

Cognitive and Organizational Analysis of Al Qaeda: The Contribution of a Psychological Perspective to the Understanding of Global Terrorism

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Abstract

This study provides an interpretation to the development of global terrorism by analyzing Al Qaeda's operations and decision-making using the concepts of organizational and clinical psychology. The globalization of suicide terrorism by Al Qaeda using de-centralized and empowering management, which supports the affiliated organizations while leaves a large space for their independent decision-making and operations, arises from the Bin Laden's management style, the evolution of the Martyrdom idea in various Muslim communities corresponding to individual needs of young Muslims around the globe and the communication patterns between Al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations carried out by assigned operators. The study conclude in a suggestion to support the development of an alternative moderate Islamic trend as a response to the threat and summarizes the analysis in three models on the development of global terrorism, the predictors of terror activity and the empowerment channels in Al Qaeda.

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Historical Background

Al Qaeda was established in 1988, toward the end of the war, by Osama bin Laden. It emerged from the Service Bureau (Maktab al-Khidimat), an organization that absorbed, oriented, managed and supported the thousands of Muslim volunteers who came to Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 in order to fight the Soviet army alongside the local Mujahedeen. Al Qaeda was established in order to unify the people who had fought with bin Laden in the war in Afghanistan and preserve them as an active force that, after the war, could continue spreading bin Laden's belligerent radical Islam beyond the Afghan boundaries. Wartime Afghanistan clearly served as a magnet for young Muslims from all over the world, and it was there that al Qaeda's worldview evolved¹.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the end of the war, al Qaeda became an independent organization with the Afghanistan war veterans at its base. From the early 1990s onward, al Qaeda's ranks were swollen by the new generation of the best trainees from the camps sponsored by bin Laden in Sudan and Afghanistan, who had chosen to stay with him and serve under his command.

Throughout the first half of the 1990s, al Qaeda was a conceptual axis for organizations of similar worldviews, and lent logistical and financial support to terror groups that, like al Qaeda, strove to further global jihad in Egypt, Somalia, the Philippines and other places. After five years in Sudan, bin Laden relocated to Afghanistan in 1996. It was then that al Qaeda began to prepare for independent terror operations. During this period, al Qaeda partnered with Egyptian terror organizations and especially with Islamic Jihad, led by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. In February 1998, bin Laden declared the establishment of an international Islamic umbrella organization called the Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders, with al Qaeda at the center. This framework was designed to institutionalize and pool partnerships of terror networks and organizations that held mutual ties, shared the same ideology and sometimes even launched operations together. The common goal was the establishment of religious Islamic regimes in countries with large Muslim minorities.

The onslaught of the international coalition against terror in Afghanistan dealt a hard blow to al Qaeda's infrastructure in that country. It killed commanders and combatants, put the leaders and members under global siege and forced the chiefs to adapt to the new situation by hiding and dispersing their men. Consequently, the focus of global jihad operations shifted from al Qaeda to its supported terror networks and organizations. *Quds Al Arabi* said that "Al Qaeda is no longer an independent organizational entity; rather, it is an idea that has become a faith²."

¹ Schweizer and Shai, 2002, 67.

²*Quds Al Arabi*, 3 August 2004.

The analysis provided in this paper will illustrate the principles of decentralization and the dynamic of empowering communication channels between al Qaeda and its satellite organizations, through which al Qaeda strives to expand the reach of global jihad terrorism by tapping into and strengthening the cognition of martyrdom.

Organizational Structure

The structure of al Qaeda's top tiers was based on the heritage that formed during the war in Afghanistan, rooted in the Islamic tradition of a leader alongside an advisory council (*shura*). The decisions of the supreme leader, based on his interpretation of the Koran and oral tradition, and in consultation with religious scholars, set the course of the organization as a whole. bin Laden was perceived as the *emir* of the organization, and anyone joining al Qaeda pledged allegiance to him as such. He always worked with another dominant leader at his side, with whom he consulted and shared decision-making and responsibility. After the death of his teacher, Abdullah Azzam, this role was taken on by Mohammad Ataf (Abu Hafs al Masri), who served as the organization's military commander and was bin Laden's confidante until his death in an American raid in Afghanistan in November 2001. In recent years, al Masri was succeeded by the Egyptian Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, who assumed this supporting role.

At first, bin Laden complied with the patterns formed in the course of the war in Afghanistan, which he had joined like any other volunteer. The *mélange* of nationalities in Afghanistan in the decade of war made it essential to create a single ideological framework that would unite all combatants. Thus the method of operation was formed, whereby many combatants of different national backgrounds but sharing emotions and ideology, could be dispatched throughout the world to mobilize new cadres to enlarge the organization and transform it into an operative organization with which to spread the concepts of global jihad. Influenced by the multinationalism to which he was exposed, bin Laden created a decentralized organization that could contain and respect variance and give operatives - commanders and combatants alike - much leeway, as long as the unifying concept of self-sacrifice (*istishad*) was jealously upheld. He realized that in a decentralized organization, the underlying concept would be more important than the leadership, and could thus serve as a uniting force in the places to which it spread, and exponentially increase the power of global jihad.

Suicide as a Unifying Organizational Value for Al Qaeda

Suicide as a method of warfare is part of a comprehensive worldview that considers active jihad against all enemies of Islam a center pillar and organizational beacon. Under al Qaeda's ideology, the willingness to sacrifice one's life for Allah's way (*fi sabil Allah*) expresses the Muslim combatant's ethical superiority over his opponents. Suicide for Allah has therefore become a supreme value, and its symbolism is just as or even more important than its tactical worth. Al Qaeda has embraced suicide as a symbol of global jihad and transformed Islamic martyrdom (*shahada*) almost to a

pillar of faith. Al Qaeda nurtured the spirit of the organization and built its ethos on volunteering for self-sacrifice³.

The culture and spirit of al Qaeda, which herald the death wish as a calling, have also served as a role model for supported terror organizations and others that share the ideology of global jihad. Emulating the parent organization, they too have nurtured the ethos of self-sacrifice in the way of Allah.

Organizational Vision: Multidimensionality as a Vehicle for Globalizing the Concept of Suicide

Al Qaeda, which supports and receives assistance from other organizations that share its worldview, has over the years revealed itself to have global reach and a dynamic structure that changed its leadership and relocated its headquarters numerous times before becoming the symbol and pillar of the global jihad movement. The globalization of al Qaeda is manifest in: (1) Dispersing graduates of al Qaeda training camps to four different continents; (2) The aspiration to become a model for emulation by using large groups of suicide terrorists and massive amounts of explosives to enhance the effect of their tactics; (3) Extensive use of psychological warfare through the media and the Internet.

There is no doubt that al Qaeda has chosen the media, which it manipulates to suit its needs, to spread its ideology, the organization's formative concepts - primarily self-sacrifice for Allah - and provide strategic guidance as to the favored targets for supporters of global jihad. It is no exaggeration to say that to al Qaeda, Arab and Western mass media is a key tool in the empowerment process that is carried out by the leaders of the organization in the territories beyond their direct control.

The enormous significance that al Qaeda attributes to the media was reflected in the organization's establishment of a media committee, led for a long time by Khalid sheikh Mohammad, who later commanded the 9/11 operation. Concurrently, bin Laden set up a company named Al Sihab, which produced the professional recordings and image-enhancing films that al Qaeda distributed in the Arab and Western world, mainly through the Qatar-based TV station of Aljazeera. Al Qaeda's preference for Aljazeera's reporters, such as Yosri Fouda and Ahmad Zaidan, was part of bin Laden's deliberate media policy of strengthening the prestige of Arab media, which was traditionally considered inferior and uninteresting compared to Western competition⁴.

Al Qaeda's approach to using the media is reflected in a letter from Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, the second-in-command in the 9/11 operation, to Yosri Fouda, where he states

³ U.S. Congress 2002, 234.

⁴ Zaidan 2003, 15.

that the reporters' personal mission is to serve rightfully their Islamic origin by praising jihad's operations⁵.

Of some 4,000 Islamic websites, around 300 are associated with radical Islamic groups that support al Qaeda. The editors of al Qaeda's websites are also field operatives. For example, one of the editors was captured in Saudi Arabia at the site where the severed head of Paul Johnson was found⁶. These sites disseminate the organization's messages and encourage volunteers to join global jihad movements. Some even provide instructions on how to build bombs and carry out terror operations. Because of Western attempts to disable or shut these sites down, they continually reappear under new URLs. Sometimes the new address is sent out as a message to previous visitors and sometimes it is passed on through chat rooms. Each terrorist group operates more than one site in more than one language. Two online newsletters are directly affiliated with al Qaeda: S'ut alJihad and Ma'askr alBatar⁷. They provide explanations on how to carry out kidnappings, poisonings and murders, and specify suitable Western targets.

For the terrorists that staged the terror attacks in Madrid in March 2004 and those involved in the 9/11 attacks, the Internet was the primary means of communication. Network anonymity enables covert communication on controversial subjects, free of government pressures. In Europe, the Internet offers young Muslims a virtual community life, which mainly influences immigrants who find it hard to adapt and struggle to maintain their ethnic identity. The Web makes it psychologically easier for European Muslims to cope with the alienation they feel and dull the crisis that is integral to immigration. On the deepest level, the Internet implements the ideal of nationhood, transforming it into concrete terms and illustrating that Muslims can create an international border-free community. Their Internet activities enable Muslims throughout the world to experience a tempting ideal that is not necessarily perceived or experienced as belligerent. They can experience the belligerent messages of Ayman alZawahiri, who said that "guns restore honor," because the Internet enables these communications. It enables guidance for religious and terrorist activities, but most importantly - it enables transmission of religious rulings that assuage readers' personal uncertainties.

Bin Laden's acute media savvy, including all platforms, shooting angles and quality of photography, was evidenced when he asked Aljazeera reporter Ahmed Zaidan, during an interview, to hold the camera at a flattering angle, and rejected a previous photo that in his judgment was not sufficiently attractive. Bin Laden also restaged his recitation of a ballad, which was photographed by Zaidan, because the crowd at the original event was not big enough in his opinion⁸. Ahmad Zaidan expressly stated his

⁵ Fouda and Fielding 2003, 153.

⁶ *The New Yorker*, 2 August 2004.

⁷ Paz 2004.

⁸ Zaidan 2003, 65.

impression of bin Laden as a man who clearly distinguishes between body and spoken language and skillfully uses both with the media. Zaidan also noted that bin Laden had used him to refute the comments of his brother-in-law Abdullah Azzam to Asharq Al-Awsat, which might have indicated conflicts between bin Laden and his partner, Azzam. Zaidan confessed that "Al Qaeda picks journalists and gives them planned interviews." In his interview with Zaidan, bin Laden stressed the role of the media and satellite stations in particular. "The public likes this media," he said, "because it puts body language before spoken words. This is often the most important element needed in order to set the Arab grassroots in action and levy pressure on governments to reduce their reliance on the US"⁹. Interviews of this kind were also intended to show the world that bin Laden is still alive and at the wheel. The focus has now shifted to his deputy, al Zawahiri.

Al Qaeda's Organizational Culture

The Psychological Contract

The term "psychological contract" defines the orally agreed-upon relationship between the organization's members and its representative. This term reflects the approach that gained momentum in the 1980s in organizational psychology, whereby the organization is a platform for individuals, as opposed to the previous approach by which individuals were resources of the organizations¹⁰. The new definition increased the productiveness of organizations. Bin Laden's al Qaeda "churns out" cadres of combatants that pledge allegiance to bin Laden personally. In this oath they proclaim themselves part of the jihad family and announce their willingness to sacrifice their life for the purpose, as laid down by the leader of the organization. The norm of absolute self-sacrifice is a primary creed for members. Those who accept this creed are videotaped swearing to fulfill their pledge. This sworn oath serves as irrefutable evidence that they cannot retract. It is also used for propaganda and for recruitment of new cadres, called on by their friends to follow in their footsteps.

In creating the psychological contract that makes al Qaeda so attractive, bin Laden seems to adhere closely to the "fraternity principle." Al Qaeda and its partner organizations employ "emotional bonding" and create commitment among potential recruits by using the principle of *mu'aakhaat*¹¹, defined by the Prophet Mohammad. Mohammad used inter-tribal links and created binding intra-tribal commitments in order to strengthen his military power. Bin Laden's methods, particularly the way in which he manipulates family relations and creates and uses friendly relations among his confidantes and prospective terrorists, are founded on the Islamic binding emotional contract among members of the organization. As stated in sura 8:75: "...and the possessors of relationships are nearer to each other in the ordinance of

⁹ Zaidan 2003, 25.

¹⁰ Thompson and Bunderson 2003, Patterson 2001.

¹¹ Watt 1960, 253.

Allah"¹². Bin Laden is trying to build an international force using the same methods employed by the Prophet in creating an inter-tribal army.

Al Qaeda's name today as a synonym for global terror calls for an analysis of the dynamic and methods of communication that the organization uses for tracing, recruiting and assigning young Muslims in terror operations throughout the globe. One of the most important questions in this context is how the organization identifies, nurtures and maintains the intentions of young Muslims throughout the world to partake in suicide missions.

Tracing

To understand the tracing mechanisms, we must first understand the needs of young Muslims that draw them to the concept of suicide. The need for self-actualization recurs in both the Saudi cell and the Hamburg cell, whose members flew the 9/11 planes. These young people were aware of the status of Muslim societies and the main point of reference, Islam, and felt deeply ambivalent toward them because of their inferiority. Bin Laden's method of resolving the dissonance between their love of Islam and their shame at its backwardness employs jihad and the same self-sacrifice practiced by the Prophet's soldiers. The jihad response to the emotional makeup of young Muslim adults is based on Koran and oral traditions¹³. With these solid foundations to rely on, this is apparently the ultimate solution for rebellious young Muslims who strive to change their circumstances, redeem their society, be heroes and give their lives positive meaning by identifying with their long-gone historic glory, whose disappearance undermines their ability to feel self-worth. These are men in their twenties, sometimes even 30 years old, who are lost or searching for meaning. Some are people who could not make their own way in life, while others have been relatively successful but nevertheless feel frustrated, humiliated and out of place. They come from all walks of Muslim society, and include individuals who have searched for the answer in Islam or were members of terror organizations and identified by the governments as being potentially destructive.

The need for self-actualization in people in troubled societies has been identified as a basis that strengthens the transition to a semi-hypnotic state enabling suicide missions¹⁴. According to al Qaeda's worldview, suicide for Allah is the utmost goal sought by jihad warriors, and is described in terms normally reserved for pleasurable experiences: "We ask you for the pleasure of looking at your face and long to meet you in untroubled times ... take us to you ..."¹⁵. In one of his interviews, Osama bin Laden himself clearly expressed the organizational ethos he had imparted to his followers: "I am not afraid of death. On the contrary, martyrdom is my passion. My

¹² I.S., vol. 1, part 2, p. 1/H, pp. 279-280

¹³ Author's interview with Prof. Sivan Emanuel, Jerusalem, July 2004.

¹⁴ Ferber 2003.

¹⁵ *S'ut Aljihad*, 3 June 2004.

martyrdom will lead to the birth of thousands of Osamas."¹⁶ Descriptions provided by surviving operatives indicate that, as the FBI has witnessed in the case of serial killers, al Qaeda's suicide terrorists are aroused by death. However, in this case, it is a learned and environmental-shaped trait. As known in psychology, concepts that enable a continuous identity that transcends territorial boundaries and time, are those that individuals tend to embrace in the long term¹⁷. The survival of the concept of suicide as an expression of self-actualization, from the pre-Afghan period of potential suicide terrorists in their home environment to al Qaeda's camps, has made this concept pivotal in candidates' sense of self, a lever for their successful integration in the organization and a safeguard against misgivings.

Al Qaeda has mastered the use of these developmental attributes in young Muslims, as evidenced by the chronicles of the Saudi and Hamburg cells and the way al Qaeda operatives took over the suicide group in Morocco before the attacks in Casablanca. Al Qaeda has two priceless contributions to make to these young people: first, a sense of heroism, accompanied, naturally, by a feeling of power, potency or even omnipotence, which is particularly important in light of the impotence they feel in the face of their backward position as Muslims or as first or second generation immigrants; second, a feeling that they selected jihad at their visits to the mosque freely and without coercion, which, of course, enhances the response they are looking for in their need for independence.

The Saudi cell that produced the crew of the 9/11 attacks differed from the Hamburg cell (which produced the pilots) in its average intellectual capacity, but in terms of psychological maturity, the groups seem to have been very similar. Having embraced the concept of jihad as a personal objective, both groups toyed with the notion of self-actualization and considered joining the fighting in Chechnya, and several of the members even told their relatives they would one day like to sacrifice themselves in the name of Allah. Their al Qaeda contacts told both groups that Chechnya was hard to reach, and that it would be better to go to Afghanistan and continue from there. Only when they arrived in Afghanistan did they discover that the contact they were told to meet did not exist and that this name was a code. It quickly transpired, however, that Afghanistan lived up to their expectations and was the right place for them to translate jihad into action. Swapping Chechnya for al Qaeda's goals was by no means a small leap¹⁸.

Tracing occurred in various places around the world. At first, al Qaeda operatives or agents identifying with its goals would create the right atmosphere, inciting emotions, forming groups around the concepts of fundamentalist Islam and marketing the idea of jihad to young religious and secular Muslims. This takes place in Arab and Western countries alike, and resembles missionary activity more than recruitment to military organizations. The focus on the close link between the slump of Islam since

¹⁶ *Ausaf*, 28 December 1998.

¹⁷ Winnicott 1956.

¹⁸ U.S. Congress 2002, 234.

the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the significance of self-sacrifice in restoring Islam's glory days plants the idea of suicide in the minds of mosque goers even at this early stage. In other words, the indoctrination toward suicide for Islam starts with emotive religious education by charismatic individuals with exceptional interpersonal skills. For example, in London this role was played by Abu Ktada and Abu Hamza al Masri; Suleiman al Alwan operated in Saudi Arabia; and in Hamburg, it was Salah al Waladi and Mohammad Zamar who operated in the area of Al Quds Mosque, which spawned the 9/11 pilots¹⁹. Such "exciting" figures are also present in universities and cultural centers, where they organize groups of believers.

The young Muslim who has always felt humiliated becomes preoccupied with the notion of self-sacrifice as a way of developing self-worth and accomplishing self-actualization. He finds others like him, and together they create a dynamic of cohesive ties revolving around the idea of self-sacrifice. The group visits the mosque with increasing frequency and circulates in the Muslim community in search of support. Through inter-community communications, contact is made between the young man, who by now has assimilated the concept of self-sacrifice, and an al Qaeda representative. Then the voyage begins to a war zone involving a Muslim minority, or to a training camp. The next step - terror missions - is just a matter of time. Once the terror attack takes place, it engenders enthusiasm and solidarity among other young Muslims, and the process repeats itself (see figure 1). This is al Qaeda's global empowerment cycle.

Recruitment

Although al Qaeda and its leaders try to resurrect the ancient times of the caliphs, its recruitment policies are in line with the organizational principles of the modern business world. The readiness to commit suicide is of paramount importance. Once candidates arrive at the al Qaeda camps, they answer questionnaires that cover the following topics: what brought them there, how they got there, how they heard about the camp, what attracted them, what kind of education they have, where they worked before, do they have any special training, and of course - would they be willing to kill themselves. The questionnaire is used in order to assess the potential of new recruits, spot spies and identify candidates of exceptional skill, like the pilot's license of Hani Hanjour, who later crashed a plane into the Pentagon. During his interrogation, Khalid Sheikh said that the most important thing Al Qaeda looked for was the willingness to commit suicide²⁰. Candidates who responded positively and unequivocally to this question were then interviewed by Mohammad Ataf, Al Qaeda's military commander. He tested the candidate's patience, to check that he was suitable for the organization's long-term plans. It was also important for the recruiters to find candidates who had no combat experience, to make tracing by intelligence services more difficult. Recruitment was therefore built on official entry into the organization and a

¹⁹ U.S. Congress 2002, 165, 233.

²⁰ U.S. Congress 2002, 234.

"psychological contract" in which the parties bonded emotionally, based on their shared interest in the concept of suicide.

Khalid sheikh said that candidates also took psychological tests to check their ability to withstand pressure and test their devotion to the concepts of jihad and self-sacrifice. According to the inquiry report, bin Laden himself was involved in assigning people to missions. He canvassed the camps, talking to candidates who had passed the preliminary screening. Reportedly, ten minutes were enough for him to tell whether a candidate would make a good suicide terrorist²¹. Bin Laden would come to the camps to teach the principles of al Qaeda's worldview, and in these talks would start dialogs with the attendees. If he had the impression that a candidate was genuinely ready to carry out a suicide mission, the candidate would be offered the chance to pledge allegiance to bin Laden, long before he heard anything about the mission itself.

Apparently, then, operational details are kept secret until the end of the recruitment process, and most of the dialog with candidates takes place regardless of the candidate's operational capabilities or his performance in training. Rather, the crucial element is his decision to sacrifice himself and his ability to do so upon bin Laden's orders, in the name of his pledge of allegiance. The pledge and its videotaping are nothing short of primal rites, evoking a person's irrational emotions and functions in what has been described as "a religious experience"²². The transition into a new state of awareness in which one's actions are motivated by emotions and backed by religion, demonstrating the superiority of *shuhada* over earthly hedonism, including the self-control provided by this superiority, guarantees that the operative would indeed be able to consciously and calmly carry out the suicide mission. It has been shown²³ that the motivation to commit suicide evolves in three stages: (1) solidarity with distress in the person's home environment; (2) autosuggestion - inducing oneself into accepting the concept of suicide; (3) departure from life and being operated, on a personal level, by a representative of the organization. According to Stern²⁴, the suicide bomber enters a semi-hypnotic dissociated trance, in which he is operated by a figure to whom he has given authority. No other perspective is entertained, apart from that on which they both agree. In this state of affairs, there is no ambiguity or uncertainty; the suicide terrorist feels that Allah is on his side and that he is transformed into a good person. According to Stern, the transcendence sought by Muslim suicide terrorists is equivalent to the pleasure derived from love, beauty and prayer. Others have described this state as one of dissociation, where logical thinking is subordinated to the emotional goal. Clearly, then, scholars are in consensus that while preparing for the mission, suicide terrorists experience serenity. In the 9/11 mission, for example, to facilitate the transition from the second stage to the third stage of motivational development, letters were sent containing instructions,

²¹ U.S. Congress 2002, 235.

²² James 1960, 534.

²³ Ferber, 2003.

²⁴ Stern 2003, 282.

regulations and procedures of conduct that were designed to place the operatives into a semi-hypnotic state in which they would feel unquestionable solidarity with the mission, with no room for misgivings²⁵. In both the tracing and recruitment stages, the readiness to commit suicide is thus a cognitive-emotional focus and an organizational litmus test for joining al Qaeda.

Assignment

Bin Laden creates his operational plans and collects potential operatives concurrently. He uses the long time between planning and operation to adapt the plans to the candidates and vice versa. The most prominent example is how he handled the operational concept underlying 9/11. At first, he rejected the idea, raised in 1996 by Khalid sheikh, of simultaneously blowing up several airplanes in midair. Later on, bin Laden embraced this concept, when he found that conditions on the ground were ripe. He trimmed Khalid sheikh's grandiose plan and adjusted it to the selected operatives, making it into the 9/11 operation. When it turned out that because of their Yemenite background, two of the original candidates would not be able to get US visas, he revised the plan. Although bin Laden chose his favorite targets, he gave the operatives leeway regarding one of the more difficult sites (the Capitol instead of the White House), and even left it to them to choose the date, even though he wanted several times to push it up. This characteristic of adjusting the plan to the operatives and vice versa was so dynamic that bin Laden, for reasons unclear, was even prepared to make last minute changes in the suicide team that had been selected and trained for the Cole (October, 2000). However, in the 9/11 mission, he chose to wait with Khalid sheikh's decision to oust Khaled Midhar, one of the first recruits for the mission, whom he had selected personally at the end of 1999, and allow him to resolve his personal conflicts, go back home to see his first born daughter and return to the cell in the fall of 2001.

The Organization's Support of the Cells - A Dynamic of Empowerment

In psychology, empowerment is defined as actions by the leadership that enable an organization's members to exercise discretion, and confer authority on individuals within the organization to make decisions regarding their daily actions within the organization²⁶.

Bin Laden and al Qaeda seem to draw on their religious sources for their style of empowerment, granting autonomy, individuation and independence. According to their approach, Islam is a religion of empowerment, with faith in Allah and the Prophet Mohammad as a vehicle for emotional strength. In al Qaeda, bin Laden has translated religious legitimacy and empowerment into a method of management and command. He illustrates for his followers how Islam was created and flourished thanks to the victory of the few against the many, the weak over the strong, and especially thanks to the love of death as a way of transcending earthly difficulties. This historic and religious truth is personified by Khaled Ibn al Walid, who in 637 engaged in the Battle of Al Qadisiya. His army was 120,000 strong, and was faced

²⁵ *Yedioth Aharonoth*, 14 February 2001.

²⁶ Bell & Zemke, 1988, Rudolph & Peluchette, 1993

with 300,000 Persian soldiers. In an act of psychological warfare, he sent a letter to the Persian commander stating "*aslimu tislamu*" (convert to Islam and you can live in peace). Al Walid explained: "If you do not agree, I will come upon you with my people, who love death as you love life." This is the point at which, in convergent validation, the organizational empowerment meets the religious one, which, according to Karmon, contains a wide array of values that together make up the religious ethos of *shuhada* and jihad, as expressed in the self-sacrifice missions²⁷. In bin Laden's hands, this pan-Muslim asset was transformed into a slogan of work and psychological warfare with which the cognition of self-sacrifice could be activated. Not only does he use the words of Al Walid as psychological warfare and as a means of disseminating the notion of suicide in other organizations, he also uses a management method of empowerment and delegation of authority in the name of religious belief until the present date.

The communications between al Qaeda's leadership and the supporters and commanders on the ground in the three attacks carried out by the organization's hard core reveal four characteristics of interpersonal empowerment:

Working in pairs - The model of working in pairs is derived directly from bin Laden's own method. As noted, bin Laden operated as part of a pair from the outset, when he began to fight his war for Islam under the influence of his teacher and spiritual guide, Azzam, with whom he led Maktab al-Khidimat (the Service Bureau). He continued to lead the organization with a supporter or spiritual and operational deputy at his side.

In the three terror attacks and in preparation for 9/11 in particular, attention was given to selecting a partner for each participant. Closeness between the partners surely facilitated mutual support and solidarity, enhancing each individual's self-worth in a process known in psychology as "twinship"²⁸. Working in pairs is meant first and foremost to protect the concept of *shuhada*. Al Qaeda's leaders are aware of the advantages of drawing strength from others, as seen in the work of imams and preachers at the mosques. The organization also uses this teamwork method to "immunize" its operatives against heresy and doubt. The boosted self-worth experienced when working as a two-man team, with both members agreeing on the same concept and strengthening one another, alleviates the individual loneliness emanating from the need to keep the secret, and enables supervision and ongoing communication if one of the partners falls out of touch.

Strengthening predispositions - al Qaeda is an organization that leans on preexisting similarities between members and suicide candidates. The organization picks brothers, cousins, friends and relatives of people who have already sacrificed themselves for the cause. In this respect, its method of operation resembles that of other secret organizations²⁹. But unlike other organizations, al Qaeda leans on

²⁷ Author's interview with Karmon Yigal, Jerusalem, July 2004.

²⁸ Kohut 1971.

²⁹ Sageman 2004, 113.

predisposition for *istishad*. This preparedness is built up in religious and secular young men as they grow up, in their natural surroundings, by a local imam or preacher. The concept, delivered in this way, is strongly and comprehensively internalized, such that it is not contingent on a specific operation³⁰. This comprehensive internalization of the concept of suicide in the name of Allah is the predisposition al Qaeda is looking for. In this mental readiness to carry out an operation, all that is missing is an operator who can utilize it and transport the person from the state of readiness -predisposition - to a state of action. The predisposition, which enables volunteering for the organization and pledging allegiance to bin Laden out of free will, opens the door to the operation that will follow. This is the constellation that al Qaeda knows how to trace during recruitment. The organization provides training, but works on a personal process previously undergone independently by the candidate, which is a prerequisite for job assignment. The concept of self-sacrifice (*istishad*) is not planted by the organization upon recruitment or during training; these stages merely enhance what was already there before. For example, both the Saudi and Hamburg cells came to Afghanistan with the predisposition, where they were actively recruited for suicide missions - as individuals or groups³¹.

Response to an individual need - In contrast to a commonly-stated opinion, we do not believe that al Qaeda brainwashes its candidates, plants foreign ideas in their minds or applies unreasonable pressure on them. In fact, the Congressional Report's analysis of the Hamburg cell indicates that the organization, its leaders and delegates could identify a candidate's individual needs and tailor a job to suit him. Interpersonal work is carried out and the organization adjusts itself to the candidate's needs from the moment the "psychological contract," which has religious force, is entered into by the candidate and the leader, and the candidate and the organization - upon the pledge of allegiance and even more so upon assignment for a specific job.

For example, Ziad Samir Jarrah (the pilot of the fourth plane, which crashed in Pennsylvania), a lively young man who found a job immediately upon moving to Germany, drank alcohol and went clubbing - had a stormy, passionate personality and was in need of a framework that could contain him. He found this framework in a Hamburg mosque and in an eager return to religion. He redirected all the passion he had invested in his tempestuous and ambivalent love for his girlfriend to the notion of *istishad*, becoming increasingly more introverted and religious. When he finished his training in Afghanistan, he came back to Germany much calmer, his girlfriend said³². He and his friends were required to maintain their Western lifestyle for operative reasons, but this also resolved all the conflicts he had experienced before leaving for Afghanistan, between Islam and Western living, religion and secularism, passions and conscience.

³⁰ Avilla 2001.

³¹ U.S. Congress 2002, 233-4.

³² *The L.A. Times*, 27 January 2003.

Mohammad Atta, commander of the 9/11 operation, reveals compulsive characteristics in his will (written in 1996, five years before his death). He asks that his body be touched with gloves only, that no one touch his private parts and that pregnant women not visit his grave. His pent-up sexual drives, which found no release in the usual way, were also expressed in a lonely platonic relationship he had with a friend's wife whom he had convinced to convert to Islam, in his refusal to seek a bride for himself, and a brief infatuation he had in a visit to Syria, which ended unsuccessfully when the girl refused to wear a veil. His quelled passions - except for his religious passion - coupled with his charisma and intellect enabled him to win arguments with Ziad Samir Jarrah - his traditional partner in arguments and his passionate counterpart in the Hamburg cell (arguments that almost caused Jarrah to abandon the group of martyrs). We believe that bin Laden, with his keen capabilities, identified Atta's determination, intelligence and leadership skills. Once assigned to the job, the responsibility influenced him and his character as a leader. Because of his zeal and because he had no other obligations apart from his devotion to the Islamic cause, the only thing that excited him, he fulfilled his duties obsessively and responsibly.

A similar analysis can be made of the deep connection between Atta and Marwan al-Shehhi, his roommate in Hamburg and his partner throughout all stages of preparation for the attack. Al Shehhi, who flew the second airplane, which crashed into the southern building of the World Trade Center, was described by his flight instructors as nice and innocent-looking. This immature 23-year-old, who needed someone to guide him, was captivated by the authoritative, dominant and dogmatic Atta. This match suited the purposes of the organization, and apparently was directed from above from the outset.

The role of contact or go-between operator was played by Ramzi Bin al Shibh, who had developed interpersonal skills and intellectual capabilities that were on par with Atta's. He was the optimal facilitator, not only because he did not receive a US visa, but also due to his social skills and ability to befriend people and advocate Islam as a positive lifestyle, without Atta's rigidity. Bin al-Shibh, who was talkative and needed the company of people more than his colleagues, was assigned a role that was extremely fulfilling for him. He worshipped Atta and accepted that he would only be playing a supporting role. His advantages were clear to al Qaeda's leadership from the start.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, one of the masterminds and architects of 9/11 and the senior commander in charge, was born to an immigrant family. The family came from an area in Baluchistan known as an area of bandits and a magnet for young men from the Middle East and Pakistan, from where the Mujahedeen went on their missions during the war against the Soviets. His father was an imam, and imparted the faith in jihad in him from childhood. But in his later teens, when the US was still financing the Mujahedeen war on the Soviets, he developed a passionate hatred for the West and envisioned the war continuing against a new enemy. This was the basis on which he joined al Qaeda's leadership. From the beginning of his career as a terrorist, he stressed his grandiose motivations. He lent financial assistance to his cousin Ramzi Yousef for the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, planned an assassination of the Pope with him and was among the masterminds who gave birth to the idea of carrying out showcase attacks by crashing airplanes into land targets. His megalomania was

reflected in what later became the 9/11 plan; he originally intended to hijack ten planes, crash nine of them into buildings, land the tenth, kill all male passengers and then convene a press conference in which a speech would be made denouncing US policy and explaining the entire course of the attack³³. Al Qaeda's leadership identified his planning skills and original thinking, which transcended the boundaries of practicality. Realizing that his grandiosity suited the goals of the organization, they soon assigned him to commanding positions. He was drawn to Southeast Asia and considered the area potentially suitable for his plans, through organizations supported by al Qaeda. The terror attacks in which Khalid Sheikh Mohammad was involved until his arrest in Pakistan in March 2003 generated extensive publicity for al Qaeda.

This means the candidate undergoes a personal and organizational process, with the latter resolving a personal conflict or answering a personal need. The organization considers this an ability to work *with* rather than *on* the candidate. The ladder of success crosses through the candidate's subjective world. This capability of the organization is the "glue" that enables individuals to survive in the system, because it allows for flexibility, interpersonal adjustments and matchmaking that enhance the individual's satisfaction. This explains the positive mindset of the martyrs during their preparations for the mission. This flexibility, coupled with the internalized concept of self-sacrifice for Allah, strengthens the individual's sense of self-actualization - while being emotionally supported – as well as the organization's certainty that the mission will indeed be carried out.

Granting autonomy to the cell - The highest operational level for a group is to act as coordinator for the subgroups, which carry on independently³⁴. The empowerment Bin Laden and al Qaeda's leadership grants to cells that are to carry out terror attacks enables the individual members to form independent units, united and guided by the notion of self-sacrifice. This organizational structure offers stronger cohesiveness than simple dependence on a leader's authority would, and allows for flexibility in decision-making and functioning. This, in turn, guarantees successful performance of the missions despite the geographic distances, problematic communications with the original authority and variance in the participants' countries of origin. Delegation of authority from Khalid Sheikh to Atta, for example, from the supreme leader to the local level, also held a promise that the concept would be translated into action, because it was the concept that motivated the formation of the group and remained its *raison d'être*. The trust given by the leader also contributes to the individuals' sense of self-worth and dignity³⁵. The feeling of independence that al Qaeda gives its cells also reduces the risk of friction and opposition³⁶.

³³ U.S. Congress 2002, 154.

³⁴ Bion 1967.

³⁵ Koerner 2002.

³⁶ Mahler 1974.

Therefore, empowerment that grants individual operatives discretion and makes them feel trusted and individuated transforms the concept of suicide into a key motive, more than simple obedience to any leader would. It elevates the act of suicide to a spiritual act for a supreme cause that transcends even the dependence on the organization itself. In this way, al Qaeda guarantees the empowerment of all the mental energies of the individual cell members, a critical component in carrying out the organization's grandiose plans. Therefore, the following three elements can be considered precursors for terror: (1) The cognition of self-sacrifice among a Muslim community; (2) The existence of a personal need to be compensated for humiliation, and the need for honor; (3) A middleman operator to act as a bridge between the individual and his cognition, and guide him through the organization's empowerment process in a way that satisfies his needs (see figure 2).

Organizational Leadership - Bin Laden's Personality and Its Reflection in His Leadership Patterns

Ever since 1998, the concept of *instishad* has been superior to that of obedience to the leader. Personal commitment only came after the organization had identified the candidate's readiness to die. Candidates also feel this way, and they are so thoroughly indoctrinated with the concept that after the pledge of allegiance, they are essentially launched missiles. This is also consistent with bin Laden's personal vision: the reign of suicide terrorism. His supreme desire is to serve as a role model for others, without competing with them. His attention to detail and involvement in the operations is therefore not totalitarian or aggressive in any way. This can be explained by his experiences before and during Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda's leader, a man in his 40s, has made the essentials of Sufism into a lifestyle and a technique that evoke admiration among his followers. His clothes and food are no different than those of the people around him; he is modest, a kind host, a soft-spoken and pleasant man, and is evidently embarrassed to talk about his family. The protocol in the public dinners and prayers he holds is that there are no external elements to distinguish between him and all others, only gestures and eye contact with his confidantes. At times he gets up and serves as imam during prayer, but he does not usually take even the first row, and prefers to mingle with his men³⁷.

Osama bin Laden is the son of one of the wives of Mohammad bin Laden, a rich confidante of the Saudi Court. He is his father's 17th child. Since Muslims are only allowed four wives, men often divorce the fourth in order to remarry. This was Osama's mother. Because of her strong rebellious character, her Syrian family was only too happy to see Mohammad bin Laden take her far away, but it was this remoteness that apparently made it hard for her to assimilate in Saudi Arabia. Her relationship with her husband was tense. Because she was looked down upon, everyone else in the family - the other wives and his older half-siblings - called Osama "the slave girl's son". This led the father to push the mother and son away from the rest of the family, which in turn initiated a long journey of mixed feelings in

³⁷ Zaidan 2003, 47.

Osama toward his mother. On the one hand, he loved her and wanted to be with her, but on the other he did not want to feel rejected, and made an effort to stay close to his father and the family's center of life. However, being both with the family - cared for by another powerful woman, Mohammad's first wife, who embraced all his neglected children - and being with his own mother meant no freedom for Osama, as well as restrictions and beatings. The mother, who repeatedly stepped in and out of his life, responded by neglecting him whenever he showed signs of needing more freedom³⁸. As a child, Osama bin Laden did not have any outlet for his need for freedom and support, because his father too was a tyrant who terrorized the women and children under the guise of religion and the paternal traditional role in a patriarchal society.

The four years he spent in Beirut, between the age of 16 and 20, with alcohol and prostitutes for company, must have had a deeper meaning. His older brother, who was later killed, managed to stop Osama's self-destruction by drawing him increasingly toward the religious life. Osama traded his self-destructive streak for the need to give his life for Allah. He also experienced a series of losses, starting with his father's death when he was 10, through the death of his adored older brother in a plane crash, and finally with the death of his teacher, Azzam, who had taught him the principles of jihad and self-sacrifice. The theory that Azzam was killed at the hand of the Americans, coupled with Islamic influences in his studies at Jeddah University and his experience in Afghanistan, created his deep animosity toward the US. Some say that the loss of his father, brother and mentor are tied - in his mind - to American evil and that in his feverish mind he feels himself to be a victim of the US, just like the Islamic "nation" (Umma) he purports to protect³⁹.

In summary, bin Laden's biography and interviews give rise to three key personality traits: humiliation, the need for freedom and a desperate need for support and love from the people close to him. His comments to Aljazeera's Ahmad Zaidan clearly reveal his need to compensate for humiliation and impotence: "The Muslims' self-confidence must be restored."

It therefore seems that the empowerment he practices in the management of al Qaeda emanates not only from his Afghanistan experience and the multicultural mix there, or from the cool analysis of a businessman, but also from his personal internal structure. As a man who had been deprived of freedom in childhood and experienced traumatic separation from both parents, as well as many losses, he grew up to become a man who receives love from people he empowers and to whom he gives freedom under his wing, even if they part with him and are far away. This behavior is consistent with the separation-individuation theory⁴⁰, according to which problems in the process of separating from the mother and absence of a solution to the normal childhood ambivalence predict the need to go on processing the issues of freedom, individuation and psychological distance between self and other in maturity as well.

³⁸ Falk 2001.

³⁹ Falk 2001.

⁴⁰ Mahler 1974.

Bin Laden does not consider his role to be that of a warrior; rather, in his opinion his job is to empower others, to "spur and inflame the nation"⁴¹. The solution he chose for his conflict with issues of losses, individuation and freedom is, from his perspective, constructive reparations. According to his account to Zaidan, he had learned the decentralized management style from Azzam, but there is no way to know whether this is yet another attempt to aggrandize his historical roots and the people he loved. Modesty and all other ascetic Sufi elements in his conduct are important to bin Laden, so that he does not appear to be aggressive or evil. With bright eyes, he told Ahmad Zaidan how an American journalist he had met was astonished to find him a simple, non-aggressive man. He also recounted how Korean merchants agreed to trade with his brother even after they found out he was a relative of Osama. These stories were designed to convince listeners that he was a good man, and not the bad man portrayed by the Americans. This reflects the basis of his dialog with his people: he empowers them and grants them freedom in their decision-making, and in return he receives limitless trust, closeness, admiration and love. They give him the legitimacy of "a good man", and he gives them the legitimacy of feeling potent and equally good. Bin Laden's strategy is thus to trust the supremacy of the ideology over his own leadership, and to use religious experience and his own modesty as two additional elements that enhance solidarity with his ideas.

Empowerment as a means of organizational management and communication, as well as individuation of his subordinates, thus emanate from his multinational experience in Afghanistan, his experience in the world of business and his personality. The resulting flexibility of his intra-organizational communications guarantees that operational planning will continue with or without bin Laden.

Communication and Empowerment Channels between al Qaeda (The Hard Core) and Supported Organizations

It could be said that al Qaeda's operational patterns of supporting affiliated organizations in the global net are varied, and transform to suit the supported organizations and changing political circumstances. An analysis of unclassified material from the questioning of the "liaison officers" or operator that have been captured by the US indicates that the parent organization is prepared to support the dispatch of suicide terrorists and provide infrastructure and funds, but the message to supported organizations is, again, one of empowerment. The main focus is that the operation must take place, regardless of al Qaeda's support. In other words, the message conveyed by the hard core to the satellites is: "go ahead with or without me."

More than anything, the terror attacks in Singapore, Bali, Thailand and Jakarta illustrate the central role played by the "liaison officers," who are charged with communications between the parent organization and its partners, and in fact disseminate the concept of global jihad. This conduit transmits operational ideas, professional expertise and enterprise values, including the ethos of self-sacrifice for Allah.

⁴¹ Zaidan 2003, 34.

The ties between al Qaeda and its Saudi branch were maintained by the organization's senior commanders, Afghanistan veterans who operated for years in close contact with the parent organization there. In recent years, these operatives returned to Saudi Arabia to manage the terror networks in the Saudi kingdom. Commanders operating in Saudi Arabia were part of the al Qaeda cadre and preached against the regime until a decision was adopted immediately after the end of the war in Iraq, apparently in collusion with the parent organization, to step up the campaign and carry out terror attacks within Saudi Arabia.

Several of these commanders, such as al Airi⁴² (al Qaeda's senior spiritual leader in Saudi Arabia and of radical Islamists in Iraq and Chechnya) and Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, were among the chief proponents of practicing self-sacrifice in Saudi Arabia and were also behind the propaganda promoting al Qaeda's suicide attacks until they were killed by the Saudi security forces.

The intensive operations of al Qaeda's Saudi branch attest to the significance of this country for the organization. There is no doubt that for al Qaeda, the focus now is to find a base country to replace Afghanistan, as noted by Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's second in command, in his book "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner." This stated goal has not yet been accomplished, but for al Qaeda it will remain the organizational goal, notwithstanding terror operations in Iraq.

The human infrastructure of suicide terrorists in Morocco (Casablanca, May 2003) is of the lowest socioeconomic level. These are young men raised in a religious society that lives in radical isolation vis-à-vis the general society, which they perceive as heretic. This dovetails with bin Laden and al Qaeda's style of using people who matured for the job through their own faith and developed the notion of self-sacrifice to the level of personal fantasy, which provides their underlying motivation. The Morocco liaisons zeroed in on the radical religious group, based on the understanding that these people could serve as a vehicle for the organization's operative goals. The connection between the terror cells in Morocco and al Qaeda was handled by Moroccan Afghanistan veterans who were living outside of Morocco, but who maintained close ties with their associates. Their main assistance was in financing operations that were carried out under local commanders. There is no knowledge of any direct communications between any of the suicide terrorists with bin Laden himself, but here too the empowerment mechanism was in play, so that an interface of this kind would not have been necessary.

On November 15, 2003, two suicide attacks took place, 60 seconds apart, at the two main synagogues in Istanbul - Neveh Shalom and Beit Israel. The cell's core comprised operatives who had formerly belonged to local Turkish terror organizations. Like many other young Muslims, these young men decided to join al Qaeda's camps in Afghanistan, where they were trained and indoctrinated, and eventually mobilized to work for global jihad in their countries of origin. The cell commander was invited to meet bin Laden in person, and in their meeting they discussed targets in Turkey. In the familiar empowerment process, bin Laden handed over the authority and responsibility for jihad to the cell commanders, who set out to fulfill their mission in keeping with the spirit of the organization.

⁴² Paz 2004.

On the morning of March 11, 2004, ten bombs exploded within a short interval at different train stations in the southern areas of Madrid. Three other bombs hidden in backpacks were found and neutralized by the police. It is only a matter of time before it is established whether the terrorists had direct or indirect links with al Qaeda, but it is already clear that the attack coincided with the strategic goals laid down by bin Laden and his spokesmen in tapes and Internet publications, stating their devotion to causing changes in western public opinion.

The use of suicide terrorism in Chechnya is relatively new. The Chechens began to use this mode of operation only in mid-2000. Since June 2000, more than 100 suicide terrorists, almost half of them women, have carried out approximately 25 attacks, killing more than 800 people. In essence, the Chechnya conflict is over sovereignty for the Chechen separatists. In the last decade, the country suffered two wars (1994-1996 and 1999 onward). Islamic radicalization has been clearly evident in the second war, in which the local conflict merged into global jihad.

Al Qaeda's influence on the Chechnya conflict is evident in the writings of the Saudi Airi⁴³ who served as spiritual guide for Chechen terrorists, imparted professional and operative know-how, provided financing, dispatched volunteers to boost their lines and assigned senior Saudi commanders such as Khatib and Abu Walid of the Amadi clan. The Chechen case, too, demonstrates the crucial role of "liaison officers."

The escalation of Chechen activity is clearly evident in the combination of hostage taking and suicide missions, and reflects the general escalation in al Qaeda's global operations. The worldview of Zarqawi, commander of al Qaeda's terror involvement in Iraq, is reflected in a long letter directed to al Qaeda's leaders. The letter is filled with religious justifications and flowery language, which was apparently written in his name with the help of religious sages he works with. In this letter, Zarqawi assumed responsibility for 25 terror attacks in Iraq, and offered this country to bin Laden instead of "the land of jihad" that the organization had lost with the US attacks in Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban. An analysis of the letter in view of Zarqawi's biography yields the image of an opportunist who does not hesitate to receive support from the Shiite regime in Iran, while simultaneously preaching acid teachings against the treachery of Iraq's Shiites. This preaching tallies with his fervent hatred of the Shi'a in general. His hatred is so virulent that he has blatantly called on the Sunnis to wage all-out war on the Shiites as a means of fomenting civil war, thus thwarting American efforts. Zarqawi emerges as a practical man who can offer his terror associates lucrative deals in the name of Islam. His approach to al Qaeda's leaders, with bin Laden at the lead, is straightforward: he has said that if Iraq is recognized as the next land of jihad - which implies a demand to recognize his position as the main implementer of Islamic jihad in that country - he would pledge allegiance to bin Laden. This is a step he has thus far avoided, although he has always considered himself part of the global jihad movement.

An analysis of the ties between al Qaeda and Zarqawi, as leader of an independent terror network with tentacles in Iraq, Jordan, Chechnya and Europe, since he first came to Afghanistan, coupled with that of his letter to bin Laden, again reflects al Qaeda's method of granting extensive leeway to those who identify with bin Laden's

⁴³ Paz 2004

worldview. It establishes that al Qaeda considers the concept of jihad superior to the need to prove organizational command or to take credit, and demonstrates the organization's clear commitment to suicide terror. Al Qaeda supported Zarqawi's initiatives and did not enforce its own plans, since it recognized Zarqawi's need for independence and control over his own men.

Zarqawi himself is a criminal who grew up in the slums and served two prison sentences before finding an ideology to justify his actions. He is strongly motivated to achieve grandeur by his own actions. He channeled his antisocial activities to jihad in order to legitimize and give religious significance to his activities, which were never recognized. His attitude toward bin Laden seems to be businesslike, and there is no hierarchy between them. His motivation to achieve grandeur makes Zarqawi extremely dangerous to the west, because of his indiscriminant terror, which will continue unless he is caught. Although he does not have bin Laden's vision or capacities, al Qaeda profits from his independent operations. His natural motivation and proven capabilities have contributed to the cause without requiring any special investment on the part of al Qaeda, except for the training, which was lent to Zarqawi and his men just as it was to many others like him.

The Singapore and Bali attacks were carried out by independent organizations, with extensive assistance from al Qaeda. This points to the multifaceted and complex ties between al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations. In these cases, the assistance in infrastructure and operations was lent by the Afghanistan headquarters (top-bottom). After the terror campaign planned for Singapore had failed in operational terms, the information necessary for drawing conclusions and preparing for the next mission was transmitted bottom-up, namely, from the Jemaah Islamiya to al Qaeda. They drew conclusions for the next mission in Bali, where the selected target was tourist sites, which are easier to hit than the Singapore targets. Hambali, the liaison officer between Jemaah Islamiya and al Qaeda, once again served as conduit between the two organizations. So although it was the Jemaah Islamiya that carried out the attack in Bali and planned the attack in Singapore, the thinking process and target selection was in concert with al Qaeda, as was the debriefing and lesson-learning.

In attacks carried out by al Qaeda affiliates, operation commanders are usually not suicide terrorists themselves. They supervise the preparation of logistical and operational infrastructure, collect intelligence, recruit accomplices, revise the plans and sometimes hold contacts with the parent organization, either directly or through middlemen. In most cases, the suicide terrorists come in at the final stage. The suicide terrorists often have lesser mental and intellectual capacity, and the organization exploits their main strength - their readiness to die. The fact that they only come in toward the end of the preparation process indicates that al Qaeda has two separate training courses, and reflects an intricate planning mechanism. Apparently, the parent organization decides when the infrastructure is ready and then allows the suicide track and operator track to converge.

It can thus be said that the influences leading to globalization of suicide terrorism include mainly: (1) Al Qaeda's decentralized organizational structure and communication dynamic; (2) Evolution of the concept of self-sacrifice in Muslim societies throughout the world; (3) Bin Laden's personality and its expression in his management style (see figure 3).

Responding to the Threat

I believe that the trans-border paradigm of suicide terrorism introduced and implemented by bin Laden is, as of now, attractive only for isolated individuals within Muslim populations and societies of Muslim immigrants, and has not yet become a model for emulation by large groups or communities therein. There is a risk, however, that the dynamic of empowerment and self-actualization utilized by al Qaeda in its dissemination of the concept of suicide might couple with the continued social frustration of Muslim communities in the West and lead to a boom in popular suicide culture, which is the perfect recruitment bed for terror organizations - as seen in Palestinian society.

I believe that beyond the need to thwart al Qaeda's terror operations and those of its satellites, especially suicide terrorism, on the operative local and international levels, there is an urgent need to fight on the conceptual level. An ideological Islamic philosophy should be offered as a moderate and pragmatic alternative, including practical and conceptual solutions that would compensate for the inferiority that young Muslims are feeling. The cognition of *istishad* should be fought with religious verdicts that counter the concept and illustrate how it is diametrically opposed to Orthodox Islam. Muslim journalists and thinkers have recently leveled piercing criticism on the way Islam has been tainted by al Qaeda and its partners, and how their criminal behavior has created a negative image for this religion⁴⁴. The main challenge lies in amplifying these voices and helping them take their place in mainstream Islam, by transforming their criticism into an alternative conceptual track and building a decentralized education system under the auspices of moderation. If religious rulers who are considered inciters are arrested, work can be done with them while in prison so that they start issuing *fatwas* (Islamic religious decrees) that contradict their previous rulings and call for ceasefire in the customary Islamic way, under which only the issuer of a fatwa has the authority to cancel it. This method was implemented successfully in Egypt with the veteran leaders of Jemaah Islamiya.

Psychological warfare to dull the idealistic image of bin Laden in the eyes of his followers might be difficult to accomplish, because he is such a modest and easily admired leader. At the same time, targeting the communication channels between him and his supported organizations, and in particular identifying the contacts (agents of influence and liaison officers such as Hambali and Khalid Sheikh) would hit the junction points and cease the empowerment process. The contacts and agents of influence are key, because they are the conduit through which information is conveyed and the empowerment model imparted, and because of the precious information they hold - both about al Qaeda and about the supported organizations with which they work.

Certainly, the financial systems supporting al Qaeda's operations in general and suicide missions in particular should also be targeted. Since these funds are transferred through non-governmental organizations and charities, work should be

⁴⁴ The Middle East Media Research Institute 2004a, The Middle East Media Research Institute 2004b.

done in concert with the relevant governments, especially in the Persian Gulf, in order to tighten the supervision of the money trail. This is already being practiced in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the activities of rich businessmen who directly support suicide missions should be neutralized; alternatively, they should be convinced to contribute money to other Islamic causes around the world in order to improve the image of Islam, which is at its lowest point because it is equated with terror and suicide.

Conclusions

A psychological-organizational analysis of al Qaeda offers new parameters with which to understand the power of this organization and project the threats it holds for the West in the short and long term. An analysis of this kind sheds a light on the need to sever al Qaeda's communication channels and disconnect the core from its satellite organizations. It also provides a clear view of the power centers that should be marked as objectives in order to overcome al Qaeda, with the understanding that the pool of potential suicide terrorists are a weak link that should be dealt with through social and religious rather than military means. Given this analysis, a large part of al Qaeda's accomplishments thus far lies in setting the trend of the supremacy of *istishad* over any leadership, including bin Laden's. Islam must offer a conceptual alternative as an important facet of the struggle.

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