"Strategic management analysis of al qaeda the role of worldwide organization for a worldwide strategy"

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The role of worldwide organization for a worldwide strategy

Abstract

Al Qaeda's birth, development, bellicose power, resistance potential, and perseverance have been discussed and studied widely.

In the framework of this article, al Qaeda will be analyzed with a tool which is normally used to analyze business organizations, the "strategic management analysis". In choosing this approach, the authors assume that the terrorist organization al Qaeda can be compared to or understood as a modern business organization. The emphasis of this article is on al Qaeda's organizational structure – which will be described and compared to that of a business or company – because every firm needs an organization in order to implement its strategy.

The procedure of using "business-tools" to analyze terrorist organizations is new, but promises to be a very effective method of understanding and fighting these groups.

Keywords: Al Qaeda, strategic management, terrorist, organization, transnational network, vision.
JEL Classification: L0, L1, L2.

Introduction

The group al Qaeda, infamous for its attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, is regarded as the "most-hunted terrorist group in history" (Gunaratna, 2004, p. 92). Terrorism is defined as "the systematic unlawful and calculated use of force" (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2003; The Criminology of Terrorism, 2004), "especially through a general climate of fear and threat of violence against persons, civilians, noncombatants, or property, to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of requests and conditions and to impose a particular political objective" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2006; Jessica Stern 2003, p. XX; The Criminology of Terrorism, 2004). Four major elements can consequently be distinguished in the definition of terrorism: particular political ideals, systematic and unlawful use of violence, threat to non-military individuals, as well as properties and, finally, blackmailing governments.

Balencie (2004) and Gardner (2005, p. 9) believe that terrorists use media in order to generate strong emotions among the survivors or viewers. For Gardner (2005) in "post-modern" terrorism, "the symbolic message and psychological effect by effective use of the international media are often more important for the terrorist group than the precise role or function of the individuals who are attacked. The more shocking and theatrical the event, the better to advertise the cause" (Gardner, 2005, p. 9).

Following the massive 2001 attacks, and especially after the beginning of the military operations in Afghanistan, al Qaeda could no longer rely on its secure sanctuary and training camps in Afghanistan.

It had lost more than three-quarters of its key members and associates to arrests or casualties (as stated in President Bush's New York Convention speech on September 2, 2004) and had confronted a variety of operational difficulties. However, these casualties and personnel loss, as the most recent being the death of al Qaeda Iraq leader Abu Moussab al-Zarqaoui, in June 2006, have not been enough to destroy the organization (Corera, 2004). "The 'termination' of Mr. Zarqaoui is not considered to terminate the insurgency" (The Economist, 2006, p. 11).

Al Qaeda seems to recruit new personnel as fast as current members are captured or killed. The new generation of militants, in their 20s or 30s, is not necessarily well trained, but nonetheless inspired by al Qaeda and its rhetoric (Corera, 2004). They are linked by blood and friendship to senior al Qaeda members and constitute a clearly intellectual workforce (Ramachandran, 2004).

Al Qaeda's funding has also decreased significantly and suffered a loss of about $140 million since September 11 and the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan (Gunaranta, interview with one of the authors, 2005). The group's financial network, however, has not been paralyzed. Al Qaeda has decreased its expenditures, stopped financial backing of the Taliban and has found, with relative ease, the small sums required to fund terrorist operations (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 11). In short, the terrorist group continues to function and the Intelligence Community expects that "the trend toward attacks intended to cause every-higher casualties will continue" (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 12).

Different theories have been evoked to explain al Qaeda's efficient survival through material resources, ideology, and external factors.

Resource-based explanations present financial strength and modern weaponry as major factors of al Qaeda's persistence. Gunaratna (2002, p. 81) states that "intelligence and security services worldwide, including the CIA (U.S.A.) and MI6 (U.K.), have never before encountered a global terrorist financial network as sophisticated as Al Qaeda's [sic]." The group not only benefits from Osama bin Laden's personal wealth, but also from its different businesses, its financial committee, companies, charities, and worldwide investments, which generate significant revenues (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 16). "Money is a critical component of what distinguishes groups that are effective from those that disappear or fail to have an impact" (Stern, 2003, p. 278). These significant financial resources permit al Qaeda to acquire arms, explosives and even attempt the purchase of uranium in order to build nuclear weapons, along with chemical and biological weapons (Stern, 2003, p. 256).

Ideology or more precisely, religion-based propaganda has also been mentioned as an efficient factor favoring al Qaeda's cohesion (Stern, 2003). A shared ideology enables followers to carry out hard to control operations by using special tactics, for example, the suicide attacks that are only possible due to a fanatic belief in a cause. Osama bin Laden is seen as a central piece of this ideology and a "symbol of resistance" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 69). Consequently, even if al Qaeda's leadership is captured, the ideology will still persist.

Al Qaeda has finally been analyzed as being remarkably adept in profiting from modern external factors, for example, the group widely uses the internet, which provides many advantages for terrorists (Thomas, 2003, pp. 113-117), anonymity and secrecy, fundraising, ideological propaganda, ease of escaping government control, command and control, recruiting and information gathering.

The approach at hand goes beyond these assumptions and tries to explain al Qaeda's achievement in terms of its strategy and organizational structure. The authors believe that the strategic theories and concepts relative to business organization, which are by definition result-oriented, can be of great interest in analyzing and understanding the functioning of al Qaeda.

Certain scholars have already emphasized the importance of studying the organizational structure of al Qaeda in order to explain its efficiency as a terrorist group. Mayntz, for instance, believes that

major analytical dimensions of organizational studies can be applied to terrorist factions (Mayntz, 2004, p. 14). It has also been stated that terrorist organizations, like any business, require the three basic elements: capital, labor and a brand or mission (Beauchamp et al., 2004). Bruce Hoffman argues similarly (2004, p. 32) that "in terms of its organizational resilience and flexibility, structure and communications, al-Qaeda [sic] is not unlike a successful, company or a venture capital firm". He even adds that relatively few brand names are more recognizable worldwide than al Qaeda: "What Bin Laden [sic] has done is to implement for Al Qaeda [sic] the same type of effective organizational framework or management approach adapted by many corporate executives throughout much of the industrialized world over the past decade" (Hoffman, 2004, p. 32).

Similarities go beyond theories. Multinational business conglomerates moved during the 1990s to flatter and more networked structures, and bin Laden did the same. He defined specific goals and aims along with a flexible strategy, and functioned as a venture capitalist by soliciting ideas from subordinates, encouraging creative approaches and "out-of-the-box" thinking, providing funding to those proposals he found promising (Hoffman, 2004). He has maximized the return on "shareholder" investments in immeasurable ways; he has creatively achieved "a remarkable synergy between Public Relations message and Human Resources recruiting"; he has built up "the world's most recognizable brand name" overnight; he has motivated loyal employees to "such devotion that they readily make the ultimate sacrifice" to extend the brand and mission into new markets; "he has used existing technology" to achieve unprecedented results; he has avoided take-overs by other despotic countries or terrorist groups; moreover, his labor force and business have expanded, despite operating in the world's most hostile environment (World Economic Forum, 2004). Al Qaeda is believed to apply the very best form of management strategy; and is more focused by far on its mission than many business ventures (Weber, 2004).

Although many scholars have already stressed the fact that al Qaeda's efficiency could be better understood by business-related concepts, few arguments have been further developed; how al Qaeda has implemented its strategy through its organization, and why this process has made the group so efficient has never been mentioned. Still, this is the core question which could provide insights not only into the political and military actors of civil society, but also, more practically, to strategy studies. This paper

might modestly contribute to fulfilling a shortcoming in the study of non-business organizations, (here, a terrorist organization,) with strategic management theories and concepts.

In doing so, this article expands the field of "strategic and organizational studies" which has come to concentrate increasingly on one specific economic type and discard, inadvertently, associations, hospitals, research institutes and even public administration agencies. Clandestine illegal organizations are also systematically neglected in the literature (Mayntz, 2004, p. 5).

1. Methodology

The "strategic management process", defined as "the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to exploit and create new and different opportunities and to achieve its objectives," (David, 1993, p. 5) will command the method of analysis in this paper.

According to David (1993, p. 56), a strategic management process is composed of the following successive stages: vision and mission statements or strategic intent; external and internal analysis in order to identify opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses; long-term objectives; strategy, selected among alternative strategies, its implementation, and finally evaluation. At each stage, the literature concerning management strategy will be sufficiently reviewed, and then applied to al Qaeda. This method should contribute to a better understanding of al Qaeda's dynamism and strategy, along with its different components.

This approach relies on an "unusual" benchmarking process, defined as "improving by making comparisons and learning from others" (PSBS, 2006). This benchmarking should lead to a pragmatic understanding of al Qaeda's strategy, and consequently ways to weaken, and if possible, destroy its operative system.

The results of this benchmarking might also be of interest to business organizations which could learn something from this "dark" but very persistent system of networks in terms of strategy, structure, and efficiency. Michael Elliott, an editor of Time Magazine, also believes that businesses have something to learn from al Qaeda which has "a lean, horizontal structure, a thin layer of management and is highly successful in what it does". In order to fight terrorist organizations he suggests: "Treat them like a big company treats a nimble competitor! Find their weaknesses, take them seriously and hit them hard!" Stern adds: "Undermine their brand and dry up their sources of capital!" (Weber, 2004).

2. Strategic vision and mission

Vision and mission, presented as the initial stage in a strategic process, define an organization's purpose, identify its future, reduce risk of rudderless decision-making, and influence the commitment of employees (David, 2002). Generally speaking, they are not defined by the parameters of time and space. However, every company has to translate its vision and mission into time and space in order to accomplish its strategies. When this step is realized, vision and mission become objectives.

Although vision and mission are often combined in one, there are slight differences between the two. A vision statement answers the question "What do we want to become?" (David, 2002). It defines a firm's identity, purpose, and future direction, and needs to be narrow enough to be achievable, and broad enough to allow scope for development (Bartlett & Goshal, 2002). A clear vision provides foundation for a comprehensive mission statement, which can be defined as "enduring statements of purpose that distinguish a business from other similar firms" (Pearce & David, 1987, p. 109). It is also an organization's reason for being, an answer to the crucial question "What is our business?", and finally, the description of a firm's values and priorities (David, 1993, p. 10).

An organization's vision should be converted into objectives defined as "specific results that an organization seeks to achieve in pursuing its basic mission (David, 1993, p. 11). Objectives reveal priority, provide direction, aid in evaluation, allow coordination, create synergy, and provide a basis for effective planning. There is a clear relation between objectives and strategy, because strategies are defined as "the means by which long-term objectives will be achieved".

Al Qaeda's vision clearly answers the question "What do we want to become?" The terrorist organization endeavors to establish a pan-Islamic state. This aim gives them indeed a very strong identity and purpose, and defines a future direction for the terrorist group. This vision originates from the Medieval Caliphate, under which, the Empire of Islam was, at one time, the richest and most powerful region in the world, controlling all Sunni Muslims (Lewis, 2001).

Osama bin Laden, head of al Qaeda, believes that certain leaders abandoned the pure path of religious devotion and destroyed the Caliphate (Lewis, 2001). His vision is to unite the Muslim community – the "Ummah" – into a single pan-Islamic country under a re-established Caliphate (Cole, 2004). No further details are known about how this utopian Caliphate

would function (Burke, 2004). For Mayntz (2004), the "old" or traditional terrorism that seeks regime change in a national context contrasts with the "new" terrorism that functions on a religious, rather than secular basis, and is characterized by its international scope and its network structure (Mayntz, 2004, p. 9).

Al Qaeda also has a mission statement. A "story about Us versus Them", distinguishes the "pure from the impure", creates group identity and can be considered as "the glue that holds even the most tenuous organization together" (Stern, 2003, p. 142). Al Qaeda's current mission statement focuses on expelling U.S. and other Western forces from Iraq, Afghanistan and all other Islamic lands by means of hostage-taking and bombings.

3. Al Qaeda's objectives and strategy

Al Qaeda's objectives and strategy can be analyzed using the definition of terrorism and its four elements mentioned earlier: Al Qaeda's particular goal is to replace corrupt and heretical Muslim governments with the rule of "Sharia" (Islamic law) and establish a pan-Islamic state. The objective of the "Re-establishment of the Muslim State" and the removal of foreign presence – primarily American and Israeli – from the Middle East serves as the core of a loose transnational umbrella organization that includes members of many Sunni Islamic extremist groups, for example, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Al-Gamaa al-Islamiya (Moore, 2001). Al Qaeda is considered to be the first multinational terrorist group of the twenty-first century (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 1). To achieve its goal, the terrorist organization defines short-term objectives to drive Americans and American influence out of all Muslim nations, especially Saudi Arabia, to topple pro-Western regimes around the Middle East, to destroy Israel, and to establish a Palestinian state (Infoplease, 2006). According to Hoffman (2003, p. 13), al Qaeda believes that the only way to address these objectives and the only language that the West understands is the logic of violence, and thus "jihad is the only option".

To attain these objectives, a method of calculated and unlawful use of violence has been adopted. Al Qaeda's major strategy is violence, pursued and justified under the guise of "jihad", which is the Arabic word for "to strive". The translation "holy war" is incorrect, but widely used. There is a distinction between the greater and the lesser jihad. The greater jihad is defined as a personal struggle against temptation and sin, and the lesser one as defending Islam against aggression (Altreligion, 2006). Al Qaeda and other extremists argue that

jihad can be declared against Muslims who are insufficiently pious, particularly corrupted rulers (Byman, 2003).

The target of al Qaeda's violence is non-military individuals and their property. Al Qaeda indoctrinates that "the West is implacably hostile to Islam" (Hoffman, 2003, p. 13), so Jihadi (warriors of jihad) should destroy the West, including civilians and non-combatants in order to impose a pan-Islamic state. Bin Laden urged all Muslims to kill any American that crossed their path.

This blind and widely orientated violence is intended to intimidate and coerce governments, and in order to achieve this, al Qaeda uses "fatwas" (religious decrees). In the post-9/11 environment, the power of terrorism to coerce, intimidate, force changes in behaviors, influence policies and affect how and on what people spend their money, has increased enormously (Hoffman, 2003, p. 16).

4. Strategic monitoring and environmental analysis

Analyzing environments to discover external opportunities and threats, along with internal strengths and weaknesses, is indispensable in crafting and implementing strategies.

External opportunities and threats stem from "economic, social, cultural, demographic, environmental, political, legal, governmental, technological, and competitive trends that could significantly benefit or harm an organization in the future" (David, 1993, p. 10). Opportunities and threats are called external because the organization cannot control them in most cases. Internal strengths and weaknesses are "controllable activities within an organization that are performed especially well or poorly" (David, 1993, p. 11). In order to draft efficient strategies, firms should try to capitalize on internal strengths and improve internal weaknesses.

Globalization, shaped and reshaped by driving forces such as technology, […], economic integration constitutes an increasingly interwoven world (Dato, 2002) and is inarguably one of the most important components of an organization's external environment (Keegan, 2002, p. 15).

Both the multinational corporation and the transnational terrorist network grow through globalization and use global economic, transportation, and communications systems (Takeyh & Gvosdev, 2002). Al Qaeda, despite its puritanical ideology, has an essentially modern organization (Gunaratna, 2002), and "uses all of the tools of globalization to conduct its business", especially for "communicating and moving money secretly" (Charters, 2004). This

statement implies that bin Laden would most likely not have been so successful in another era in terms of the external environment. Charters (2004) explicitly concludes that a well-funded and organized terrorist group can now do things that were not possible for terrorists before. Islamic terrorists often try to disseminate the belief that globalization, and the spread of Western values in general, are harmful to the Muslim community, but the fact is that Islamist terrorists successfully use globalization and profit from it hugely (Lorünser & Sefrioui, 2003, p. 22). Al Qaeda ostensibly uses two vehicles of globalization, deregulation and new technologies.

Thanks to deregulation, liberalization and, consequently, softer border controls, the group has shown itself capable of carrying out attacks in countries like the U.S. and Spain and of immigrating to any country with weakened central authority. Places with ongoing conflicts, such as Kashmir or Chechnya, also provide perfect havens in terms of external opportunities for terrorist organizations like al Qaeda (Williams, M., 2001). Al Qaeda also takes advantage of many other factors in the external globalized environment.

The terrorist organization exploits the gap between the West and poor Islamic countries to persuade the Muslim population that the "satanic enemy" is becoming richer at the price of impoverishment of Islamic countries.

Al Qaeda also cashes in on the stigma of colonialism. European colonialism and semi-colonialism in most of the Islamic world, except the heart of the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Afghanistan, Yemen, and certain parts of Arabia, strongly affected the collective memory of the Muslims (Swahili Online, 2006). The post-colonialism period, marked by secularism and, after the Second World War, by state-socialism and closed nationalism, ended in frustration and created an "opportunity" for reactions to the Western "imported model" along with a return to the "ingenious Islam", and the application of the Sharia (Swahili Online, 2006). Dictatorship in the Islamic lands also built "opportunities" for al Qaeda. The violent characteristics of some rebel movements can be explained as resulting from the fact that Islam is being, almost without exception, suppressed and quarantined by the rulers of the Islamic nations (Marty & Appleby, 1994). A researcher for Human Rights Watch in Pakistan notes that the Pakistani rulers consider, at present, the military as the only institution able to prevent an Islamist takeover of Islamabad; in fact it is the Islamist military alliance that gets in the way of genuine liberal democracy and promotes extremist philosophies in the country (Hasan, 2006). Politically, the annual report of

Freedom House on the state of democracies in the world ranks the 57 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, established in Rabat (Morocco) in September 1969, from democratic (Senegal, Mali) to repressive regimes (Iran, Syria) (OIC, 2006).

The generosity of Muslims creates another opportunity for al Qaeda. All adult Muslims are expected to pay "zakat", an Islamic religious tax, one of the five basic requirements of Islam (Answers, 2006b). Al Qaeda abuses this generosity by infiltrating charity organizations and using their money (Gunaratna, interview with one of the authors, 2005).

Information Technology, with its ability to erase the limitations of traditional geographic markets (David, 1993, p. 125) has been widely used by al Qaeda. On websites assumed to be related to al Qaeda, such as Alneda.com, Jehad.net, Assam.com, Almuhrajiroun.com, Jihadunspun.net, Drasat.com, members had free electronic mail accounts and used "steganography" (the art and science of writing hidden messages in such a way that no one except the intended recipient knows of the existence of the real message) to transmit messages. Al Qaeda is also said to recruit members over the internet (Wikipedia, 2006). However, electronic communication can also be considered al Qaeda's biggest vulnerability. Law-enforcement authorities can now intercept and track down practically all electronic communication unless successfully encrypted (Stern, 2003).

The external environment in general and globalization in particular are not all beneficial to al Qaeda. The diversity of Muslim populations is far from being an opportunity for al Qaeda.

The most flagrant diversity is denominational. Muslims are Sunni or Shia. The distinction is based on a historical disagreement over the succession of authority after Muhammad's death (Wikipedia, 2006). For example, Iran has an 89% Shia population, whereas the other Muslim regions of the world seem to be dominated by Sunni. Sunni Muslims are mainly followers of four schools, which are named after their founders: "Hanafite" after Abu Hanifeh, "Malikite" after Malikibn Anas, "Shafiite" after Muhammad Ibn Idris Al-Shafii, and "Hanbalite" after Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. Most Sunni Muslims follow a different school than that of the majority of al Qaeda members: Wahhabism (Gosheh, 2005). Wahhabism is a conservative version of the very Orthodox Hanbalism. The Hanbalists reject private opinion, analogy or consensus and maintain the Koran and the prophet's traditions as the unique valid base of Islamic law. The Wahhabis revived the Hanbalist School in the 18th century, mainly in central Asia.

Ethnical diversity is no less threatening for al Qaeda. Muslims are mistakenly identified as Arabs. But the fact is that while most Arabs are Muslims (more than 80%), most Muslims are not Arabs (more than 80%). Islam embraces diverse ethnic groups, like Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese, and Malays. The biggest Muslim countries are not Arab. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population, 216 million, followed by Pakistan and India with 161 and 147 million, respectively. It is interesting to note that India, with "only" a 13% Muslim population, is still the country with the third largest Muslim population worldwide (CIA – The World Factbook, 2006).

Most Muslim countries do not share al Qaeda's sexist attitude, which is another external menace to the group. Four of the largest Muslim countries have already had or still have a woman as President or Prime Minister: Megawati Sukarnoputri was the President of *Indonesia* from 2001 to 2004; Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of *Pakistan* from 1988 to 1990 and from 1993 to 1996; Khaleda Zia was Prime Minister of *Bangladesh* from 1991 to 1996 and has been again since 2001, as was Sheikh Hasina Wajed, from 1996 to 2001; *Turkey* has also had a female Prime Minister: Tansu Chiller (from 1993 to 1996).

Competition is also an external factor having had a double effect on al Qaeda's strategy. Competition for al Qaeda, as for any business-related organization, can arise from two different sources: direct and indirect competition. Direct competition comes from other homologuous competitors who do exactly a similar business or profession, while indirect (substitute) competition emanates from those, who satisfy the same needs but through different businesses and professions. Direct competition, that is to say other terrorist groups (especially Fundamentalist Islamist Terrorist groups), do not dispute the leadership of al Qaeda and thus do not represent a threat to it. Al Qaeda is probably the most successful terrorist group worldwide and certainly the most active at the moment (Gunaratna, interview with one of the authors, 2005). Many competing groups accommodate al Qaeda's strategy in order to fight the common enemy.

However, indirect "substitute" competition and comprising reformists represent a real menace to al Qaeda, defying its leadership. Reformism appeared mainly during the late 19th century, especially in India, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, and the Arab World (mainly Egypt, Greater Syria, and Tunisia). Reformists opposed the "traditional" interpretation of religion and advocated a reinterpretation of Muslim texts (Koran and Hadith), and the adoption practices consistent with modernity (Gosheh, 2005).

Reformists can be classed as al Qaeda's indirect or substitute "competitors." They range from pioneers like Muhammed Abduh (1849-1905) who "sought to modernize Islam and bring it into line with rational principles" (Thornton, 2005), to contemporary Islamic reformists such as Chandra Muzaffar (one of Malaysia's most prominent human rights activists and president of the International Movement for a Just World) and AbdolKarim Soroush (Iran's most influential liberal Islamic thinker). Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a leading Egyptian pro-democracy activist, who believes that "in all cases, a moderate, less-violent Islamist core exists vividly" (Ibrahim, 2005, p. 9) should also be mentioned. Reformists were able to find a wider audience after 9/11 (Appleby, 2005), and continue to combat violent interpretations and the al Qaeda ideology.

This struggle between traditionalists, for whom the Koran is fixed and eternal, and rationalists, who see the Koran also as a historical document whose meanings can change through time, has been at the fore since the very beginning of Islamic history. The correct interpretation of the Koran is most likely one of the most important disputes between protagonists (Aslan's book according to Townley, 2005). It gave rise to a confrontation between different interpretations of the "Koran" and the "Hadith" (Sunnah), which are the two major sources of Islamic law. Ijtihad (interpretation) describes the process of making a legal decision by interpretation of the sources of the law, like the Koran and the Sunna. It also means the intellectual effort of Muslim jurists to reach independent religio-legal decisions, especially if the solution of the case in question cannot be found directly in the sources of Islamic law. Reformists are open for an up-to-date interpretation, which is considered a key feature of modern Islamic reform (Answers, 2006a). Integrists disagree; for example ijtihad is forbidden in the Islamic Wahhabist School of al Qaeda, which only supports a literal interpretation. This issue represents a major weakness to a huge organization like al Qaeda, because different people, or members, can have different interpretations.

R. Scott Appleby (2005) believes that "extremist Islamism will finally fail because its hope for conformity is doomed by the internal pluralism of the Islamic tradition and by the inability of extremists who reject cooperation with outsiders to ameliorate the economic and social inequalities that haunt most Muslims". Appleby also mentions that "progressive" Muslim thinkers, such as most (moderate) Muslims do not support Islamic Fundamentalism. They are wary of Islam as a political movement, and they oppose Islam's manipulation for violent and

revolutionary ends (Gosheh, 2005). Many Islamic countries have joined the OIC "Convention to Combat Terrorism", in order to discuss anti-terrorism measures (OIC, 2006).

Al Qaeda is also threatened by the fact that there is a receptivity to and an attempt of Muslims to establish democracies in the Middle East. Darwish (2005, p. 9) says: "From the purple fingered display of strength in Iraq to the 'cedar revolution' in Lebanon, it is clear the Middle East stands at what might prove to be the dawn of a new era. There is much international optimism that the first tentative steps down a path towards real democracy may have been taken."

With globalization continuing its course, the external political and legal environment seems to becoming less favorable for al Qaeda. The "War against Terrorism" initiated after September 11, when U.S. troops started bombarding Afghanistan in October 2001, has attracted many countries willing to fight terrorism. Gunaratna (2002b) believes that al Qaeda could be destroyed by the U.S. and the international community in about five years, if efforts are persistent enough.

How can one analyze the internal strengths and weaknesses of a terrorist organization which operates under different names and identities, such as al Qaeda, (the Base), the Islamic Army, the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, the Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places, the Osama bin Laden Network or Organization, Islamic Salvation Foundation or The Group for the Preservation of the Holy Sites (Terrorism files, 2006)?

Al Qaeda is sometimes mistakenly called a sect but its conception and history clearly show its difference from an apocalyptic, millennialist sect (e.g. the Japanese Aum group), which believes that supernatural forces will intervene in the human world. Al Qaeda is a revolutionary organization with clear political aims that wants to bring about God's rule on earth (Spyer, 2004).

In 1984 Osama bin Laden and Abdallah Azzam (from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood) founded "Maktab al-Khidamat" (MAK = The Services Office) in order to fight Soviets who had invaded Afghanistan in 1979 (Baud, 2003). The MAK "recruited thousands of mujahideen from around the globe, financed their travel to Afghanistan, and trained them in guerrilla tactics and terrorist operations" (Kushner, 2003, p. 20). After Azzam's death, the MAK split up, and its most extremist faction joined bin Laden to form the core of al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda was then officially founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988 in Peshawar of Pakistan (Gunaratna, 2002; Kay, 2003) as a service centre for Arab Afghans and their families, and an organization to promote Wahhabism among the Afghans (Thackrah, 2004). Steve Coll, who won the "nonfiction" Pulitzer price 2005 for his book "Ghost wars" (Coll, 2004), describes how "the CIA, the KGB, Pakistan's ISI and Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Department all operated in Afghanistan in the late 1970s and 80s and primed Afghan factions with cash and weapons, and how, in the midst of the struggles, Bin Laden [sic] conceived and built his global organization" (Coll, 2004b). "Al Qaeda was based in Afghanistan from 1989 to 1991, Sudan from 1991 to 1996, and Afghanistan again from 1996 to 2001, and was forced into exile after 2001" (Kushner, 2003, p. 20). The group operated in a relatively favorable external environment prior to the U.S attack on Afghanistan in October 2001, which destroyed its safe base, and disseminated many members.

Today, al Qaeda's core is disrupted; the terrorists have lost their secure hideaway and training camps in Afghanistan, and have difficulty operating under such pressure.

However, adaptability and agility have saved the terrorist organization from total destruction. It can be argued that al Qaeda adapts "better" to the external environment's mutations than a business organization, due to some of its internal strengths, such as financial support, members' devotion, a "catch all" ideology, access to sophisticated weapons, idolization, and leadership abilities of Osama bin Laden. Gunaratna distinguishes three major strengths regarding al Qaeda's internal organization: Firstly, al Qaeda's ideology, because it has the ability to attract Jihadi groups from around the world; secondly, al Qaeda's military experience, inherited from fighting the large Soviet army in the late 80s; finally, its violent but organized way of attacking economic, political, and military targets far from its homeland (Gunaratna, interview with one of the authors, 2005).

Al Qaeda was not born with its core competencies and strengths, it has developed them. Training skills such as guerrilla warfare, Islamic law, use of explosives, assassination techniques, heavy weapons manipulation, surveillance and counter-surveillance, forging documents, and conducting suicide attack can be considered as al Qaeda's top priorities (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 95). The main training objective is to convert the members into independent self-sufficient individuals, held together by al Qaeda's ideology. "The most important aspect of training is mental training, such as religious indoctrination and

familiarity with evil enemy's 'new Crusade' against the lands of Islam" (Stern, 2003, p. 261). Due to the importance of ideology, members are fully committed to the group, and there is general consensus. Unlike a business company, where individuals' skepticism and deviating points of view might challenge the realization and hinder the easy unfolding of strategies (Thompson & Strickland, 2002, p. 267), the preoccupation of al Qaeda's members is not their personal career, but rather the group's common goals. Therefore, members will accept different strategies more easily with less resistance to change.

Only the best young Muslims graduating from a training campus enter al Qaeda. Fourteen qualifications are compulsory for joining al Qaeda or one of its associate groups: "Knowledge of Islam, ideological commitment, maturity, self-sacrifice, discipline, secrecy and concealment of information, good health, patience, unflappability, intelligence and insight, caution and prudence, truthfulness and wisdom, the ability to observe and analyze, and the ability to act" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 98).

Another advantage regarding al Qaeda's internal structure is the group's intelligence service. Al Qaeda has developed, due to effective agent handling, intelligence wings comparable to government intelligence agencies. They have infiltrated several governments by "running agents into the political establishment, security forces or security and intelligence apparatus" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 101).

Al Qaeda's network can be understood as a cellular (or cluster) model, "composed of many cells whose members do not know one another, so that if a cell member is caught the other cells would not be affected and work would proceed normally" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 102). Cell members use electronically non-detectable forms of communication and never meet in one place. Al Qaeda supporters from migrant communities provide communication, safe houses, transport, intelligence, and finance to al Qaeda attack teams. "Sleepers" are members who live normal lives in a special region, sometimes for years, until they are activated and start their mission. Dormant cells are even harder to detect than active ones. Another al Qaeda tactic is their overt (i.e. should not discuss with others what they know or hear) and covert (i.e. their general appearance should not indicate Islamic orientation) members (Gunaratna, 2002).

One of the most crucial points for the organization is secure communication. "Each cell leader in the field determines how each member will keep in touch, stressing that communication should be quick, explicit and pertinent" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 107).

"Al Qaeda appears almost as the archetypal shark in the water, having to move forward constantly, albeit changing direction slightly in order to survive. Al Qaeda's main challenge is to promote and ensure its durability as an ideology and a concept. It can do this only by staying in the news and launching new attacks" (Hoffman, 2004).

Al Qaeda uses both skilled and unskilled labor, and pays them accordingly (Weber, 2004). Bin Laden paid Sudanese operatives three times less than Egyptian operatives and argued that he was paying his people according to how much they would earn in their home country – one could believe that these tactics come out straight out of a human resources handbook. Maybe the West could attract some unsatisfied and underpaid employees.

5. Organization and strategy implementation

Strategic planning is an "action-oriented and a make-things-happen task" (Thompson & Strickland, 2002, p. 268). Once a strategic plan is conceived, then an organizational structure should help the company to divide responsibilities and "co-ordinate people's efforts in harmony" (Mescon et al., 1999). Coordination is inevitable to achieve goals and objectives, especially in a world characterized by a high division of labor (Douma et al., 2002, p. 36).

An organization defines how to allocate resources to implement strategy and accomplish objectives. If strategy is set up along customer groups or business lines, then resources are respectively allocated in those manners too (David, 1993, p. 264). An organization's structure is often illustrated by an "organizational chart" to provide a visual representation of how human and material resources are distributed, and how the lines of communication and authority between them are organized. Beyond the classical principles of standardization, especially unity of command, the new model of organization seems to give more power to experts, and multi-disciplinary teams (Beshears, 2005).

Two forms of organization, mechanistic and organic, are distinguished: The mechanistic organization is rigid, tightly controlled, based on a formalized hierarchic chain of command and low decision participation, while the organic organization, composed of cross-functional teams, low formalization, empowered employees and communication channels, might be exemplified in a network between a core team with a basic competency and external partners consulted for specific opportunities (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). The authors believe that a third type of organization can be introduced, especially for a better understanding and analyzing of al Qaeda. This type, which is called "free electron",

and which will be explained later, is similar to the organic organization, but without its tight link to the central hub.

6. Al Qaeda's organization

The study of al Qaeda's structure shows a modern network-based organization which is far beyond the traditional forms of terrorist structures. Jessica Stern (2003, p. 141) distinguishes two traditional structures of terrorist groups: "Lone-wolf avengers" who act entirely on their own and are often influenced both by terrorist ideologies and personal grievances, and "terrorist armies" or "commander-cadre organizations" that comprise a training department, travel agents, public relations wing, foot and skilled soldiers, experts for meeting governments, and leaders who provide inspiration and instructions.

During the late 1990s, al Qaeda showed many characteristics of a traditional hierarchical structure with permanent installations and regular procedures. But later, after it had lost its main base in Afghanistan and many important members in October 2001, it became decentralized with a wider network. Al Qaeda is now believed to have made a transition from a commander-cadre organization to a virtual network, and furthermore to a hybrid organization (Stern 2003), probably because the group also functions in a law enforcement environment (Frerichs, 2004). In a virtual organization, operatives take action and raise money on their own and never report to a central headquarters or single leader (Stern, 2003b), while a hybrid organization is rather a network of virtual organizations with regional agendas and hierarchical structures (commanders and cadres), along with leaderless resisters who are inspired through virtual contacts and may donate money in return for the privilege of participating. Al Qaeda is also believed to be an accumulation of cells without a decision centre and with no hierarchical and no formal organization (Denécé, 2004).

Most authors now distinguish two layers within al Qaeda's structure; one, central, hierarchic and tied, the other peripheral, loose, and flexible. The two possible translations of the word al Qaeda, connote the same concept "the base of operation or the foundation," and "a precept of method." Smith (2002, p. 33) believes that "al Qaeda operates with a formal vertical structure and an informal horizontal structure comprising many associate terrorist organizations. Byman fosters this statement: "Al Qaeda's structure consists of a mix of elements of hierarchy and a global network that enables it to adapt to leadership losses and the disruption of cells in numerous countries" (2003, p. 139). Gunaratna (2002, p. 73) states similarly that al Qaeda's high command is

"run via a vertical leadership structure that provides strategic direction and tactical support to its horizontal network of compartmentalized cells and associate organizations".

Within the framework of this article, al Qaeda's structure is analyzed in four different layers: 1) Hierarchical structure of command, 2) Al Qaeda's organic network, 3) Al Qaeda's franchised network, and 4) Al Qaeda's "free electron" network. These terms, which might seem groundbreaking in analyzing a non-economic, (here terrorist) organization, are in fact familiar concepts of the strategic management vocabulary.

6.1. Al Qaeda's hierarchical structure of command. The group's internal horizontal structure and also its chain of command clearly comply to the conventional *Vertical Organization Chart* used in any business. Al Qaeda's hierarchical structure (which definitely existed before 9/11 2001) is comprised of three major sections (Gunaratna, 2002; Stern, 2003): Osama bin Laden, widely known as the "emir" or leader, the "Shura Majlis" or Consultative Council, composed of about a dozen veteran clerics and military leaders originating from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Yemen, etc., who have proved themselves in "jihad" (Fineman, 2001), and operational committees comprising the Military, Fatwa, Media and Publicity, and the Business Committee. Some members serve in more than one committee or are rotated between them (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 77). The Emergency Response and Research Institute (ERRI) provides a similar kind of hierarchical structure: Bin Laden is top of the hierarchy and the "Shura Majlis" can be likened to the "Board of directors". The "Shura Majlis" is believed to be composed of individuals like the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri or Saif al-Adel (Denécé, 2004), the Jordanian Moussab al-Zarqaoui was also a member before his death in 2006.

The Military Committee is split into different subcommittees. Its "Internal Security Service" recruits, guards leaders, and protects the organization from "enemy infiltration" ("National Commission on Terrorist Attacks" 2004, p. 2).

The Fatwa – Islamic Study Committee, also called "Religious/Legal Committee" (Shultz, 2005) or "Sharia and Political Committee" (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 2) issues religious instructions and rulings in order to justify al Qaeda's actions.

The Media and Publicity Committee or "Information Committee" (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2004, p. 2) disseminates news or informa-

tion in support of political and military objectives and is in charge of public relations.

The Finance (and Business) Committee attempts to raise money by criminal, business or financial activities and assistance from states and charitable donations (Stern, 2003, p. 272). Al Qaeda has established a worldwide network of charities, banks, and companies, such as Wadi al-Aqiq, Ladin International Company (import-export), Taba (currency trading) Investment, Hijra Construction (bridges and roads), and Themar al-Mubaraka (sesame, peanuts and white corn) (Feuer, 2001). Other major activities include diamond trading, manufacturing, and transport. Within the committee, financiers control cash flows and fund-raising, and portfolio managers take care of the financial support of cells. There are only limited connections between portfolio managers and key financiers, but a greater number of relations exist downward with lower levels (Robb, 2004). The "Payroll Office" pays al Qaeda members, and the "Management Office" oversees money-making businesses (Wordiq, 2006).

Around this structured hierarchy, there exists a real policy of staff and rank. Bruce Hoffman (2003b) identifies four ranks within the al Qaeda organization: professional cadres, the most dedicated and entrusted members, are carefully selected, generously funded and provided with very specific instructions; trained amateurs are given only open-ended instructions before an operation, local walk-ins obtain funding from al Qaeda in order to finance their own attack-ideas, (for example, the group of Islamic radicals in Jordan who intended to attack the Radisson Hotel in Amman – where Israeli tourists often stayed – received funding from al Qaeda, but its members were arrested before they could act); like-minded guerrillas are trained by al Qaeda and provided with support for operations in Uzbekistan, Indonesia, and Chechnya or elsewhere. John Robb (2004) illustrates this level with additions: foot soldiers and administrative support are ad hoc members who have personal relationships with members of mid-level management, along with family and sympathetic supporters who are also considered as source of recruitment for higher levels. At this entry level, "soldiers" who carry out operations should be distinguished from "sympathizers/supporters" who deliver financial resources, for example (according to ERRI).

6.2. Al Qaeda's organic network. Al Qaeda's flexible and adaptable structure meets basically all the criteria of the "Organic Organization", mentioned by Robbins & Coulter. Another concept of Robbins & Coulter (2005), the "Boundaryless Organization", – going beyond internal and external

boundaries, – also corresponds to al Qaeda. Dubois & Torvatn (2002) propose to analyze firms mainly in the light of networks, because they are in constant interaction with partners, and consequently their resources, capabilities and competencies are developed as a result of external processes rather than internal ones (Dubois et al., 2002, pp. 433-434).

Networks, social entities that are linked directly or indirectly by various ties (Raab & Milward 2003, p. 417), have emerged as a reaction to the limitations, inefficiencies, and rigidities of strict hierarchical structures in the business context. Networks consist of core nodes, characterized by dense ties among leaders, who provide direction and initiate activities, and peripheries with looser interactions and relationships (Williams, P., 2001, p. 66). Nodes can be understood as business units, work groups, subsidiaries or such like, and links as communication channels between them. In al Qaeda's organization, critical nodes include hubs of key gatekeepers surrounding the leadership, and pulse-takers, indirectly connected to a large number of people who know the key members in the organization (Garreau, 2001, p. 1).

Al Qaeda's second structure is its organic member-network, characterized by a loose, one-sided (mostly top-down) communication relation. A global network was progressively created around al Qaeda's core structure from December 1991 to May 1996, while the terrorist organization was based in Khartoum, Sudan (Gunaratna, 2002). The above definition of networks categorizes them as a series of connected nodes. In this context, the nodes can be understood as "cells", comprised al Qaeda members and the links as their communication channels. As in other illegal networks, some of the connections of nodes and members were established through actors such as presidents of failed states, dictators, or rebel chiefs who functioned as brokers (Raab & Milward, 2003). The ties between al Qaeda's cells are weak in order to minimize the risk of penetration. Only a few members of clusters or cells communicate with other cells (Stern, 2003, p. 271). The "cell leader reports to his controller or agent handler" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 131) who lives most often in the "hostile zone" (Europe and North America) and coordinates special missions such as that of "9/11". Al Qaeda's network is connected by weak ties in order to avoid damaging the whole system in the case where one cell (mostly consisting of 2 to 15 members) is damaged (Cooley, 1999, p. 40). The group also has "a proven capacity to regenerate new cells" (Gunaratna, 2002, p. 14), which helps them to adapt very quickly to changes in their external environment.

6.3. Al Qaeda's franchised network. "Terrorist experts no longer see al Qaeda as a 'terrorism central', but more as an ideological franchise. Militant jihadi groups operate in about 68 countries (in 2001 it was 40)", says George Tenet, head of the CIA (The Economist, 2004). The al Qaeda franchises around the globe receive instructions, guidance, and sometimes funding, but operate independently of each other (Miller and File, 2001, p. 27). These groups contact al Qaeda to "learn its operational techniques" (Farah et al., 2003), quoting Michael Pillsbury, a Pentagon terrorism consultant. There are dozens, even hundreds of franchises that pay handsomely for the privilege of operating under a well-recognized name like al Qaeda (World Economic Forum, 2003).

This loose franchised network is, in fact, a form of cooperation with spontaneous partners. Communication between these different groups is random, and there is no hierarchy at all.

Al Qaeda is the "leader-organization" and the partners are organizations like the International Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, formed in 1998, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines), Jemaah Islamiah (the Southeast Asian group who carried out the Bali bombing in 2002, with the assistance of al Qaeda experts), Egyptian Islamic Jihad (merged with al Qaeda in 2001), Al-Ansar Mujahidin (Caucasus), Al-Gamaa al-Islamiya (Egypt), Abu Sayyaf (Philippines) (Yoursitetop10, 2006) and other associate groups such as All-Ittihad al-Islami (Horn of Africa), Tunisian Combatants Group, Jayash-e Mohammad (South Asia), and the Salafi group for Call and Combat, active in North Africa, Europe, and North America (Spyer, 2004).

Al Qaeda can also be viewed as an example of Mintzberg's *Adhocracy* (Beshears, 2005). The group is characterized by mutual adjustment – achieving co-ordination by simple, informal communication – of ad-hoc teams, a very complex environment, and a dynamic pace of change.

6.4. Al Qaeda's "free electron" network. In this paper, the inorganic network is separated from the franchised one, because franchising involves some kind of contact between the two parties. In this inorganic network, however, there is no organic, organized communication, neither one- nor two- sided, and no contract between the two parties. Different individuals or groups seem to circle around al Qaeda like free electrons around the nucleus. Gunaratna (Interview with one of the authors, 2005) calls this network "Al Qaeda's affiliated groups", and he believes that they operate mainly in Muslim societies or countries with Islamic communities without central control (Gunaratna, 2002).

The special force of attraction between these groups can be explained by ideology. Gunaratna (2004) believes that "even if the top members of the organization are killed or captured, al Qaeda's strength is not diminished, because of the shift from small groups and individuals to an ideology power". Therefore, the group's leadership should be less imagined as a group of commanders, but more as inspirational leaders (Stern, 2003). The glue that unifies all these different organizations is their common ideology and mission.

Jason Burke (2004) claims that "al Qaeda is more lethal as an ideology than as an organization. With or without Osama bin Laden, 'Al Qaedaism' will continue to attract supporters in future." Burke even argues that al Qaeda is not a global terrorist organization, but more an "ideology in itself". There are two possible translations of the word al Qaeda, one is "the base of operation, the foundation", and the other one is "a precept of method". Burke believes that Islamic militants always understood the term in the latter sense.

One example of the "free electron" network could be Stern's freelancers who take actions largely on their own. One lone wolf-avenger was Mir Aimal Kansi, "a Pakistani immigrant to the U.S. who shot several CIA employees in 1993" (Stern, 2003, p. 172). Another one was John Allen Muhammad who "carried out a series of sniper shootings in suburban Washington, D.C., in the fall of 2002", and who "appears to have been motivated by a mixture of personal and political grievances" (Stern, 2003, p. 172), typical of lone-wolf avengers.

Al Qaeda's "four layer" organization seems to fit perfectly the concept of globalization, which defies those organizations that engage, under the pressure of competitive forces, in international business resources (Daniels & Radebaugh, 2001, p. 4). In fact, by virtue of the preceding lines, al Qaeda can be considered a "transnational organization" or "integrated network," which is believed to better cope with the challenges of globalization. This type of organization represents an interdependent and specialized configuration of assets and capabilities based on a worldwide set of integrated differentiated national units and operations, along with jointly developed and shared knowledge (Bartlett & Goshal, 2002, p. 102). Al Qaeda's "resources and capabilities are distributed and specialized, there is a large flow of components, products, resources, people, and information among interdependent units, and they involve a complex process of coordination and cooperation in an environment of shared decision making" (Bartlett & Goshal, 2002, p. 102).

Conclusion

This paper is built on the fundamental framework offered by "strategic management analysis" with the aim to understand the terrorist organization al Qaeda and its strategy. This understanding has practical implications for both managers and politicians in charge of the war against terrorism. Managers will also find ideas to grapple with organizational design in the face of globalization and the necessity to adapt efficiently to continuous environmental changes.

The authors have argued that the external environment, and more precisely globalization, present both opportunities and threats for al Qaeda. Deregulation and softer borders have enabled the group to recruit and carry out attacks in many countries. Information technologies have also created an opportunity for al Qaeda to communicate and move money massively. Other external factors have been considered as opportunities too. The history of Western colonialism and the gap between the rich West and the poor Islamic countries are widely used as means of propaganda with regard to the Muslim populations. Dictatorship in Islamic countries constitutes another opportunity for the terrorist organization, because it "legitimizes" violence.

Similarly, the external environment provides threats to al Qaeda. Denominational (Sunni, Shia, for example) and ethnical (Arab and non-Arab) diversities menace the monolithic authority of al Qaeda's leadership. Most Muslim countries do not share al Qaeda's sexist attitudes, as four of the largest Muslim countries have already had a woman president or prime minister. This demonstrates another external menace to the terrorist group.

Even if direct fundamentalist competition is no real threat to al Qaeda, "substitute" competition, that of reformist Muslims, represents, in all probability, a persistent menace to al Qaeda, because the former defies directly the leadership and "raison d'être" of the latter. This struggle has been prominent since the very beginning of the 20th century. Receptivity of Muslims towards democracy, along with the worldwide political and legal war against terrorism have also been considered as threatening external factors.

In the internal analysis process, no significant internal weakness that would hinder the deployment of al Qaeda's strategy has been analyzed. The flexible, agile, networked-based and transnational organization of al Qaeda has been well thought-out and is its founding strength. A new model of al Qaeda's organization, based on the four layers "hierarchical structure of command, organic network, franchised network, and 'free electron' network" has been suggested. Highly indoctrinated and trained members are furthermore believed to constitute one of its greatest assets. Al Qaeda's vision, which holds the group's transnational network together and saves it from fragmentation and dissipation, is presumably its most unrelenting strength. Some other studies, with manifest political and historical approaches, support similar recommendations. Zeyno Baran (2005, p. 75) states that "the glorification and encouragement of suicide bombers, the dissemination of justification for violence … create a crucial … ideological infrastructure that enables the more explosive action of Islamist radicals".

The authors believe that if this radical vision is efficiently competed against by other reformist interpretations of Islam, which could influence the cognitive and affective attitudes of Muslims, then there would be no glue to hold together the terrorist group's loose translational network organization. Therefore, moderates should receive help in order to win the theological and ideological war, and promote tolerance and interfaith dialogue (Baran, 2005, p. 78). This would impede al Qaeda's strategy deployment and organizational functioning.

As stated in the introduction, the methodology used in this paper is purely inspired by strategic management literature, which is not the conventional theoretical reference to analyze social and political issues relative to the main subject of this study. Still, the authors modestly conclude that it is possible to expand the field of strategic and organization concepts to study political and even clandestine illegal organizations.

It goes without saying that there is a huge need for further research on al Qaeda and terrorism in general. Secret organizations are in continuous movement and can be better analyzed and understood through multidisciplinary and non-conventional approaches.

The emerging conclusions should be subject to precaution and further investigation, because the information contained in this document may be incomplete or suffer from distortion, which is inevitable when dealing with exploratory research of an illegal network.

What the article leaves unclear is the quantitative aspect of al Qaeda's strategic analysis. Different questions relative to measurement and cost of thwarting al Qaeda's strategy deployment and organizational functioning can be raised: how well do measures of persuasion (attitude) correspond to indoctrinated members of radical Islamic groups? What factors would enable reformists to massively promote values of tolerance and create dialogue in the Islamic countries?

However, now that a conceptual baseline has been built, some statistical models can be explored. It will be consequently useful to consider the quantitative aspects of this inquiry in search of some practical models. The authors welcome the partnership and contribution of scholars and professionals in this perspective.

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