



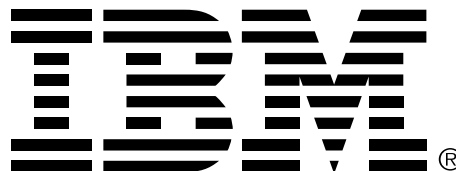
**Australian Security in the 21st Century
Seminar Series**

**Expanded version of the MRC presentation
'The Future of Al Qaeda and the Islamist terrorist
threat to Southeast Asia and Australia'**

**Delivered by
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Introduction

Since the emergence of the contemporary wave of terrorism in the Middle East in 1968, the world has witnessed three categories of terrorist organisations – ideological (left and right wing), ethnonationalist (irredentist, separatist, autonomy) and politico-religious groups. Two landmark events – the Islamic revolution in Iran – and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan – both in 1979 marked the emergence of the contemporary wave of Islamist guerrilla and terrorist groups.¹ While Iran’s clerical regime held dozens of Americans as hostages for 444 days in Tehran, the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan campaign checkmated the world’s largest army – the Soviet army in a protracted guerrilla campaign that lasted a decade. While an Islamic regime defied one superpower in the Middle East, an Islamic movement defeated another superpower in Afghanistan. In response to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (December 1979-February 1989), US presence in the Arabian Peninsula (December 1990), Gulf War I (January 1991) and the US-led coalition occupation of Iraq (March 2003- ____), Islamism grew in strength, size and influence. As a result, virulent and extremist ideologies found greater acceptance, existing Islamist political parties and terrorist groups became more influential, and new Islamist organisations proliferated.

Since its foundation in March 1988, one year before Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, Al Qaeda built a “network of networks.”² By co-opting leaders of like-minded Islamic movements, Al Qaeda build an umbrella of which Osama bin Laden gradually assumed the leadership. In its earlier life – Maktab – il –khidamat (Afghan Service Bureau) – established in 1984, it built a global network that channeled resources and recruits from around the world to Afghanistan. After defeating the Soviet Army, the largest land army in the world, and stripping the Soviet Empire of its super power status, the Islamists aimed its sights at the remaining superpower – the United States of America. As the vicious by product of the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan campaign, Al Qaeda had inherited a state-of-the-art training infrastructure, wealthy sponsors, proven trainers, experienced combatants and a vast support base stretching from Australia throughout the Muslim world into Canada.

After its victory against the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s, Al Qaeda transformed from a guerrilla group to a terrorist group capable of operating in urban terrain and targeting civilians after its headquarters relocated from Peshawar, Pakistan, to Khartoum, Sudan in December 1991. After the 1993 meeting in Khartoum, between Osama bin Laden and Imad Mugneyev, the head of the Special Security Apparatus of Hezbollah, the most dangerous terrorist group at that time, Al Qaeda members and

¹ While guerrilla groups target combatants, terrorist groups target non combatants.

² The term was coined by the Counter Terrorism Centre at the Central Intelligence Agency, Langley, Virginia, USA sometime in the late 1990s. Michael Sheehan, former US Ambassador for Counter Terrorism and currently Deputy Commissioner for Counter Terrorism at the New York Police Department, Senior’s Conference, US Military Academy, West Point, June 2003.

recruits received terrorist instruction in Sudan and Southern Lebanon.³ The camps in Sudan were sponsored and conducted by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security Affairs (MOIS) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). As the Taliban regime perceived the clerical regime in Iran as inimical, Iranian sponsorship declined after Osama bin Laden relocated from Sudan to Afghanistan in May 1996.⁴ After US occupation of Iraq in March 2003, Iran became the immediate neighbor of the United States of America. In conducting its operations from Afghanistan, a landlocked country, Al Qaeda has to rely either on Pakistan or Iran as a launching pad. With severe losses on its Pakistan front, since October 2001, Al Qaeda has opened a new staging area, the Iranian front. Is Iran turning a blind eye to Al Qaeda or actively supporting it? If so exactly which agency of Iran, a fractured government, is supportive of Al Qaeda? There are early signs of covert Iranian sponsorship of Al Qaeda, but it may be from one segment of the fractured government. As its immediate neighbor, both Iran and Syria, sponsors of the Lebanese Hezbollah, perceives the United States of America as a severe threat as well as its number one enemy, a notion shared by Al Qaeda and Hezbollah, the leading Shiite and Sunni terrorist groups today.

The Context:

Al Qaeda has suffered formidable losses since September 11, 2001. Over 3200 leaders, members and key supporters of Al Qaeda had been killed or captured in 102 countries since the United States of America's declared "War on Terrorism."⁵ Nonetheless, the robust Islamist milieu, in which Al Qaeda operates, has enabled the group to replenish its human losses - members captured and killed - and material wastage - assets seized and funds frozen. Furthermore, having imparted guerilla and terrorist training to several tens of thousands of Islamists from around the world in its camps in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda built sufficient strategic depth worldwide for the generation of support and recruits. As a well-endowed and well-resourced group from its inception, Al Qaeda invested in creating a cadre of highly dedicated and committed fighters willing to kill and die in the name of religion. Whether they live in the West or the East, Al Qaeda supporters and sympathizers believe in the often repeated Al Qaeda dictum: "It is the duty of every Muslim to wage jihad."

Despite the US led intensive and sustained global hunt, Al Qaeda continues to present an unprecedented threat. Its unique historical origins, religious character, and organizational structure guarantees its sustenance and survival. When compared with all the other terrorist groups we have been studying since the emergence of the contemporary wave of terrorism in 1968, Al Qaeda is different in composition, diversity, and reach. With the exception of Aum Shinrikyo of Japan, Al Qaeda is the first multinational terrorist group

³ The meeting was arranged by the former Egyptian Army Captain Ali Mohammad who subsequently became a naturalised American, joined the US military and served as a Supplies Sergeant at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, before joining Al Qaeda and becoming the Chief bodyguard of Osama bin Laden and the Principal Instructor of Al Qaeda, both in Afghanistan and Sudan. He is currently in US custody in the mainland USA.

⁴ However, 10% of phone calls from Osama bin Laden's satellite phone went to Iran from 1996-1998.

⁵ Compared to its numerical strength of 4000 members, estimated at October 2001, the loss of 3200 members and key supporters is significant. The figure 4000 members come from Al Qaeda detainee debriefs, including the FBI interrogation of Mohammad Mansour Jabarah, the 21 year old Canadian operative of Kuwaiti-Iraqi origin detained in mainland USA since 2002.

of the 21st century.⁶ It has recruited from the Muslim territories of Asia, Africa, Middle East, Caucasus and the Balkans as well as the Muslim migrant and diaspora communities of Europe, North America and Australia. In contrast to other groups that recruited from one single nationality⁷ or groupings of nationalities from one particular region,⁸ Al Qaeda is truly multinational. Despite global efforts to detect, disrupt, degrade and destroy Al Qaeda, the group has survived because it has a global presence. Periodically it has attacked symbolic, strategic and high profile targets across geographic regions to make its presence known to its support base and to its enemies. Its capacity to survive is largely due to its loosely networked structure, diverse composition and universal ideology. To counter and evade the growing threat to Al Qaeda, the group itself has transformed structurally, strategically and geographically. Al Qaeda is global in reach, from Asia to Canada; multi-national in composition, from Uigurs in Xingjiang to American Hispanics; and therefore, enjoys diverse capabilities, access to resources, and multiple modus operandi. There is not standard textbook for fighting Al Qaeda. As such, to effectively destroy a group like Al Qaeda, a global approach and a global strategy is a pre-requisite.

Post-9-11 Al Qaeda:

Today, Al Qaeda is in a period of transition. It has lost its base – Afghanistan – and its host, the Islamic Movement of the Taliban, the ruling party of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. More significantly, the death or capture of at least half its operational leaders, members and key supporters has dented its operational effectiveness. Despite the dismantling of its training and operational infrastructure in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda remains a serious, immediate and a direct threat to its enemies. Although Al Qaeda's physical and personnel infrastructure worldwide has suffered, its multi layered global network still retains sufficient depth to plan, prepare and execute operations directly and through associate groups. By ideologically and physically penetrating a number of regional conflicts where Muslims participate, Al Qaeda's decentralized network works with like-minded groups. With sustained action by the US, its allies and its friends in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the core of Al Qaeda, its organizers of attacks, trainers, financiers, operatives and other experts are moving to lawless zones of Asia, Middle East, Horn of Africa and the Caucasus.

Like a strike on a hive of bees, Al Qaeda members are gravitating, seeking new bases in Mindanao in the Philippines, Bangladesh-Myanmar border, Yemen, Somalia, Pankishi Valley in Georgia and Chechnya. Like sharks rapidly moving in search of new opportunities, post-9-11 Al Qaeda cells survive and strike on opportunity. After identifying the weaknesses and the loopholes of the new security architecture, a constantly probing Al Qaeda is likely to infiltrate. While retaining a presence in Afghanistan, post 9-11 Al Qaeda members are active and its fresh recruits train in the

⁶ However, Aum Shinrikyo does not have the same global composition or the global reach of Al Qaeda.

⁷ For instance, Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Group of Egypt has only Egyptians; Armed Islamic Group of Algeria and Salafi Group for Call and Combat has only Algerians, Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayaaf Group has only Moros;

⁸ For instance, Takfir Wal Hijra, a group active in Europe and North America recruited from North Africa – Egyptians, Algerians, Libyans, Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians – and Jemmah Islamiyah recruited from Southeast Asia and Australia – Indonesian, Malaysian, Thais, Singaporeans, Filipinos, and Australians (both cradle and convert Muslims).

conflict zones. For Al Qaeda, regional conflicts are healthy green houses to rebuild, regroup, and strike.

Although Al Qaeda as an organization per se has suffered, it is still retaining its pioneering vanguard status of the Islamic movements. In keeping with its founding charter authored by its founder leader Dr Abdullah Azzam, Al Qaeda remains the spearhead of the Islamic movements. Despite repeated high quality losses, Al Qaeda is still able to set the ideological and operational agenda for three-dozen foreign Islamist groups it trained and financed during the last decade. Al Qaeda is able to preserve its global status by relying on its associated groups to sustain its fight against the US, its allies and its friends. To compensate for the loss of its state-of-the-art training infrastructure in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda is exploiting the Islamic movements within its ideological, military and financial spheres of influence. Until US intervention in October 2001, the international neglect of Afghanistan turned the country into a “terrorist Disneyland” with about 40 Islamist groups receiving both guerrilla and terrorist training throughout the 1990s. These Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Caucasian groups, hitherto fighting local campaigns, influenced by Al Qaeda’s vision of a global jihad, today pose a threat comparable to Al Qaeda.

The post 9-11 trajectory of Al Qaeda operations demonstrate its staying power. With sustained US and allied action in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaeda has an infinite capacity to change its shape. In the coming months, Al Qaeda will fragment, decentralize, regroup in lawless zones of the world, work with like-minded groups, select a wider range of targets, focus on economic targets and population centers, and conduct most attacks in the global south. Although the group will be constrained from conducting coordinated simultaneous attacks against high profile, symbolic or strategic targets in the West, Al Qaeda together with its regional counterparts will attacks in Asia, Africa, Middle East, and even in Latin America, a region where it only has a limited presence. Despite the likely capture or death of its core and penultimate leaders, Al Qaeda’s anti-Western universal jihad ideology inculcated among the politicized and radicalized Muslims will sustain support for Al Qaeda.

While its organizers of attacks will remain in Pakistan and Iran, its operatives and messengers will travel back and forth coordinating with Al Qaeda nodes in safe zones such as Yemen, Somalia, Bangladesh, Philippines and Chechnya. To make its presence felt, Al Qaeda will increasingly rely on its global terrorist network of groups in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Horn of Africa, Middle East, and the Caucuses to strike at its enemies. Already attacks in Kenya, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Kuwait and Yemen seek to compensate for the loss and lack of space and opportunity to operate in the West. Its operatives are currently working together with Jemmah Islamiyah (JI: Southeast Asia), Al Ithihad al Islami (Horn of Africa), Al Ansar Mujahidin (Caucuses), Tunisian Combatants Group (Middle East), Jayash-e-Mohammad (South Asia), Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC, North Africa, Europe and North America) and other Islamist groups it had trained and financed in the past decade. As Al Qaeda has a very small number of cells in the West, the group will operate through the GSPC and Takfir Wal Hijra – two

groups it had infiltrated in Europe and North America.⁹ With the transfer of terrorist technology and expertise from the center to the periphery, the attacks by the associated groups of Al Qaeda is posing a threat comparable to Al Qaeda.

The fragmentation of Al Qaeda support and operational infrastructure under sustained military and law enforcement action is making it rely on its strategic linkages, diversity, and global reach. The decentralization of Al Qaeda has contributed to its flexibility of targeting. Despite being the most hunted terrorist group in history, its cellular structure, rigid compartmentalization, and the robust Islamist milieu, ensures its resilience to destruction. With sustained military action in Afghanistan, the threat of terrorism has diffused, increasing the threshold for political violence worldwide. The new threshold terrorism is a multidimensional, complex, and a global challenge. Despite sustained attrition of Islamist networks since October 2001, their high capacity for replenishing losses by regenerating fresh support and recruits has ensured the continuity of the intellectual and operational capabilities of Al Qaeda. As such, many governments and publics will have to live with a medium to high threat index for several years in different parts of the world.

Current Situation:

In response to the high threat to Al Qaeda, the group is becoming more creative and lethal. The group is adapting dual technologies - airplanes, commercially available chemicals, agricultural fertilizers, liquid petroleum gas, and liquid nitrogen – as its new weapons. The group is also searching for new weapons such as chemical and biological agents especially contact poisons easy to conceal and breach security. Both Osama's statement in February 2003 "think intelligently and kill the Americans secretly and in May 2003, Sheikh Nasr bin Hamid al Fahd's fatwa legitimizing the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Although an attempt to pervert Islam, it is likely that the Saudi Sheik presented Koranic justifications, a requirement in Islam, prelude to an attack. The Al Qaeda associate group - the Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) – successfully developed ricin, one of the contact poisons found in the Al Qaeda manuals and its rudimentary manufacturing apparatus in London in January 2003. The ricin network in Europe, especially in London, Manchester, East Anglia and Edinburgh in the UK, worked together with Al Qaeda experts in the Pankishi Gorge in Georgia, the border of Chechnya.

In the current environment, terrorist groups will continue to recruit and mission its members and supporters living in the West to support and conduct attacks. With the exception of the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma in 1995, almost all the major terrorist attacks in the West has been conducted by members of diaspora and migrant communities. The 9-11 coordinator Ramzi bin al Shibh and the suicide pilots were migrants living in the West. As foreign terrorist groups based in North America, Western Europe, and Australia did not pose a direct and an immediate threat to Western

⁹ Hasan Hattab the head of the European network of the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) broke away from the GIA in 1998 and formed GSPC. Although GSPC is strongest in Europe, a cell in the US planning to target the MGM hotel and casino in Las Vegas was broken by the FBI in 2002.

¹⁰ Interview, Dr Reuven Paz, International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, Israel, May 2003.

security until 9-11, these host governments tolerated their activity and presence. Even after 9-11, due to the reluctance of Europe, Canada, and Australia to disrupt terrorist support networks, terrorist organizations continue to target émigré communities for recruits and support. Other than Al Qaeda front, cover and sympathetic groups, other Islamist groups are aggressively politicizing, radicalizing and mobilizing their migrants and diaspora. Assif Mohammed Hanif, 21, and Omar Khan Sharif, 27, two British suicide bombers of Asian origin from Derbyshire, UK infiltrated Israel and attacked Mike's Place, a nightclub, on April 30, 2003. While Hanif detonated, killing two musicians and one waiter and injuring 60, Sharif's explosives device failed to detonate. Since the 31-month uprising in Israel, Hanif's bombing was the first suicide attack by a foreigner. Similarly, in Asia, the first suicide bomber who targeted the State Assembly in Srinagar, Kashmir, was a British Muslim, also of Asian origin. The émigré communities remain vulnerable to ideological penetration, recruitment, and provision of financial support. Despite stepped up government surveillance, disenfranchised segments of the émigré communities in Western countries still identify themselves with the struggles in their homelands. Until and unless, host governments develop a better understanding of the threat and target terrorist propaganda, both its tools and its ideologues, the threat to the West from within will persist.

As illustrated by the statements of both Osama bin Laden and his successor and deputy Dr Ayman Al Zawahiri, although Al Qaeda's capability to attack the West has diminished, its intention to attack has not. On October 6, 2002, Osama bin Laden, the Emir-General of Al Qaeda said: "I am telling you, and God is my witness, whether America escalates or de-escalates this conflict, we will reply to it in kind, God willing. God is my witness, the youth of Islam are willing, are preparing things that will fill your hearts with tears. They will target the key sectors of your economy until you stop your injustice and aggression or until the more short-lived of the US die."¹¹ Ayman Al Zawahiri said on Al Jazeera on October 8, 2002: "Our message to our enemies is this: America and its Allies should know that their crimes will not go unpunished, god willing. We advice them to hasten to leave Palestine, the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, and all Muslim countries, before they loose everything. We addressed some messages to America's Allies to stop their involvement in its crusader campaign. The Mujahid youths have addressed a message to Germany and another to France. If these measures have not been sufficient, we are ready with the help of God, to increase them."¹² In many ways their periodic pronouncements and statements are the best guide to future Al Qaeda actions.

Targeting Trends:

Having recruited from a cross section of society – the rich, the poor, the educated and the less educated, Al Qaeda has developed a reasonably good understanding of Western security measures and countermeasures. After the bombing of the US embassies in East Africa in August 1998, the US government enhanced the perimeter security of its land

¹¹ Osama bin Laden's two-minute audiotape broadcast to mark the first anniversary of the US intervention in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera, Arab Satellite Television Station, Qatar, October 6, 2002.

¹² Ayman Al Zawahiri's question and answer with an unidentified reporter, Al Jazeera, October 8, 2002.

targets. Then Al Qaeda attacked USS Cole, a maritime target in October 2000. When the US government enhanced the perimeter of its land and maritime targets, Al Qaeda attacked America's icons from the sky. The tactical trajectory of Al Qaeda suggests a cunning foe always keen to harass, hurt, and humiliate the enemy by deception.

Al Qaeda's tactical repertoire was deeply influenced by the Iranian-sponsored Lebanese Hezbollah. Hezbollah modus operandi of coordinated simultaneous suicide attacks influenced Al Qaeda's modus operandi in a big way. As Al Qaeda's aim was also to force the withdrawal of US troops from the Arabian Peninsula, the group emulated the success of Hezbollah in Beirut in 1983 where the group forced the US led multinational peace keeping force to withdraw from Lebanon in 1983 following coordinated simultaneous suicide attacks on US and French targets. In the attack on its marine barracks, the US lost 243 personnel, the single biggest loss since Vietnam. As a result, for several years, the US disengaged itself from the politics of the Middle East. With the exception of the attack on the USS Cole, all the mega attacks by Al Qaeda have been coordinated simultaneous suicide attacks. For instance, Al Qaeda attacked the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998; attempted to destroy the Los Angeles international airport, Radisson Hotel in Amman, Jewish and Christian holy sites in Jordan, and the USS The Sullivans in Aden, Yemen on the eve of the millennium; and attacked America's most outstanding economic and military landmarks and attempted to attack its political landmark on 9-11. Similarly Al Qaeda influenced its associated groups to conduct coordinated simultaneous attacks. For instance, Jemmah Islamiyah successfully attacked 16 churches in Indonesia on Christmas Day in 2000 and five targets in Manila, Philippines on December 30, 2000.

In the early 1990s, Al Qaeda's aim was to create Islamic states in the Middle East by targeting the false Muslim rulers and the corrupt Muslim regimes. After suffering significant losses, both its operatives and material, in the Middle East, Al Qaeda decided to abandon its policy of targeting near targets in favor of targeting the distant enemy – the West – especially the “head of the poisonous snake” – the USA. Gradually, Al Qaeda attacks escalated in intensity and sophistication – East Africa in August 1998, USS Cole in October 2000, and America's mainland on 9-11. The two wave attacks in October 2001 and May 2003 are major turning points. Today, Al Qaeda is returning to its near-targets in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Caucuses. Having suffered significant losses to its support and operational infrastructure in North America, Western Europe and Australasia, the primary target countries, in the last two years, Al Qaeda is aggressively seeking Western and Jewish targets in the Muslim World.

Although attacking inside North America, Europe, Australasia and Israel remains a priority, Western security measures and countermeasures have made it expensive and difficult for Al Qaeda to mount an operation on Western soil. Nonetheless, Al Qaeda and its associate groups will attack Western targets outside the West where security is largely in the hands of foreign governments. Al Qaeda finds it less costly to operate in parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, where there is lack of security controls. Therefore, most attacks will be against Western targets located in the global south such as the attack in Saudi Arabia. While focusing on Western targets, Al Qaeda will continue to conduct

operations against Muslim rulers and regimes supporting the US led “war or terror.” The physical security of the Saudi royalty, Pakistani and Afghan leaders Musharaaf and Karzai respectively will remain particularly vulnerable and their regimes will come under sustained political challenges in the coming years.

With the hardening of US targets, the threat is shifting to both government and population targets of allies and friends of the US. Similarly, Al Qaeda is increasingly looking for opportunity targets. For instance, when Al Qaeda failed to target a US warship off Yemen, it targeted a French oil super tanker in October 2002. The hardening of government land and commercial aerial targets has shifted Al Qaeda targeting to both soft land and maritime targets. Although the primary intention of Al Qaeda is to target inside the US, it lacks the quality operatives of the Mohammad Atta caliber to operate inside the US. Therefore, Al Qaeda is targeting US land, sea and aviation overseas. Increased hardening of US military and diplomatic targets after 9-11 is steadfastly shifting the threat to other classes of targets. For instance, Al Qaeda cells in Morocco attempted to target both British and US shipping in the Straits of Gibraltar in mid 2002. Due to perimeter and structural hardening of Israeli and US embassies in Europe and Asia, Al Qaeda decided to target friends and allies of Israel and the US. More than ever before, today, the allies and the friends of the US are vulnerable to Al Qaeda attack.

Hardening of government targets will also displace the threat to softer targets making civilians prone to terrorist attack. For instance, Al Qaeda planned to attack US diplomatic targets in Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Manila, American Institute in Taiwan, and the US consulate in Surabaya in September 2002,¹³ but visible security presence made the group consider soft targets. Although not in all cases, hardening of targets works but as the world witnessed with horror, counter measures makes terrorists creative and innovative. As the traditional explosives laden vehicle was a non-option to breach the hardened perimeter security of America’s most outstanding landmarks, Al Qaeda was forced to develop an aerial airborne capability. Similarly, hardening of military and diplomatic targets in Southeast Asia prompted Jemmah Islamiyah to seek entertainment targets such as Bali. The reality is that government countermeasures have increased the vulnerability of population centers and economic targets. As Islamist groups weaken they are likely to hit soft targets, killing civilians, if possible in large number. As it is impossible to prevent bombing of public places, civilian and civilian infrastructure targets will remain the most vulnerable to terrorist attack in the immediate, mid and in the long term.

Hardening of land and aviation targets will shift the threat to sea targets particularly to commercial maritime targets. As any aviation incident attracts significant attention, Al Qaeda assigns a high priority to aviation-impact terrorism. Due to the difficulty of hijacking aircraft to ram them against targets, Al Qaeda will increasingly invest in conducting stand off attacks and use hand held Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs). For instance, Al Qaeda Sudanese member fired a SA-7 missile at a US military transport

¹³ Debriefing of Umar Al Faruq, held at Baghram Airbase, Afghanistan, on September 9, 2002, enabled the US government to issue an alert immediately before September 11, 2002, the first anniversary of 9-11. Tactical Interrogation Report Umar Al Faruq, CIA, Langley, September 2002.

plane at the Prince Sultan base in Saudi Arabia in mid 2001. His arrest in Khartoum in December 2001 led the Saudi authorities to recover another complete missile system buried in the Riyadh desert. If appropriate and immediate countermeasures are not taken to target the Al Qaeda shipping network, SAMs under Al Qaeda control held in the Pakistan-Kashmir-Afghanistan theatre, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Horn of Africa will find its way to the Far Asia and to Europe, and possibly even to North America. Protective measures, especially target hardening of vulnerable government personnel and infrastructure, by law enforcement and protective services is a temporary solution. To reduce the threat, governments have no option but to hunt terrorists and prevent public support and sympathy for terrorism.

The post 9-11 robust security architecture has forced Al Qaeda to transform its targeting strategy. Al Qaeda's capacity to conduct spectaculars or theatrical attacks has diminished due to three factors. First, heightened human vigilance. The high state of alertness of the public and law enforcement authorities has led to the disruption of several operations. For instance, the alert passengers and crew prevented the bombing of the transatlantic flight by Richard Reid, the Al Qaeda shoe bomber on board American Airlines 63 on December 22, 2001. Second, unprecedented law enforcement, security and intelligence cooperation and coordination. As a direct result of inter and intra agency cooperation a large number of suspects have been detained and arrested and over 100 attacks by Al Qaeda and its associated groups have been interdicted, prevented or abandoned since 9-11. Cooperation beyond the Anglo-Saxon countries, Europe and Israel, especially with the Middle East and Asia, has led to significant arrests. For instance, Jose Padilla, who intended to mount surveillance and reconnaissance to detonate a radiological dispersal device in Washington DC, en-route from Pakistan via Zurich was arrested at the Chicago O'Hare international airport in the US on May 8, 2002. Third, hunting Al Qaeda and its associate groups has limited their time, space and resources to conceptualize, plan and prepare elaborate terrorist strikes. As long as the international community can maintain the public vigilance, anti- and counter terrorism cooperation and coordination worldwide; and maintain sustained pressure on the group, Al Qaeda will not be able to mount large-scale coordinated simultaneous attacks on symbolic, strategic and high profile targets. Large attacks require long term planning and preparation by several operatives and across several countries. In the current security environment, where there are periodic desertions, arrests, and penetration, a terrorist group can only plan, prepare and execute medium to small-scale operations. Preventing complacency from setting in, especially after a long period of Al Qaeda inactivity is difficult but it is a must if we are to prevent the next attack.

The nature of the Al Qaeda threat has clearly changed since 9-11. In comparison, the post 9-11 threat to the US, its allies and its friends is fragmented and diffused. Although it has no resources to carry out theatrical or spectacular attacks, it has a clandestine network to move, experts, messages and money to associate groups. All indications are that Al Qaeda is not deserting from the 1520-mile long Pakistan-Afghanistan border but its leadership is actively and aggressively tasking its membership and ideologizing associate

groups.¹⁴ From the center of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaeda's technical experts and financiers, organizers of attacks and operatives are gravitating to lawless zones in Asia, Horn of Africa, Caucuses, Balkans and the Middle East widening the perimeter of the conflict. The regional groups - such as Jemmah Islamiyah - and local groups - such as Islamic Army of Abyan Aden - are providing a platform for Al Qaeda to plan, prepare, and execute operations against targets of the West and Muslim countries friendly to the West. For instance, the attack on the French tanker Limburg was staged by Al Qaeda working with the Islamic Army of the Abyan in Aden. Similarly, the Bali bombing was staged by Jemmah Islamiya, working together with Al Qaeda experts. Likewise, in Pakistan, a dozen attacks has been conducted by Al Qaeda through individual members of Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Harakat-ul-Jihad-I-Islami, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, and Harakat-ul Mujahidin.¹⁵ A decentralised Al Qaeda working with Islamist and other groups worldwide is a force multiplier. In the years ahead, Al Qaeda - that has a long history of providing experts, trainers and funds to other groups - is likely to operate effectively and efficiently through their associates. To compensate for the losses suffered by the group, post-9-11 Al Qaeda operatives are heavily reliant on the social and familial contacts in associate groups. Therefore, mapping the family and social trees of leaders, members, supporters and sympathizers is key to understanding the deepening operational nexus between Al Qaeda and its associate groups. The nexus has manifested in tactical and opportunity targeting as well as the globalisation of the terrorist strategy, developments that call for closer political, diplomatic, law enforcement, military, security and intelligence cooperation and coordination.

Wave Attacks:

Today, Al Qaeda conducts two types of attacks – stand-alone attacks and wave attacks. For maximum impact and effect, Al Qaeda prefers to conduct attacks in waves. The first wave of attacks by Al Qaeda after 9-11 was in October and November 2002, when Al Qaeda working together with Islamic Army of the Abayan in Yemen, Jemmah Islamiyah in Indonesia (Islamic Group), Al Ansar Mujahidin in Chechnya (The Supporters of the Warriors of God); Shurafaa al-Urdun (The Honourables of Jordan); Al Ittihad Al Islami (Islamic Union) staged five attacks. A suicide boat meant for a US warship attacked the French oil super tanker Limburg off Mukalla, Yemen on October 6; gunmen killed two US marines on exercises in Failaka, Kuwait on October 8; multiple suicide bombings in Bali, Indonesia on October 12, 2002; hostage taking in a theatre in Moscow on October 24; assassination of USAID official Lawrence Foley in Amman, Jordan on October 28;

¹⁴ Kashmir, only six hours by road from Afghanistan and the theatre of conflict nearest to Afghanistan, was visited by the author in August 2002. Both reviewing detainee tactical interrogation reports and debriefing of foreign detainees by the author revealed that Al Qaeda is neither abandoning nor deserting Afghanistan or Pakistan but the routine flow of foreigners to fight in Indian Kashmir is continuing.

¹⁵ For instance, the 9-11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohomad, Al Qaeda's head of the military committee, ordered a Pakistani group to kill Daniel Pearl, the first US casualty in a terrorist attack since 9-11. Operating through Lashkar-e-Omar, an umbrella group mooted by Al Qaeda, six terrorists opened fire and killed 17 Christians including five children and a policeman and injuring 17 in a church in Bahawalpur, Punjab on October 28, 2001. Similarly, a grenade attack on a church in the heavily guarded diplomatic enclave in Islamabad killed 5 including a US official's wife and daughter and injured 41 on March 17, 2002. Al Qaeda also financed a car bombing to kill President Musharaff, and when it failed used the same car bomb to attack the US consulate. While Pakistanis mounted reconnaissance and organised the explosives and the vehicle, an Arab Al Qaeda member finally arrived and conducted the suicide bombing killing 12 Pakistanis and injuring 51 including one US marine guard in Karachi on June 14 2002.

suicide bombing of an Israeli owned Kikambala Paradise hotel and Surface to Air Missile attack on Israeli Arkia Flight 582 on November 28.

After maintaining a year of silence Al Qaeda presented Koranic justifications in October 2002 immediately before launching the coordinated multiple attacks in the Middle East and Asia. The attacks in Yemen, Kuwait and Jordan indicated the ability of Al Qaeda and its associated groups to function amidst security countermeasures. Islamist groups in Chechnya and Thailand also conducted terrorist operations in Russia and in Southern Thailand respectively. On October 6, an explosives laden suicide boat rammed the 157,833-ton French oil super tanker Limburg before mooring at al Shihr off the coast of Yemen. The explosion killed one Bulgarian and injured one-crew members, and spilling 90,000 barrels of crude oil.¹⁶ Although the time and the place of the attack could not be determined, governments in Asia and in the Middle East anticipated maritime suicide attacks on military and commercial shipping in the Straits of Malacca and in the Persian Gulf by Al Qaeda.¹⁷ Based on debriefing of Al Qaeda operatives detained in the Middle East and in Asia, the US intelligence community warned of impending attacks. For instance, before US and Indonesian joint military and naval exercises were held from May 30-June 3, 2002, Al Qaeda's former Southeast Asian representative Omar Al Faruq was trying to source terrorists to conduct suicide attacks against US warships in Surabaya in Indonesia's second largest city in May 2002.¹⁸ Two days after the Limburg attack, two terrorists in a pickup truck attacked a marine unit of the US military on training maneuvers on Failaka, an island 10 miles east of Kuwait City.¹⁹ The October 8 attack killed Lance Corporal Antonio J. Sledd, 20 years old, from Hillsborough County Florida. The terrorists drove to a second location to attack again but were killed by US marines.

Al Qaeda, operating through Jemmah Islamiyah (JI), its Southeast Asian network, staged the worst terrorist attack in Indonesia's tourist resort of Bali killing 202 and injuring over 300 people mostly Australian tourists on October 12, 2002, also the anniversary of the USS Cole attack.²⁰ Before and after the mass casualty bombing at the Sari Club, Bali at 23.15 Hrs, small bombs exploded near other targets reflecting both Al Qaeda and JI modus operandi and widespread capability to conduct coordinated simultaneous or near-simultaneous attacks. The targets were the Philippine Consulate, Manado City, North Sulawesi, at 18.45, 23.00 Hrs at the Paddy Restaurant, Kuta Beach Strip in Bali, and 23.25 Hrs near the US Consulate in Denpasar, Bali.²¹ Bali, a predominately Hindu city where 22,000 Australians were holidaying, was the ideal target for JI-Al Qaeda. The neighboring Philippines witnessed five bombings killing 22 including a US serviceman and injuring over 200 in October 2002. Although the perpetrators have not been identified, Philippines intelligence community suspects that the bombings were carried out by the Al Qaeda-affiliated Abu Sayyaf Group, a group that has suffered significantly

¹⁶ Al Qaeda website al.neda.com claimed that it attacked the "French oil tanker off the coast of Yemen."

¹⁷ Terrorist connections of Abubakar Basyir; and further details on terrorist connection and activities of Umar Faruq, Orange Alert Document, September 2002, p. 2.

¹⁸ Umar Faruq's Terrorist Activities in Indonesia, Badan Inteligen Nasional (BIN: National Intelligence Agency), Jakarta, June 2002, p.1.

¹⁹ al.neda.com claimed that it attacked the "Fialka base in Kuwait"

²⁰ al.neda.com claimed that it attacked the "nightclubs and warehouses in Indonesia."

²¹ Analysis of the Latest Bombing Incident in Indonesia and Its Possible Connections with Al-Qaeda and Jemmah Islamiyah, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, Philippines, October 2002.

as a result of post 9-11 US assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. On October 28, a terrorist opened fire on Laurence Foley, a 60-year old US diplomat in Jordan working as an administrator for the US Agency for International Development (USAID).²² Foley shot point blank seven times in his chest when he was heading for his car parked in his garage in his house in Amman. The Shurafaa al-Urdun (The Honorables of Jordan), a suspected front for Al Qaeda, claimed that Foley was killed in protest of US support for Israel and the “bloodshed in Iraq and Afghanistan.”²³ The attack came amidst a warning in August 2002, when the US government stated that Al Qaeda was planning to kidnap US citizens in Jordan.

Following the tradition of Prophet Muhammad of calling its enemies to convert to Islam before subduing them, Al Qaeda launched multiple attacks in Kuwait, Yemen, and Bali, all in the second week of October 2002. Bin Laden said: “In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate; a message to the American people: peace be upon those who follow the right path. I am an honest advisor to you. I urge you to seek the joy of life and the afterlife, and to rid yourself of your dry, miserable, and spiritless materialistic life. I urge you to become Muslims, for Islam calls for the principle of ‘There is no God but Allah,’ and for justice and forbids injustice and criminality. I also call on you to understand the lesson of the New York and Washington raids, which came in response to some of your previous crimes. The aggressor deserves punishment. However, those who follow the movement of the criminal gang at the White House, the agents of the Jews, who are preparing to attack and partition the Islamic World, without you disapproving of this, realize that you have not understood anything from the message of the two raids.... We beseech Almighty God to provide us with his support. He is the protector and has the power to do so. Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah. If then they turn back, say ye: bear witness that we at least are Muslims bowing to Allah’s will.”²⁴

To assess the statements of bin Laden and Zawahiri, the CIA approached the senior most Al Qaeda leaders in US detention, Abu Zubaidah, former head of Al Qaeda’s external operations, and Ramzi bin Al Shibh, the chief logistics officer of 9-11 operation. They interpreted with dead accuracy that bin Laden would not make such a statement unless the organisation was “ready and able to carry out such attacks” and according to Abu Zubaidah, “bin Laden’s modus operandi considered of reviewing operational plans, weighing the consequences of each, selecting targets, and finally releasing his message regarding an impending attack. The plan has been approved and the timing is now determined by the operatives and the local security situation.”²⁵ They said that the same

²² USAID is the lead disaster relief agency engaged in agriculture, water and humanitarian programs.

²³ The same group had claimed responsibility for killing of Israeli diamond merchant Yitzhak Snir, a man in his 50s, who was slain near Foley’s home on August 6, 2001. The group said the attack was in response to Israeli behaviour against Palestinians. Israeli security officials suspected that two previous attacks conducted against Israeli citizens in Jordan were also by the same group. On December 5, 2000, an unidentified gunman shot and slightly wounded Israeli diplomat Shlomo Razabi in the left foot as he was leaving an Amman store. On November 19, 2000, Israeli diplomat Yoram Havivian was slightly wounded in the arm and the leg when a gunman fired on his vehicle.

²⁴ Osama bin Laden’s two-minute audiotape broadcast to mark the first anniversary of the US intervention in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera, Arab Satellite Television Station, Qatar, October 6, 2002.

²⁵ Al-Qa’ida Declarations of Continued Attacks, CIA, Langley, October 2002, p. 1.

way the prophet urged his opponents to embrace Islam before being subdued by his army, Osama was calling his opponents to convert to Islam before attacking them. Although the tape was meant for an external constituency, Osama was trying to justify Koranically his course of action to his internal constituency.

Diffusion of Threat:

Both the spreading out of Al Qaeda cells and the conduct of spectacular attacks have certainly made anti- and counter-terrorism initiatives difficult and complex. As terrorists are copycats, the direct and indirect influence of Al Qaeda is reflected in the changing behavior of several groups. As terrorist groups closely guard their foreign linkages, often it has become difficult even by government intelligence agencies to identify the exact nature of their external relationships. While the Russian secret service is convinced of the Al Qaeda-Chechen terrorist nexus, there has been a grave reluctance in the Western press to call Chechen groups that practice terrorism as “terrorists.”²⁶ On October 23, 2002, 53 male and female suicide terrorists from Chechnya, 600 miles away from Moscow, stormed the 1163 seat auditorium of Act II screening Nord-Ost (North East), a popular musical.²⁷ After mining the theatre with 850 hostages, they wanted Russian forces to withdraw from Chechnya. The next day, they sent a video tape to Al Jazeera where a hostage taker said: I swear by God we are more keen on dying than you are keen on livingeach one of us is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of God and the independence of Chechnya.”²⁸ On October 26, after the terrorists began to execute their hostages, Spetsnaz commandos in the elite Alfa and Vypel anti terror squads of the Federal Security Service rescued the hostages after injected sleeping gas through the ventilation system and holes bored underneath the auditorium. Of the 119 dead hostages, only two died of gun shot injuries – others perished from the gas, due to lack of timely medical care. The Moscow operation was conducted by 25-year old Movsar Barayev, the nephew of Arbi Barayev, the Chechen Islamic Special Units leader who oversaw the beheading of three British and one New Zealand telecommunication workers in Chechnya in 1998.²⁹ The deputies of the Chechen rebel President Aslan Maskhadov were Shamil Basayev, leader, and Ibn ul-Khattab, military leader, Majlis ul-Shura of Mujahidin of Ichkeria and Dagestan respectively.³⁰ Khattab, the then commander of the Al Ansar Mujahidin (Islamic International Brigade) and a protégé of bin Laden, was assassinated by the Russian secret service on March 19, 2002. Movsar was close to Khattab, who remained a part of the Al Qaeda network until his death.³¹ Khattab was succeeded by Mohamad al Ghamdi alias Abu Walid, the cousin brother of two 9-11 hijackers, the Ghamdi brothers. The Moscow operation bore the first three hallmarks of Al Qaeda: (a) grandiose operations, (2) suicide, (3) targeting the heart, and (4) coordinated simultaneous attacks.

²⁶ Valeria Korchagina, “Hostage-takers ‘keen on dying.’ USA Today, October 25, 2002, p. 14 A. Article uses the term “rebels.”

²⁷ After the first Chechen war (December 1994-November 1996), Russian troops withdrew from Chechnya but returned in 1999 in response to a series of apartment bombings in Moscow that killed 300 Russians.

²⁸ Chechen Tape, Al Jazeera, October 24, 2002.

²⁹ Movsar’s aunt Khava Barayev, 19, conducted a suicide attack killing two Russian soldiers at the Russian base in Alkhan-Yurt in June 2000.

³⁰ Poisoned Letter Killed Chechen Commander Khattab, Kavkaz-Tsentr News Agency Web Site in Russian April 28, 2002.

³¹ Al Qaeda’s former Southeast Asian representative Umar Al Faruq’s cell phone number 081-2802-7614 was in the phone memory of Ibn-ul-Khattab as well as the phone book of another Al Qaeda leader Abu Talha alias Muhammad Abdallah Nasir Ubayd al Dusari arrested by the Kuwaitis. Tactical Interrogation Report Umar Al Faruq, CIA, Langley, September 2002.

Second Wave:

The post 9-11 second wave targeted Riyadh, Casablanca, Chechnya and Karachi in May 2003. Demonstrating that the group remains a resilient threat, Al Qaeda coordinated its attack in Riyadh with its associated groups the timings of the bombings in North Africa, Caucasus and in Asia. To compensate for the loss of significant personnel and physical infrastructure, Al Qaeda is relying on its associate groups to conduct operations.

Despite being hunted by the Saudi intelligence and its law enforcement agencies Al Qaeda was able to plan, prepare and execute an operation in the heart of the Kingdom on May 12, 2003. Amidst domestic and foreign intelligence, both technical and human, that Al Qaeda was in the final phases of an operation, Saudi authorities failed to detect and disrupt the operation that destroyed three poorly protected foreign residential complexes in Riyadh at 11:25 p.m. on May 12, 2003. The triple suicide attacks killed in Al Hamra, Coroval, and Jedawal, 34 including nine bombers and injured 194 people. A fourth explosion hit the offices of Siyanco, a Saudi Maintenance Company, a venture between Frank E. Basil, Inc of Washington and local Saudi Partners, but there were no casualties.

In Morocco, suicide bombers attacked Casa de Espana, a Spanish social club; Hotel Farah; a Jewish community center and cemetery and a restaurant next to the Belgium consulate in Casablanca, all within 20 minutes, on May 16. In addition to 12 bombers who perished in the raid, the attacks killed 27 and injured 100. Of the 14 man attack team, one failed suicide bomber was captured, and later one bomber was arrested. The attacks in Saudi Arabia and Morocco bear the hallmarks of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and its associated group Assirat al-Moustaquim (The Straight Path) in Morocco conducted the coordinated simultaneous suicide attacks against western and Jewish targets with the aim of inflicting maximum fatalities.

In Chechnya, Al Ansar Mujahidin, an associate group of Al Qaeda mounted suicide operations on Znamenskoye killing 59 and injuring 200, also on May 12, and Iliskhan-Yurt killing 18 and injuring 100 on May 14. The bombings in Chechnya were aimed at producing mass fatalities and fear - offices and homes in Znamenskoye, northern district of Nadterechny, and an assassination of Akhmad Kadyrov, the Chechen administration leader near a shrine in Iliskhan-Yurt where 15,000 Muslims gathered to mark the birth of Prophet Muhammed. An Ansar Mujahidin is led by Abu Walid alias Mohommad al Ghamdi, the successor of Ibn Omar al Khattab, Afghan veterans and protégés of Osama bin Laden. Abu Walid is the cousin brother of the 9-11 hijackers – Ahmed and Hamza al Ghamdi – all from the Southern Saudi Province of Asir.

In Pakistan, Muslim United Army (MUA) simultaneously bombed 19 Shell and two Caltex gasoline stations in Nazimabad, Joharabad, SITE, Sharea Faisal, Gulshan-I-Iqbal, all in Southern Karachi between 4-5 a.m. on May 15. MUA is believed to be Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an Al Qaeda associated group in Pakistan. The improved explosives devices, weighing 200 grams, with 15-minute timers, were placed inside garbage cans beside fuel pumps by motorcyclists. The bombings damaged the Pakistani infrastructure owned by

Anglo Dutch and American companies and injured one customer, three station attendants, and one security guard. To prevent such attacks, Pakistan had increased security of food chains – Pizza Hut, McDonalds, KFC, but the group had selected its tactic and targets creatively. The bombing was in revenge of Pakistan hunting Al Qaeda and its associate members in Pakistan.

Middle East - Striking the Heartland:

For those who believed that Al Qaeda is dead, the attack in Riyadh on May 12, 2003 demonstrated that Al Qaeda remains a significant threat in the coming months, if not years. Despite recurrent indications and warnings, including from the CIA that “they are coming for you,” the Saudi’s were defiant stating that “everything was under control.”³² Two week before the attack, it was very clear to both the American and the Saudi authorities that Al Qaeda was in the final phases of launching an operation.

There were multiple indications and at least one warning the week preceding the attack. This included a US government warning of the likelihood of attack in Saudi Arabia. Although the warning was not target specific, it was country specific. Under the no double standards policy, the US was mandated to place all general and specific warnings to its citizens both at home and overseas in the public domain. On April 29, US Embassy in Riyadh requested Saudi authorities to increase the security of the residential complexes. On May 1, the US State Department issued a travel warning requested private US citizens in Saudi Arabia to consider departing and Americans defer non essential travel . On May 6, nineteen members of Al Qaeda escaped after a firefight with the Saudi security forces. During the confrontation, demonstrating their willingness to kill and to die, one member exploded a device killing himself. The 19 had fought with Osama bin Laden in the Tora Bora battles in Afghanistan They were the same members that conducted the operation. One Al Qaeda member surrendered and provided information about Al Qaeda organization in Saudi Arabia but not about the attack. The Saudi’s released the identities of the 19 wanted men requesting the publicly for assistance. On May 7, a spokesman for al Qaeda, Thabet bin Qais, stated that Osama bin Laden's forces were gearing up for a series of attacks. On May 7, US Embassy in Riyadh requested Saudi authorities to increase the security of the residential complexes. On May 8, Saudi authorities seized 800 lbs of explosives, automatic weapons, grenades, ammunition, computers, communication equipment and money from both a house and a vehicle about quarter mile from Jedawal, one of the complexes later attacked. On May 10, US Embassy in Riyadh requested Saudi authorities to increase the security of the residential complexes. The US Embassy specifically requested the Saudi authorities for additional protection for the Jedawal complex. On May 11, an Al Qaeda member Abu Mohammed Ablaj wrote to the London-based Al-Majalla magazine that the armed martyrdom squads were about to attack. "Beside targeting the heart of America, among the strategic priorities now is to target and execute operations in the Gulf countries and allies of the United States," Ablaj wrote in an email the day before the attack.

³² George Tenant, CIA Director visited Riyadh a few weeks before the attack and appraised the House of al Saud of the impending threat. Interview, CIA officer, May 2003.

Even prior to these indications, the intelligence reports suggested that Saudi Arabia was coming under increasing threat. Both the CIA and the FBI informed their Saudi counterparts nearly an year before the attack Abdel Rahman Jabarah, a Canadian Al Qaeda member of Kuwait origin had entered the Kingdom. Together with Mohammed al-Johani, who led the operation, Abdel Rahman, one of the organizers of the bombing, was the elder brother of Mohomad Mansour Jabarah, a 21-year old Al Qaeda operative in US custody. After the Al Qaeda operation to destroy the US and Israeli diplomatic targets in Manila and the US, British, Australian and Israeli diplomatic targets in Singapore was thwarted in December 2001, its operations coordinator Mohomad Mansour fled to the Middle East and he was arrested in Oman in March 2002. Both the operations commander Mohommed al-Johani and the Canadian brothers worked under Khalid Sheikh Mohommed, the head of the Military Committee of Al Qaeda, and his successor and Deputy Tawfiq Attash, both of who were arrested in Rawalpindi and Karachi in Pakistan in March, 2003. Al-Johani, who left Saudi Arabia when he was 18, returned to Saudi Arabia on a forged passport in March 2003 to conduct the operation. Operating under the Al Qaeda front "The Mujahideen in the Peninsula," al Johani built the organization to conduct attacks in the region starting with the Saudi Arabia. Thirty-six hours after the attack, 'Al-Muwahhidun' (Those who profess the oneness of God), a front for Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack. The new front under the leadership of three fugitives - Ali bin Khudair Al-Khudair, Nasir bin Hamd Al-fahd, and Ahmad bin Hamd Al-Khalid - and nineteen wanted.

As the attack was intended against the Westerners, and the first attack against a Western target after US intervened and occupied Iraq, the attack will be viewed with mix feelings within the Kingdom and the Middle East. The elite who want to retain their power and status will want to control the group. However, the suppression and repression of the Islamists of the Al Qaeda brand is likely to generate a fresh wave of recruits and support for Al Qaeda and its associated groups in the Gulf. While the Saudi over-reaction is likely to decrease the threat in the short term, it will increase Saudi public support for Al Qaeda in the long term. Unless, Saudi Arabia reforms the education system of the country, Osama bin Laden, the popular hero of all the Saudis who oppose the House of al Saud, will remain their symbol of resistance.

Outside the Middle East, Al Qaeda members are concentrated in the Horn of Africa, the Caucuses (Chechnya and Pankishi Gorge in Georgia) and in Asia. In the international intelligence community the Achilles Heel has always been Africa especially the Horn. Intelligence on the Horn has improved since August 1998 but not appreciably. While based in Sudan (December 1991-May 1996) having made significant inroads to the countries in East Africa, Al Qaeda continues to operate in the Horn. While the Russian military has sustained heavy losses in Chechnya, the US Special Operations Forces working with the Georgian forces are conducting operations to clear the gorge. In Djibouti, there are several hundred US personnel engaged in activities in the Horn of Africa and Yemen. In addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Al Qaeda elements have a presence throughout Asia. For instance, Al Qaeda members regularly infiltrate Kashmir and Bangladesh in South Asia. In addition to the Middle East, when it comes to regions, the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia presents the biggest challenges. Even before the

gravity of terrorism moved from the Middle East to Asia in the early 1990s, the Middle Eastern groups were active in Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia: a New Theatre:

Of the two-dozen Islamist terrorist groups active in Southeast Asia, JI presents the biggest threat. There are about 400 Al Qaeda trained JI members in Southeast Asia. With the exception of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Southeast Asia is the home of the single largest concentration of Al Qaeda trained active members in any given region. The presence of 240 million Muslims, emerging democracies, corrupt governments, weak rulers, and lack security, is making Southeast Asia emerge as a new center for Al Qaeda activity. Historically, Southeast Asia has featured prominently in all Al Qaeda operations including 9-11, when Al Qaeda military committee convened a meeting of Al Qaeda operatives in Kuala Lumpur from January 5-12, 2000, to discuss both the USS Cole and the 9-11 operation.³³ Immediately before 9-11, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, the head of the military committee of Al Qaeda, dispatched its key financier Mohammed Mansour Jabarah (a Kuwaiti of Canadian citizenship) alias Sammy to Malaysia to plan and prepare the attacks against US and Israeli diplomatic targets in Manila, Philippines. After visiting the embassies with an Al Qaeda suicide bomber Ahmed Sahagi, Jabarah concluded that “the attack on the US Embassy in Manila would have been much more difficult” and that “a plane would be needed to attack this building because the security was very tough.”³⁴ Therefore, Al Qaeda decided to shift the operation to Singapore where the “embassy is very close to the streets and did not have many barriers to prevent the attack.”³⁵ Due to the difficulty of shipping the explosives to Singapore, Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin alias Hambali, a 36 year old Indonesian serving both on the Al Qaeda and JI Shura (Consultative) Councils, decided to cancel the Singapore operation of destroying US, British, Australian and Israeli diplomatic targets – and pick “better” targets in the Philippines. The detection and disruption of the Singapore operation by Singapore’s Internal Security Department led to the discovery of Al Qaeda’s JI regional network in December 2001. Although the Malaysian and the Philippine governments arrested JI members, Indonesia’s President Megawatti Sukarnoputri was reluctant to follow suit, and as a result about 180 JI members moved to Indonesia and Thailand. In Southern Thailand, Hambali together with Jabarah discussed bombings in “bars, cafes, or nightclubs frequented by westerners in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Indonesia.”³⁶ Although Hambali’s original plan was to conduct a number of small bombings in line with the in-house capability and modus operandi of JI, the arrival of bomb making experts and finance from Al Qaeda into the region improved JI technical expertise to conduct large-scale bombings.

³³ Initial reports from regional intelligence agencies assessed that Khalid Sheik Mohammad was present in Kuala Lumpur but subsequent reports, based on Khalid’s debriefings, from the US Central Intelligence Agency indicated otherwise.

³⁴ Information Derived from Mohammed Mansour Jabarah, Federal Bureau of Investigations, US Department of Justice, August 21, 2002, p. 2.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), an associate group of Al Qaeda, provided training to JI recruits in Mindanao, Philippines. After Camp Abu Bakar was overrun in April 2000, MILF and JI established training camps in Indonesia: Poso, Sulawesi and in Balikpapan and Sampit in Kalimantan.³⁷ Even after MILF-Manila government resumed peace talks, MILF camps – Vietnam, Hudeibiya and Palestine continue to provide facilities to over one hundred foreign nationals including Arab members of Al Qaeda. The arrest in Indonesia in January of Muhammad Saad Iqbal Madni, a Pakistani and in June 2002, Omar Al Farook alias Mahmoud bin Ahmed Assegaf, a Kuwaiti, the former leader of Camp Vietnam, provided insight into MILF-JI linkages and future Al Qaeda plans.³⁸ Omar Al Farook's also divulged attack plans and information of financial transfers, including US\$ 73,000 from Sheikh Abu Abdallah Al Emarati of Saudi Arabia to Abu Bakar Bashir in Indonesia to purchase explosives. An Indonesian intelligence report states: "In the absence of an Internal Security Act, it is almost impossible for the Indonesian government to take legal action against anybody involved in Al Qaeda unless he has committed a crime. Therefore, Farook was deported on immigration grounds and the illegal acquisition of documents. He was arrested on June 5 [2002]. On June 8 [2002], he was deported to the US Air Force base in Baghram, Afghanistan."³⁹ The JI spiritual, ideological and political leader is Abu Bakar Bashir (who also had an operational role), now in Indonesian custody, and the operational commander of JI and Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia Hambali, is in US detention. Unlike Indonesia and Thailand, that has denied the existence of a terrorist network for over a year, the Philippines have steadfastly fought terrorism. However, it has lacked the resources of the US, support of European governments, and cooperation of its neighbors, and as a result forced to negotiate even with MILF, a group that has failed to condemn bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

The lack of a zero tolerance terrorism policy in the region and beyond facilitated the spawning and sustenance of a robust terrorist support and operational network. When JI network was discovered in December 2001, Indonesia permitted the continued operation of a fully-fledged JI infrastructure. This was despite the Al Farook and Jabarah debriefings implicating the continued use of Indonesia and Thailand by JI and Al Qaeda. These governments as well as the neighboring governments failed to engage in sustained targeting of terrorist operatives and assets. Despite the US intelligence community providing strategic intelligence including the threat to "bars, cafes, or nightclubs" there was a failure on the part of the regional governments to develop the ground, contact or tactical intelligence by technical and human source penetration. The Australian government should have invested sufficient resources in its immediate neighborhood to dampen Islamism and use the JI infrastructure in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to penetrate the network. Despite a dozen Australian citizens and residents participating in JI and Al Qaeda training camps from Mindanao, Philippines to Afghanistan,⁴⁰ the

³⁷ Umar Faruq's Terrorist Activities in Indonesia, BIN, Jakarta, June 2002, p. 2.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

³⁹ Although BIN headed by A.M. Hendropriyono targeted Al Qaeda cells, the Indonesian government was reluctant to target JI and its associated Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI: Mujahidin Council of Indonesia) headed by Abu Bakar Bashir and Lashkar Jundullah headed by Agus Dwikarna.

⁴⁰ Debriefing of John Walker Lindh, Virginia, US, July 25-25, 2002.

government assessment and operational agencies did not believe that the threat was “significant” until Bali.⁴¹

Liberal Democracies: North America, Europe, Australasia:

Examination of terrorist support and operational infrastructure worldwide reveals that liberal democracies offer the ideal conditions for foreign terrorist groups to establish their support networks in the West. For terrorism to flourish, pre-requisites are terrorists, who conduct attacks, and non-terrorists, who provide support. To defeat terrorism, both these categories must be targeted. During the past two decades, Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American terrorist groups established open offices or secret cells for disseminating propaganda, raising funds, specialized training, procuring and transporting supplies in the West. The foreign terrorist groups disseminate terrorist propaganda, recruit, raise funds, procure and transport technologies from the West to perpetrate terrorism elsewhere. As these groups did not pose a direct and an immediate threat to host countries, Western security and intelligence agencies monitored these groups without disrupting their propaganda, fund raising, procurement and transportation infrastructure. As a result, several terrorists, their supporters and sympathizers infiltrated Western societies and governments. These foreign terrorist groups diverted the resources raised in the West to attack target countries in the global south. By passing legislation, North America and Europe have proscribed foreign terrorist groups but not Australia and New Zealand. As a result, Australia remains the home of several foreign terrorist groups including the Palestinian Hamas, Chechen mujahidin, Kurdish Workers Party (Turkey), Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (Spain), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka), Babbar Khalsa International (India) and International Sikh Youth Federation (India), dissident factions of the Irish Republican Army. With the exception of Hezbollah, proscribed in May 2003, the parliamentary opposition was reluctant to give the Attorney General the powers to proscribe terrorist groups outside the UN list.⁴² The UN only proscribed Al Qaeda and some of its associated groups. Despite the loss of 88 of its citizens in Bali, still there is no policy of zero tolerance of terrorist groups in Australia. If there is a big terrorist attack on Australian soil, there will be sufficient public pressure to change government and opposition thinking.

In addition to establishing Al Qaeda cells, the group also co-opted the leaderships of two European networks. As a result, both Takfir Wal Hijra and GSPC in Europe and to a lesser extent in North America present a significant threat to Western security. These two networks are staffed by migrants from North Africa and ideologically fuelled by the developments in the lands of jihad especially conflicts in their home countries. Like Europe witnessed a spill over of terrorism from the Middle East, the developments in Southeast Asia have increased the threat to Australia and to New Zealand. Australia has been an Al Qaeda target since 1999 but certain events increased the threat to the country since 2000. For example, Australia's high profile participation in the US led anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan in October 2001, and the resultant anger of Australian Muslims

⁴¹ Margo O'Neill, Lateline, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 9, 2002. Australian government saw no significant threat to Australia or to its interests.

⁴² Interview, Daryl Williams, Attorney General, Parliament House, Canberra, May 2003

and bin Laden's claim in early November 2001 that Australia conspired and led a crusade against the Islamic nation to dismember East Timor in November 2001. The build up of threat was clear - a grenade was lobbed from a motorbike into the garden of the Australian International School in Jakarta in November 2001; large firecrackers were hurled into the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in November 2001; an Arab Al Qaeda suicide bomber in an explosives laden truck planned to destroy the Australian High Commission in Singapore in early 2002.⁴³ Al Qaeda and Taliban detainee and prisoner interrogation in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Camp Delta, Guantanamo Bay, and in mainland US revealed that Australian Muslims trained in Camp Al Farooq in Afghanistan and elsewhere were tasked to conduct terrorist operations against Australian targets.

Australia and New Zealand feature prominently in the eastward shift of terrorism. Like Europe and North America was infiltrated by Al Qaeda, the group established a support network in Australia using its Southeast Asian arm - JI. At the invitation of the JI Australia, JI founder leader the late Abdullah Sungkar his successor Abu Bakar Bashir visited Australia a dozen times throughout the 1990s. Furthermore, JI penetration of local Muslim group led to a significant generation of propaganda within Australia aimed at politicizing and radicalizing Australian Muslims. Sungkar spoke of the "obligation of jihad within the framework of aiming to re-erect dawlah islamiyyah" by applying the strategies of faith and its expression in word and action and jihad.⁴⁴ He added: "In this, quwwaatul musallaha or military strength is essential".⁴⁵ The JI leaders said Indonesian Muslims had two choices: "life in a nation based upon the Koran and the sunnah or death while striving to implement, in their entirety, laws based on the Koran and the sunnah."⁴⁶ Bin Laden gave an exclusive interview to Islamic Youth Movement, a support group in Australia and it was published on a website in Australia. JI also raised funds in Australia and funds were transferred from Australia, first to JI Malaysia and then with the disruption of the JI network in Malaysia, to JI Indonesia.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Australia features prominently in the JI regional structure. JI network in the Asia-Pacific is divided into four geographic regions, which includes Australia. JI's Area 4 or Mantiqi 4 (M4) covers Irian Jaya and Australia. As such, Australia has no option but to work jointly with the Southeast Asian countries to detect, disrupt, degrade and destroy the JI organisation. Its failure to do so will result in further attacks both in Australia and in its neighborhood.

Another reason the terrorist threat is rising in Australia is that several terrorist groups in its immediate neighborhood - notably in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, have stepped up their activities at home and abroad. Furthermore, JI leaders and members who left Australia including Abdul Rahim, an Australian citizen of Indonesia origin, now head Mantiqi 4.⁴⁸ In addition, half a dozen groups with links to Al Qaeda perceive Australia as

⁴³ Despite a JI surveillance video of the Australian target was recovered in the residence of the late Al Qaeda military commander Mohomad Atef alias Abu Haf's in Afghanistan, the Australian government did not take the threat seriously - some officials believed that Al Qaeda/JI had included the Australian High Commission in the target list because it was next to the US Embassy. Even in March 2002, some Australian intelligence officials who participated at a counter-terrorism meeting organised by the Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies in Singapore disbelieved that JI was under Al Qaeda control.

⁴⁴ *Nida'ul Islam* (Call to Islam), Islamic Youth Movement magazine, Sydney, February-March 1997

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ "The latest Indonesian crisis: causes and solutions", JI political manifesto, May 1998,

⁴⁷ Debriefing of JI members, September-October 2002.

⁴⁸ Interrogation of Mohammad Nasir bin Abbas alias Khairudin alias Sulaeman alias Leman alias Maman alias Eddy Mulyono (born May 6, 1969 in Singapore, married with three children), Indonesia, April 18, 2003.

an enemy. Towards strengthening security in the Asia-Pacific, Australia and the Southeast Asian region do need to improve operational cooperation. Until Bali, there is definitely a very poor understanding of the threat in Australia. The Australian malaise is one of not being sufficiently educated on the Asia-Pacific region with a poor understudying of the culture, politics and economics of its neighbors.⁴⁹ When you factor in a serious transnational terrorist threat it seems the 'she'll be right 'or 'it can't happen to us' attitude prevails.⁵⁰ In the task ahead, Australia lacks the expertise and capacity but it may require a shift of thinking on how its finite resources will be deployed. As a technologically advanced country with significant economic, political, diplomatic, and a military capability Australia could also assist countries in Southeast Asia especially Indonesia to improve its capability to fight terrorism. Australia can make a significant contribution to the ensuing criminal investigation to assist Indonesia. Australia should take a leadership role in this in the region as a whole especially with its Southeast Asian friends in moving Indonesia into action. This tragic event could see a rapid maturation of cooperation in the region spurred on by Australia.

To meet the current threat the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), its counter-intelligence and anti-terrorist agency and the Australian Security and Intelligence Service (ASIS), its overseas intelligence service, needs to double its strength without loss of quality and resources as well as greater powers to operate effectively and efficiently. To improve the security of Australia and New Zealand, Australian agencies must work closely with their New Zealand counterparts.

Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran:

With US intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001, Osama bin Laden requested the bulk of the Al Qaeda members to travel to their home countries and await instructions. Those who had come to the adverse attention of their home security and intelligence agencies were asked to remain in Pakistan. Al Qaeda's operational leaders Abu Zubaidah and Khalid Sheikh Mohommad relocated to Pakistan and coordinated the global terrorist campaign until their arrests in March 2002 and May 2003 respectively. After the arrest of Khalid Sheikh Mohommad's successor Tawfiq bin Attash, Osama bin Laden appointed his Chief of Security Seif Al-'Adel, as the new operations chief in April 2003. The May 2003 operations were executed by Seif Al-'Adel, a former officer of the Egyptian military, and thereafter a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. After fighting against the Soviet army, he joined Al Qaeda and thereafter trained with the Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon. Seif Al-'Adel was joined in the Riyadh operation by another senior member Abu Khaled, and Osama bin Laden's son Sa'ad bin Laden, a bodyguard of the Al Qaeda leader. Although the extent of Iranian sponsorship is unclear, the operational leadership that coordinated the Riyadh bombing and dispatched experts to Casablanca, Morocco, to advice Assirat al-Moustaquim was located in Iran. Due to the loss of a large number of Al Qaeda leaders and operatives in Pakistan, Al Qaeda is increasingly looking towards Iran. An Iraqi Islamist group Ansar al-Islami, another Al Qaeda associate group, is also operating on the Iran-Iraq border.

⁴⁹ Interview, Jeff Pentrose, Former Director, Australian Federal Police Intelligence, October 2002

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The international community has gravely failed to rebuild Afghanistan by transforming the war-ravaged state into a modern state of the 21st century. Al Qaeda has re-invented itself in Afghanistan by working with Mullah Omar's Taliban and Gulbaddin Hekmatiyar's Hezbi-e-Islami. Similarly, Al Qaeda continues to work with Sipai Sahaba, Lashkar-e-jenghvi, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jayash-e-Mohammad, Harakart-ul-Mujahidin and a number of other Pakistani groups. With US security forces and the intelligence community targeting Al Qaeda's nerve center in Afghanistan-Pakistan, Al Qaeda will decentralize even further. While its organizers of attacks will remain in Pakistan and its immediate neighborhood, its operatives will travel back and forth coordinating with Al Qaeda nodes in the south. To make its presence felt, Al Qaeda will increasingly rely on its global terrorist network of like-minded groups in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Horn of Africa, Middle East, and the Caucasus to strike its enemies. Already attacks in Kenya, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Kuwait and Yemen seek to compensate for the loss and lack of space and opportunity to operate in Afghanistan. With the transfer of terrorist technology and expertise from the center to the periphery, the attacks by the associated groups of Al Qaeda will pose a threat as great as Al Qaeda.

Impact on Ethnonationalist Conflicts:

Although Al Qaeda is waging a universal jihad, the influence of Al Qaeda on Muslim separatist groups active in their territories is growing. It is a worrying trend as Islamists tend to co-opt the human and material resources of the ethnonationalists. There is very little governments can do to arrest the trend of Muslim separatist, irredentist and autonomy conflicts becoming Islamist. Whether it is in the Moroland in the Philippines, Aceh in Indonesia, Pattani in Thailand, Kashmir in India-Pakistan, or Chechnya in Russia, Muslim secessionist conflicts have been penetrated by Islamist groups to different degrees. Either by emulation or direct contact, factions, splinters and main groups of the ethnonationalist category are learning from Al Qaeda tactics, techniques and styles. Al Qaeda did not engage in kidnapping, hostage taking or assassination frequently, but its camps in Afghanistan and elsewhere taught these tactics to several tens of thousands of youth.⁵¹ Even before 9-11, it has been observed that Al Qaeda has been attempting to develop alliances with non-Islamist Muslim groups. Rabitat-ul Mujahidin is an alliance of Islamist and ironically Muslim separatist groups from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.⁵² Thailand, especially Narathiwat Province, is a safe haven for Jemmah Islamiyah, is the home of a number of other groups. The ethnonationalist groups formed include Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) formed in 1967, New PULO formed in 1995, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Malayu Pattani (BRN) formed in 1960, Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP) formed in 1986, and Bersatu (Unity) formed in 1997.⁵³ GMIP has members, such as Wae Ka Raeh, that

⁵¹ The author reviewed over 200 tapes, including training tapes, recovered by CNN's Nic Robertson from Al Qaeda's registry in Afghanistan, CNN Centre, Atlanta, August-September 2002.

⁵² The second meeting of the Rabitat-ul Mujahidin held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, presided by the JI leader Abu Bakar Basyir in mid-2000 included both Islamists and separatist leaders - Agus Dwikarna from Sulawesi, Tenku Idris from Aceh, Ibrahim Maidin from Singapore, Abdul Fatah from Thailand, Nik Adli Abdul Aziz from Malaysia, representatives from Myanmar and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Interview, Intelligence official, Department of the Prime Minister, Malaysia, November 2002.

⁵³ Tony Davis, "The Complexities of Unrest in Southern Thailand" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Volume 14 Number 9, September 2002. p. 17

trained in Afghanistan and fought for Al Qaeda.⁵⁴ In spite of the successes of the Thai government of bringing the secessionist violence to an end in the 1980s, there has been a revival in 2001. On October 29, 2002, a series of arson incidents and bombs exploded in Southern Thailand. Five schools were set on fire in Songkhla Province and bombs damaged both My Garden Hotel and a Buddhist temple in the neighbouring Pattani Province in 2001. Since April 2001, about two-dozen law enforcement officers have been killed in southern Thailand but the authorities in Bangkok have dismissed the violence as criminal and not terrorist. Similarly, Jemmah Salafiya, a clandestine Thai group associated with JI remains active. Furthermore, the Al Qaeda network in Bangkok, where two of the 9-11 hijackers were launched after a meeting in Malaysia in January 2000, remain uninterrupted. After living in denial for one and a half years, Thailand finally admitted to the presence of a JI network after JI Thai members were arrested in Cambodia and a JI Singaporean member was arrested in Bangkok in mid-2003. As a result, multiple attacks being planned by JI in Thailand both on diplomatic targets in Bangkok and two tourist resorts were disrupted. Nonetheless, Thailand especially Phuket, Pataya, and other tourism destinations remain vulnerable to attack especially after Bali.

Ideological Threat

More than an organization, the ideology of Al Qaeda remains a resilient threat. Although Al Qaeda can still mount operations, with the increase in pressure, Al Qaeda will become relegated to an ideology. As it increasingly depends on like-minded groups to conduct attacks, other Islamist groups will become like Al Qaeda in their thinking and behavior. For instance, Mas Salamat Kasthari, the former Chief of Jemmah Islamiyah (JI) of Singapore was planning to hijack an Aeroflot plane from Bangkok and crash it to the Changi International Airport in Singapore in 2002. The tactic of using an air vehicle as a weapon was clearly an Al Qaeda invention. When asked by his interrogators why he chose to hijack an Aeroflot plane, he responded that JI had decided to teach Russia a lesson for killing civilians in Chechnya. Furthermore, the killing of 202 civilians in Bali by the same group was not Southeast Asian in character. Southeast Asia had never witnessed a mass fatality terrorist attack before. Likewise, the JI attack in Bali witnessed the first suicide attack by a Southeast Asian terrorist.⁵⁵ During the past decade, JI and other associated Islamist groups had come under Al Qaeda influence in a substantial way.

Traditionally, Qaeda with better trained, more experienced and highly committed operatives wanted to attack more difficult targets especially strategic targets and leave the easier and tactical targets to its associated groups. With Al Qaeda decentralizing, its operatives are working closely together at a tactical level with other groups. As a result, the lethality of the attacks conducted by the associate groups of Al Qaeda is increasing. As Bali in 2002 and Casablanca in 2003 demonstrated, the attacks conducted by the associate groups of Al Qaeda can be as lethal as the attacks conducted by the parent group itself. With attacks conducted by Al Qaeda's associated groups posing a threat as great as Al Qaeda, the theatre of war will widen. Government security and intelligence

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 17.

⁵⁵ Iqbal, the JI member, detonated a backpack of explosives that he carried into the Paddy's Bar in Bali.

agencies will be forced to monitor the technologies, tactics and techniques of a wide range of groups.

Although US is under severe pressure to withdraw from Saudi Arabia, the US will prefer to remain in the Kingdom because withdrawal after the recent attack will mean defeat in the eyes of its opponents. Nonetheless, US visibility in the Middle East; US assistance to Israel; continued US presence in Iraq will generating wide ranging reactions from the Islamists, both terrorist groups and political parties. Especially after US, Allied, and Coalition intervened in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, Iraq is an attractive base for Al Qaeda. The Islamists desperately needs a new theater to produce psychologically and physically war-trained Islamists.

Successes and Failures:

Although branded a “War against Terrorism” by the US, the fight is against a radical ideology producing Muslim youth willing to kill and die and wealthy Muslims willing to support and suffer incarceration. For the Al Qaeda umbrella – the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders – the fight is against a civilization. The reality is that, it is a fight between the vast majority of progressive Muslims and the miniscule percentage of radical Muslims. It is not a clash of civilizations but a clash among civilizations – a fight that must essentially be fought within the Muslim world. While the immediate (1-2 years) consequences are apparent, the mid (5 years) and long term (10 years) consequence of fighting primarily an ideological campaign militarily is yet to be seen. All indications are that Islamism – whether it is in Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, or in Indonesia – is moving from the periphery to the centre. US intervention in Iraq has spiked the ideological fuel prolonging the strength, size and life of Islamist political parties and terrorist groups.

The greatest failure of the US-led coalition is its lack of capability to neutralise the core leadership of both Al Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of the Taliban. While preparations for protracted guerrilla operations against the coalition forces inside Afghanistan is coordinated by the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, terrorist operations worldwide including in Afghanistan is coordinated by Osama bin Laden and his deputy, principal strategist and designated successor Dr Ayman Zawahiri. Multiple sources, including the CIA reveals that both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri are alive.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Zawahiri refers to suicide attacks on the oldest Jewish synagogue in North Africa in Djerba, Tunisia, killing 21 including 14 German tourists on April 11, 2002 and the killing of 14 including 11 French naval technicians working on the submarine project outside Sheraton Hotel in Karachi, Pakistan, on May 9, 2002. He states “Thank God, America could not reach the leaders of Al Qaeda and Taliban, including Mullah Muhammad Omar and Shayak Osama bin Laden, who enjoy good heath and, alongside the rest of the patient mujahidin, are managing the battle against the US crusader raid on Afghanistan”⁵⁷ Members of the former Army of the Islamic Emirate Afghanistan loyal to Mullah Omar and Al Qaeda’s 055 Brigade that survived death or capture are supporting

⁵⁶ Al-Qa’ida Declarations of Continued Attacks, CIA, Langley, October 2002, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Ayman Al Zawahiri’s question and answer with an unidentified reporter, Al Jazeera, October 8, 2002.

or engaged in guerrilla and terrorist operations against the US led coalition both inside and outside Afghanistan respectively. Mullah Omar is building a clandestine network slowly and steadily in Afghanistan utilizing its vast and porous borders to wage a protracted campaign of sustained urban warfare. Bin Laden and Zawahiri are developing targets overseas, especially soft targets with a twin focus on population centers and economic targets.

Change of Mindset:

To make it difficult for its enemies, Al Qaeda has constantly innovated its military tactics, financial methods, and propaganda techniques in the past year. Al Qaeda - focusing on strategic targets prior to 9-11 - is operating across the entire spectrum targeting both strategic to tactical targets. Although the West seized US\$ 150 million of terrorist money in the first four months after 9-11, with the transformation of Al Qaeda financial practices only about 10 million has been seized. With the targeting of the above ground open banking system, the underground unregulated banking network (hawala) has grown bigger. With mosques, madrasas, charities and community centers that disseminate Islamist propaganda coming under threat, Al Qaeda is increasingly relying on the Internet. As Al Qaeda is a learning organisation, the law enforcement and security and intelligence fighting it must be goal-oriented and not rule-oriented.

With the terrorist's adapting to the threat posed by government law enforcement authorities, government security and intelligence agencies are increasing their human and technical source penetration. Capabilities for terrorist tracking, pre-emption and disruption of terrorist operations is increasing. For instance, an Al Qaeda team travelling in their vehicle in Yemen's northern Province of Marib was attacked by a hellfire missile from the CIA-controlled unmanned Predator drone on November 4, 2002. The attack killed Ali Senyan al-Harhi alias Qaed Senyan al-Harhi alias Abu Ali, the mastermind of the USS Cole operation and a key Al Qaeda leader in the region. To meet the current threat, the Pentagon has increased its intelligence capability and the CIA has increased its paramilitary capability. In the foreseeable future, human intelligence and covert strike forces will remain at the heart of fighting secret and highly motivated organisations like Al Qaeda. It is critical for the US to increase its sharing of intelligence especially with their Middle Eastern and Asian counterparts. Traditionally, the US has been averse to sharing high-grade intelligence especially source based intelligence with the Muslim World. This has changed since 9-11 but not adequately.

If Al Qaeda is to be defeated a change in the thinking of the US led "War of Terrorism" is paramount. Despite US-led coalition campaign worldwide, the Al Qaeda alliance - the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders - has managed to repair the damage to their support and operational infrastructure. As no serious international effort has been made to counter the Islamist ideology (the belief that "every Muslims duty is to wage jihad") the robust Islamist milieu is providing recruits and financial support for Islamist groups worldwide to replenish their human losses and material wastage. Today, 2-4 Al Qaeda and Taliban members are captured or killed in Afghanistan but at the end of the week the Islamists are successful in attracting a dozen

recruits as members, collaborators, supporters and sympathisers.⁵⁸ To put it crudely, the rate of production of Islamists is greater than the rate of their kill or capture. Into the counter-terrorism toolbox, the powerful message that Al Qaeda is not Koranic but heretical has not been integrated. As such there is popular support for the Al Qaeda model of Islam among the politicized and radicalized Muslims. As there is no effort to counter or dilute the ideology of extremism, the military campaign against Al Qaeda even if pursued single-mindedly and unrelentingly is likely to take decades. The “deep reservoir of hatred and a desire for revenge”⁵⁹ will remain unless the US can start to think beyond the counter-terrorist military and financial dimensions.

The international community must seek to build a zero tolerance level for terrorist support activity. The tragedy of 9-11, Bali, Moscow, Riyadh, Casablanca and several other attacks demonstrate that contemporary terrorists are indiscriminate. As terrorists do not recognize and respect ethnicity, religion or national borders, terrorism irrespective of location should be fought. There is no appeasement with those who seek to advance their political aims and objectives using violence. Like Indonesia, countries that condone, tolerate or fail to take tough action against terrorism will be touched by it. It is not only the countries in the South but even countries in the North have been complacent in the fight against terrorism. Within four months of 9-11 Western governments froze US\$ 150 million of terrorist money in Europe and North America indicative of the magnitude of terrorist wealth in liberal democracies. Although Al Qaeda support network has suffered in the US, its propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising activities are still continuing in Europe. Despite efforts to the contrary, segments of Muslims in the migrant communities of North America, Western Europe and Australasia and territorial communities of the Middle East and Asia continue to provide support to Al Qaeda and other Islamist groups. As Europe has not suffered a large-scale attack, Europeans do not perceive Al Qaeda as a high threat. As a result, Islamist support activities are continuing in Western Europe. With the increase in threat, both governments and their publics that do not take threat information seriously are bound to suffer.

Managing the Threat:

Al Qaeda has had a head start of ten years. Until one-month after US diplomatic targets in East Africa was destroyed by Al Qaeda in August 1998, the CIA did not even know the correct name of Osama bin Laden’s group.⁶⁰ However, during the past two years the understanding of the US intelligence community of its principal enemy - Al Qaeda – has grown dramatically. The tragedy of 9-11 has empowered the Counter Terrorism Center at the CIA to develop the much-needed organization and more importantly the mindset to hunt Al Qaeda. Largely due to detainee debriefings, the West today understands the threat it faces much better than ever before. The US government, especially its security and intelligence community has learnt at a remarkable pace. There is a remarkable improvement in collection and analysis both by the CIA and the FBI. For instance, immediately before the Yemeni, Kuwaiti and Bali attack, the CIA and FBI alerted

⁵⁸ Interviews, US military and intelligence officials, Washington DC, October 29-November 1, 2002.

⁵⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins. Countering Al Qaeda: An Appreciation of the Situation and Suggestions for Strategy, RAND, 2002

⁶⁰ None of the CIA documents until August 1998 refers to Osama Bin Laden’s organisation as Al Qaeda. It refers to the group as UBL or OBL network and as Islamic Army. Furthermore, the US designated foreign terrorist groups in 1997 does not list “Al Qaeda.”

friendly counterpart agencies and the US State Department issued worldwide alerts. The West together with its Middle Eastern and Asian counterparts seriously started to fight Al Qaeda only after 9-11 and Al Qaeda has suffered gravely. The global strategy of the West to meet the global threat posed by Al Qaeda is taking shape slowly but steadily. Like it contained the Soviet threat in the second half of the 20th century, it will develop the organisation and a doctrine to contain the Islamist threat. With sustained efforts to target the core and penultimate leadership, it is very likely that the Al Qaeda echelon Osama bin Laden, Dr Ayman Al Zawahiri and even the Taliban leader Mullah Omar will be captured or more likely killed. Nonetheless, Islamist terrorism will outlive Al Qaeda and Islamism as an ideology will persist in the foreseeable future.

The global fight against terrorism will be carried out by the West and Japan – the rich and influential nations with the greatest staying power. With the diffusion of the terrorist threat, the US political, military, economic and diplomatic presence will grow and its influence will expand globally in the months and years ahead.⁶¹ It is a long fight and will have to be fought on all fronts by multiple actors across many countries. To ensure the success of the campaign, the international community must remain focused on targeting Al Qaeda and committed to rebuilding Afghanistan and Pakistan, and now Iraq. Western nations must move beyond rhetoric into concrete action, pour in resources, and build modern model nation-states for the Muslim World in these countries. Protecting Karzai of Afghanistan and Musharaff of Pakistan - the most threatened world leaders – is paramount. Several attempts by Al Qaeda and its associated groups to assassinate these leaders have been frustrated. International assistance to their regimes to politically and economically develop their countries and invest in their publics is key to reducing the space for and challenge the Islamists continuously appealing to the politically and economically marginalized.

On the eve of the US intervention in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden correctly stated that the fight has moved beyond Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's propaganda war since 9-11 especially after US intervention in Iraq has escalated several folds. With Al Qaeda and pro-Al Qaeda web sites proliferating - many of them operationally unconnected but ideologically connected to Al Qaeda - support for Al Qaeda's ideology is slowly growing. The world has recently witnessed several isolated terrorist incidents by those influenced by terrorist propaganda. For instance, Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, an Egyptian walked to the El Al counter at the Los Angeles International Airport and shot two people dead on America's independence day on July 4, 2002.⁶² There were arrests worldwide including in the heart of Europe of several politicized and radicalized Muslims providing funds or were planning and preparing terrorist attacks. Osman Petmezci, a 24 year old Turkish national, and his American fiancée Astrid Eyzaguirre, 23, were preparing to attack the US Army Europe Headquarters in Heidelberg arrested by the German authorities on September 5, 2002.⁶³ Inside the couple's third-floor apartment, police recovered 130 kilograms of bomb making chemicals, five pipe bombs, a bomb making manual, detonators and a

⁶¹ In addition to the rise of Islamism, another factor that is driving an increased US presence worldwide is the re-emergence of the Peoples Republic of China and US efforts to contain the next superpower.

⁶² Shooting at Los Angeles International Airport Kills Two, Injures Others on July 4, FBI Press Release, Los Angeles Field Office, July 5, 2002.

⁶³ Tony Czuczka, Germans had hints about suspected bomb plot against US, Associated Press, September 8, 2002.

picture of bin Laden. German authorities believe that the “couple was acting alone, despite citing evidence that they admired Osama bin Laden and shared some of convictions, including a hatred for the Jews.”⁶⁴ There are several similar unreported or under reported terrorist attacks. For instance, a US helicopter carrying US oil company employees was attacked after taking off from the San’a airport injuring two persons on November 3, 2002. With the steadfast erosion of Al Qaeda personnel and physical infrastructure, Al Qaeda can become a state-of-mind spawning both individual terrorists and successor terrorist organisations. To avoid this real danger, the ideological response to Al Qaeda and Islamism as a doctrine must not be made a secondary task.

If to win the campaign, the fight against radical Islam should not be confused with the Muslim world, one fifth of humanity or 1.44 billion people.⁶⁵ It is not a clash of civilizations but a clash among civilization. It is a fight waged between the progressive Muslims and the radical Muslims. Only a miniscule proportion of the Muslim public actively supports terrorism.⁶⁶ The vast majority of Muslims have suffered as a result of political violence unleashed by a small group of power hungry leaders wearing the garb of religion. If the fight is to be won, efforts must be made to protect the moderate Muslims from virulent ideologies propagated by Mullah’s of the Al Qaeda brand of Islam. With the threat of Islamism increasing, the hands of the progressive Muslim leaders both in government and outside government especially in the non-governmental organisations must be strengthened. It must involve the best of relations between the Western governmental and non-governmental leaders with their Middle Eastern and Asian counterparts and moreover public diplomacy where governments directly communicate with the public, even of publics across borders.⁶⁷ Despite the oil boom, the failure of the Arab leaders to invest in their citizens has increased both the ideological appeal and the welfare programs of terrorist groups. The Arab regimes must take the blame for their failure to build modern education systems, create new jobs, and develop the quality of life of their people. By fashion of blaming the West for their ills and more importantly their reluctance to counter anti-Western rhetoric makes Western public diplomacy in the Arab World even more necessary. In parallel to Al Jazeera, a CNN, BBC or CBS Arab satellite television station is central to correcting and fashioning the traditional Middle Eastern view of the West. Instead of shying away, the West must engage the Middle East to develop transparency and accountability.⁶⁸ Furthermore, joint prophylactic measures - greater investment in the political, socio-economic reform especially education and welfare – by the West, and working together with the Muslim World is likely to reduce support for terrorism in the long term.⁶⁹ Failure to develop a multi-pronged, multi-dimensional, multi-agency and a multinational response to Al Qaeda and its associate groups will lead to a continuity of the threat, and even an escalation.

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ For statistics, US Centre for World Mission 2002 Report.

⁶⁶ Husain Haqqani, “The Gospel of Jihad,” Foreign Policy, September-October, 2002, p. 74.

⁶⁷ Perception that the Indonesian military was behind the Bali bombing found resonance in Indonesia because US government only engaged the Indonesian government and not the public. While strengthening government to government cooperation, it is necessary also to engage the public in a dialogue and keep them informed of the active presence of an Al Qaeda-JI network in Indonesia.

⁶⁸ For instance, charities should not be permitted to raise funds or transfer funds unless and until the end user has been verified and validated.

⁶⁹ Marina Ottaway, “Nation Building,” Foreign Policy, September-October 2002, pp. 16-24.

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