state actors, the study attempts to prove that the strategy factor, that is derived from past experiences and developed in the transnational context of current conflicts is the main element that contributes to survival of a non-state groups. Al-Qaeda's survival beyond 2001 owes to its strategy in a hostile atmosphere. That atmosphere consisted of increasing counterterrorism efforts by America and its allies, coupled with the U.S. invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Besides, the asymmetrical character of the conflict is a prevalent factor in this atmosphere. Al-Qaeda was deprived from its sanctuary and was forced to remain out of sight. Whereas the necessities of the asymmetrical conflict could prove as disadvantages for non-state groups, al-Qaeda utilized the elements of its strategy to offset those disadvantages and capitalize on its relative advantages. It employed a communication element within its strategy. Al-Qaeda continuously disseminated messages and statements to both hostile and friendly audiences. It sought a global audience. As the communication aspect started to take an important place within the current conflict, al-Qaeda proved to be adept at transmitting its message, using the latest communication techniques made available by technology, therefore it enjoyed a great deal of publicity that could both have an impact on its adversary and create an appeal within its constituency. Through increased vigilance in counterterrorism efforts, al-Qaeda faced a risk of isolation after its sanctuary has been disrupted. However, the communication aspect of its strategy enabled al-Qaeda to break such isolation.

Al-Qaeda's conduct of the actual conflict involved the employment of indirect guerilla warfare approach. Al-Qaeda refrained from direct clash with superior American forces, which would be near-suicidal. With this approach, al-Qaeda does not seek the destruction of the U.S. forces in the Middle East. Therefore, direct engagement would bear no fruit for it. Rather, al-Qaeda seeks to influence the political will of its enemies, as it was demonstrated in the 2004 Madrid Attacks that led to the withdrawal of Spain from Iraq. Terrorist attacks suit this approach due to their indirect nature that seeks some impact beyond damaging the immediate target. In this context, al-Qaeda's strategy depends on the practice of indirect approach in the conflict that will allow it to avoid defeat so that actual confrontation will take a much longer time. Therefore, al-Qaeda seeks to extend the duration of the conflict until the U.S. could no longer sustain its military commitments in the Middle East. Employing an indirect guerilla warfare approach enables al-Qaeda to offset its disadvantages in military sense.

Al-Qaeda's strategy depends on a careful and deliberate assessment of important contexts and developments at the end of the 20th century. It is al-Qaeda's political rationale that makes possible the assessment as such. It is needed to study al-Qaeda in its political and historical context to understand and underline the importance of its political rationale. Al-Qaeda is a transnational non-state armed group that emerged under the conditions of general state failure in the Middle East observed in the 1990s. It sought to substitute state in security matters. Based on its perception and conceptualization of the insecurities of its constituency, i.e. the Muslim nation, al-Qaeda strove to eliminate those insecurities. Therefore, in 1996, it initiated a

conflict with America, which al-Qaeda considered to be the main element beneath the problems and insecurities that the Muslim nation faced. In its struggle, al-Qaeda adopted a rational manner, with which it evaluated the present condition, sought ways for better conducting the conflict, and formulate a general pattern that elements of its strategy will fit in. After 2001, al-Qaeda has deepened its indirect approach to the conflict. The September 11 attacks drove the U.S. into a more extensive presence in the Middle East. This has provided al-Qaeda to broaden the area of confrontation and pull the U.S. into a war of attrition. Al-Qaeda aimed to sabotage the political will of the U.S. to carry on its presence in the lands of the Muslim nation. For achieving this aim, al-Qaeda initiated spectacular terrorist attacks and took advantage of the atmosphere that those attacks created with an intensified approach in communication that it addressed towards both friendly and hostile audiences through the Internet.

Those points show that the initial disadvantages of the asymmetrical conflict could be offset by such a strategic approach outlined above. Therefore, al-Qaeda was able to compensate for the asymmetrical conditions of the conflict. The explanations in the main body of the study sought to verify that through the compensation of the asymmetry it faces, al-Qaeda's strategy became the primary factor in its survival beyond 2001.

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