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Yoram Sweitzer, Sari Goldstein Ferber,
*Al-Qaeda and the internationalization
of suicide terrorism,*
Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies,
Telaviv University, Memorandum No. 78
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Terrorism became an international and very important issue at the end of twentieth and beginning of twenty-first century. Terrorist organizations, which existed for many years started to demonstrate their presence in a stronger and much more cruel way. Attacks prepared and performed by them caused hundreds of innocent victims, leaving even more in grief and pain after the death of their beloved.

Among well known terrorist organizations *al-Qaeda*, lead by Osama Bin Laden is the strongest, biggest and after the attacks of 11 September 2001, probably also best known in the world. It has also joint an 'exclusive club' of organizations which carry out suicide attacks and has become the dominant group in the global arena with regard to suicide terrorism. It has been written and said quite a lot about the leader and the organization itself, but in fact there are not many books or concise references giving some detailed information about both *al-Qaeda* and Bin Laden. For this reason the book *Al-Qaeda and internationalization of suicide terrorism* is very valuable because it presents some interesting facts about the group but also reveals some sociological aspects and mechanisms of work with in the group and also some another affiliates which cooperate successfully with the *al-Qaeda*.

The book is divided into two parts, which deal with two different matters. The first part titled *Al-Qaeda and the ideology of self-sacrifice* describes in three chapters the organization itself. To understand how it operates we must gain knowledge of some information about its background and history which is given in a short passage. Because *al-Qaeda* cooperates with many other, international terrorist groups so the authors gave a description of its affiliates. This helps to understand all the connections within the group and is necessary to appreciate other chapters and the next part of this book.

Osama Bin Laden is the best known leader of terrorist groups in the world. His figure is very important and plays a special role in the organization. According to testimony of members arrested over the years he is also a symbolic figure among the Afghan alumni in general and in *al-Qaeda* in particular. That is why the writers decided to give some information about this person and his life. The reader can learn about Bin Laden parents, his childhood, teenage years and how he joined the group and became a well known terrorist.

The information so far gives the opportunity to understand the rest of the book and works like a bridge that ties two ends. The most important facts to understand suicide ter-

rorism is described in the next chapters. Chapter two reveals suicide terrorism as ideology and symbol by using the concept of *istishhad* as a means of warfare in an overall philosophy. The authors try to explain how *al-Qaeda* members understand their obligations. They try to show what is the most important for this terrorist group, how they perceive the presence and future and how they organize their campaign against the United States and Western culture. It must be mentioned that the organization uses very modern tools for example the Internet and they are fully aware of the possibilities and its value.

The next chapter tries to show how the ideology is put into practice by presenting new standards in the suicide terrorism, which depends on recruiting and training practice. It is stressed that the willingness for self-sacrifice lies at the center of the recruitment process. To understand this process it is important to present the idea of *istishhad*-the act of martyrdom- as a kind of personal quest for young Muslims. The whole process is long and carefully monitored by Bin Laden personally and ends with personal pledge of loyalty to Bin Laden. The writers take the readers through this process paying attention to a very important component adopted by the leader – propaganda by the deed.

The second part of the book describes the suicide attacks of *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates, presents modes of action as well as reflection of culture. We can find there general operational features and the authors state that *al-Qaeda's* organizational culture and operational characteristics clearly are embodied in its suicide attacks and are in turn passed on to its affiliates, who adopted them to suit their own organizational character and trademark. It is well shown in a table where the reader can see differences and similarities of suicide terrorism performed by *al-Qaeda* and *al-Qaeda* affiliates.

For those who are particularly interested in the attacks, there are detailed descriptions of different suicide attacks carried out by *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates. In chapter five, there are described attacks performed by the organization. Readers can find about the suicide attacks carried out by *al-Qaeda* operatives on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998, American destroyer USS *Cole* in Aden Bay on October 12, 2000, the attempted „shoe-bomb” attack on December 22, 2001 on board the plane of American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami, but the operation was foiled by technical-operational failure as well as the awareness of a flight attendant, and the Djerba Synagogue in Tunisia on April 11, 2002 as well as two terrorist attacks which occurred one after the other on Israeli Targets in Mombassa, Kenya on November 28, 2002. All the information given in this chapter are very important and valuable if the method which the organization uses is to be understood.

Chapter six shows how wildly the idea of suicide attacks is used around the world by *al-Qaeda* affiliates especially from organizations in Southern Asia. Counterparts trained in Afghanistan are still under Bin Laden influence fell the necessity to continue cooperation even after they left his camps. This shows as well how big is the authority of his leadership and how successful he is in his effort. This partnership resulted in a broad terrorist infrastructure used to plan and carry out showcase suicide terrorist attacks. The readers can read about the most ambitious *al-Qaeda*-supported operation of *al-Islamiya* which was planned for Singapore in late 2001, a few months after the attacks in the United States. There is also a description of terrorist attacks carried out in Indonesia on the night of October 12, 2002 on Bali and Jakarta. The next attack described in the book took place on May 15, 2003, when

four cells containing a total of thirteen suicide operatives working in coordination with each other attacked a number of targets in the Moroccan city of Casablanca. Saudi Arabia as the county of origin of Bin Laden and many of its members, but, first and foremost, the very hart of Islam and the birthplace of Muhammad the prophet, was not a target of attacks for a long time but the terrorist campaign began with an attack on May 29, 2003. The most important intension was liberating Saudi Arabia from the „heretical” regime of the Saudi family. The authors write about two attacks one minute apart which were carried out on November 15, 2003 in Istanbul’s two main synagogues performed by two young Turks. The book gives the description of attacks on the morning of March 11, 2003 in Madrid in Spain, which as it is believed were carried out by means of an affiliated terrorist network. The volume would not have been complete without the information about Chechnya and the use of suicide terrorism in the Chechnyan conflict. For this reason there are some information about the attack on a theater in Moscow in October 2002 and the incident from September 1-3, 2004 in northern Ossetia, where the school was attacked on the fist day of a new school year. There is also a brief information about the attacks carried out in Iraq since the „invasion” of the US. Bin Laden encouraged the citizens of Iraq to fight with the occupiers and the foreigners in the country.

The whole book is a very interesting study about *al-Qaeda* and other international organizations which cooperate all over the world to continue the idea of global jihad. The authors make a very valuable notice in the conclusion that although *al-Qaeda* joined the ranks of suicide terrorism relatively late in the game, the organization quickly emerged as its main proponent, fashioning it into an international phenomenon and increasing its death tools to hitherto unknown heights. They also suggest that given Bin Laden’s personal contribution and symbolic importance to advancing the idea of global jihad in general and ideological suicide in particular, removing Bin Laden from the equation, whether by killing him or apprehending him, is crucial to the war on terrorism in general and on *al-Qaeda* in particular. Every body who is interested in terrorism, jihad and *istishhad* should read this book to learn about the organization and its affiliates which use suicide attacks to fight with the United States and the West.

The book examines the multidimensional relationship between *al-Qaeda*’s core and the organization’s affiliates in an interesting way giving a chance to understand their links. The only difficulty might be the fact that the book is written in English which might limit possible readers, but definitely it is worth recommendation to all people interested in this topic but also to those who would like to learn something more to understand our modern world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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