

2013

Al Qaeda's Propaganda War: A War for Hearts and Minds

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AL QAEDA'S PROPAGANDA WAR: A WAR FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

JILL POHL
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California, 2009**

2013
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

November 25, 2013

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY JILL POHL ENTITLED AL QAEDA'S PROPAGANDA WAR: A WAR FOR HEARTS AND MINDS BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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ABSTRACT

Pohl, Jill. M.A., Department of Political Science, Wright State University, 2013.
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Literature on terrorist efforts to win over “hearts and minds” discusses several influential factors: the politics of the organization, the relationship of the organization to the public, levels of violence, provocation of counterterror responses, and the use of various forms of propaganda. It is my contention that mass media propaganda, which reaches the widest audience, is most influential in the battle for hearts and minds. Al Qaeda has exploited this tool to sustain support. In spite of this, Arab Public Opinion Surveys show a decline in support for Al Qaeda's anti-Western goals, and fluctuations in support for its methods. They also indicate a decline, then an increase, and an ultimate falloff in overall support for the organization. I would like to determine what is responsible for these changes? Do media propaganda efforts influence Arab-Muslim public opinion, or is something else creating these changes year by year?

The answers to this question may be applicable to other terror organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. However, these are terror organizations operating on a national rather than transnational scale. Al Qaeda is unique in its transnational scope, but this does not mean that what works on a larger scale would not apply to a smaller scale and constituency as well. This gives my study the potential for broad generalizability, though *every* terror organization is unique and what applies to one may not apply to another, be they national or transnational in scope.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Shannon for his guidance and support throughout the thesis process. I would also like to thank Dr. Telhami for his continued willingness to speak with me about my thesis, in spite of his very busy schedule. I would also like to thank my entire thesis committee, Dr. Awad Halabi and Dr. Donna Schagheck, for their commitment to my writing. But most important, I would like to thank my family: my father for reading every chapter, multiple times, my mother for encouraging me, and my husband most of all for sitting with me late at night as I wrote, keeping me motivated and inspired.

Thesis Chapter I: Introduction

How Terrorists Wage the Battle for Hearts and Minds

When Al Qaeda established its presence in the global consciousness, most notably on September 11, 2001 with an attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, it made an indelible impact. But it existed as a dangerous terror organization long before this. AQ arguably made its presence known in the West with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, conducted by operatives trained in Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. In 1998, Al Qaeda figurehead and leader Osama bin Laden issued a *fatwa*, or legal pronouncement, declaring *jihad* on Israel and the Western world. However, most Americans came to know the organization in 2001 because of the enormity of its act of terror. Later, it became evident that Al Qaeda was also revolutionary in its media savvy. Not only did AQ commit horrific acts of terror, but it attempted to saturate the Internet, televisions, and newspapers, not to mention the minds of everyday people, with fear-inducing words and images showcasing its power, political prowess, and propensity towards violence. This was revolutionary. AQ harnessed the global media, exploited film and video technology, and consequently captivated audiences with its powerful messaging. Al Qaeda was not just a dangerous enemy, but a smart and very modern one.

The question this left, among many, was whether or not Al Qaeda would be more influential than other terror organizations? Would its powerful messaging campaign have a larger impact on hearts and minds than other terror groups? And would it be able to win over the Arab-Muslim public, its constituency, with its ability to leverage media tools? This is a crucial question because terror groups are

empowered by the public. If they are supported by their constituency, and induce terror among their proclaimed enemies, they are able to operate off of a deadly combination of faith and fear. Their loyal constituency helps them gain new members, find safe havens, and spread their messaging. There is power in numbers. Their enemies may be more willing to cooperate with their demands, because they are fearful of the consequences.

This thesis seeks to answer the question of whether or not Al Qaeda's media efforts are uniquely able to influence Arab-Muslim hearts and minds. My initial research question is, "Is there a relationship between media propaganda and Arab public opinion on a transnational level?" If there is not, what *does* influence the Arab public in favor of, or in opposition to, the organization? Alternate hypotheses suggest that political violence could have the greatest impact on public opinion. Other sources of influence are professed political ideas of the organization, the casualties caused by political violence, organization-community relationships as constructed through acts of charity and statements about religion, and finally, counterterrorist activity on the part of governments.

If we can pinpoint what it is that most influences a constituency in favor of a terror group, we can determine how to diminish support for the organization. Those things that help it gain favor can be directly targeted by counterterrorism efforts. The best way to stop the enemy is to take away its tools of support, the tools that help it grow and gain support and safety.

Research into current literature shows that there are several methods used by terrorists to win over hearts and minds. It also reveals that propaganda could be

as much a tool for influencing the public as acts of violence. Kepel writes that “Bin Laden’s counteroffensive recognized that, under the right circumstances, rhetoric and satellite propaganda can be on equal footing with unmanned bombers and cruise missiles...He responded to the Afghan invasion...with a call to Muslims worldwide.”¹

Propaganda literature commonly discusses media propaganda as an influential factor. The entirety of Grey and Lumbaca’s article concerns the role of the “media as an information instrument...to generate publicity and draw attention to...causes.”² This type of thinking leads to my strong belief in the power of media propaganda to influence public opinion. However, within the category of media, there is a distinction between terrorist-produced media, and state-run international or local news media. Studies that do not focus on the media as a form of propaganda, like Grey and Lumbaca’s, and Wilkinson’s piece,³ commonly focus on propaganda of the deed, and the attention this garners for the terrorist organization.⁴

Propaganda in its many forms is a technique for waging the battle over hearts and minds. Modern terrorist propaganda manifests itself via mass media, not only utilizing newspapers, but satellite television, local news channels, and online

¹ Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 193.

² Lumbaca, Sonise and David H. Gray, “The Media as an Enabler for Acts of Terrorism” *Global Security Studies* 2:1 (2011) 45.

³ Paul Wilkinson, “The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9:2 (1997), 51-64 (<http://www.jstor.org>).

⁴ Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Eric S. Dickson, “The Propaganda of the Deed: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Mobilization,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51:2 (2007): 364-381.

videos.⁵ Terrorists' propaganda not only consists of videotaped speeches and beheadings, but the very acts of terror themselves. These acts are labeled as separate from "media propaganda" within my study, because they are largely acts of political violence, but it is important to note that they are often waged in a pointed effort to attract media attention and produce powerful images on screen, and then to hopefully win Arab hearts and minds.⁶

Al Qaeda and the Arab Public

V.I. Lenin stated that the purpose of terrorism is, quite simply, to induce terror. But there is more to it than that. Terror organizations not only need to cause fear, but sympathy for their cause.⁷ If individuals do not identify with the organization, the group has no supporters. According to White, supporters form the very foundation of the terrorist group structure.⁸ Among those who identify with the terrorist organization, there is another division: people who support the organizations' ideas, but not their violent actions. White characterizes them as passive supporters, as opposed to the active supporters whose support helps the organization "maintain a campaign of bombings and kidnappings."⁹

Observing audience responses to these organizations enables us to see where they stand in terms of legitimacy and capability. White points out that "support

⁵ Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, (New York: Columbia UP, 2006).

⁶ Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson, 2007.

⁷ Alex Schmid, "Terrorism as Psychological Warfare," *Democracy and Security* 1:2 (2005): 137-46.

⁸ Jonathan R. White, "Changing Group Structures and the Metamorphosis of Terrorism," *Terrorism: 2002 Update* (Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003).

⁹ White, 36.

sections provide the means necessary to carry out the assault.”¹⁰ Without them, the very mechanisms for action are nonexistent. Public support can also help the organization appear successful and valid. “Simply by responding positively to their tactics, public supporters can help a terrorist organization to be perceived as credible, effective, and a viable threat to its enemy.”¹¹ Counterterrorism strategy sometimes focuses on denying organizations this support base, because “denying terrorists the support of these constituents is a crucial component in the war on terrorism.”¹²

It is also important to point out that acts of terrorism and the accompanying propaganda are not wholly political—they are also heavily psychological.¹³ The psychological component associated with terrorism reveals that terrorism is not just about killing people, but about affecting individuals’ perceptions. For these reasons, tracking public opinion of terrorist organizations helps us to determine whether or not they are viewed as legitimate groups capable of coordinated action.

Public opinion in the Arab and Muslim world is of particular importance with the rise of modern Islamist political movements and the Arab Awakening. Efforts by organizations such as Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hizbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood have centered on winning the hearts and minds of the Arab-Muslim world, because

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Steven Simon and Jeff Martini, “Terrorism: Denying Al Qaeda Its Popular Support,” in Russell D. Howard and Bruce Hoffman, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2005), 639.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John W. Riley, Jr. and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr., “Research for Psychological Warfare,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 21:1 (1957), 147-58 (<http://www.jstor.org/>).

“jihadists need to mobilize Muslim populations.”¹⁴ Their propaganda primarily targets these Islamic audiences. According to Al Qaeda strategist Abu ‘Ubeid al-Qurashi it is of utmost importance to the organization to “ ‘expose the American lie and deceit to the peoples of the world-and first and foremost to the Islamic peoples.’”¹⁵

It is telling that there have been fluctuations in support for Al Qaeda, an organization that has revolutionized modern propaganda, and is widely known for its vast media exploitation. In spite of possessing its own media wing, *As Sahab*, Al Qaeda has lost public support since 2004.¹⁶ Instead of winning over hearts and minds, it ultimately lost them. When I saw that this coincided with a diminution in releases by Al Qaeda’s media wing, which no longer regularly disseminated speeches and interviews, I believed there could be a connection. The decline in releases by *As Sahab* also coincided with increased viewership of Qatar-supported *Al Jazeera*,¹⁷ and the increasing popularity of the Internet as a source of communication and news throughout the world.¹⁸

The U.S. launched its own satellite television station, *Al Hurra*, to partake in the ideological battle for Arabs’ hearts and minds. It served as a countermeasure against satellite networks such as Hezbollah’s *Al Manaar* and Hamas’ *Al Aqsa* channels. According to Dr. Shibley Telhami’s surveys of the Arab world from 2001

¹⁴ Manuel R. Torres Soriano, “Jihadist Propaganda and Its Audiences: A Change of Course?” www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/9/21 (May 28, 2012). [Original Source: *Perspectives on Terrorism: A Journal of the Terrorism Research Institute*, No. 1.2 (2007)].

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Telhami, 2009.

¹⁷ Telhami, 2011

¹⁸ Ibid.

until 2011, *Al Hurra* is consistently one of the least-watched Arab satellite news channels. The U.S.'s decision to devote resources to a news media outlet in the Arab world through *Al Hurra*, and to further relate to the Arab public worldwide through *Al Jazeera English*, gives credence to the idea that media propaganda is influential. But research points to other influential factors as well, and my goal in this research is to see when propaganda benefitted Al Qaeda, and when it did not. What may have kept media propaganda from having an influence on Al Qaeda's constituency?

Al Qaeda's constituency for the purposes of my research is the population that Al Qaeda works to gain support within: primarily Arab countries. Most of Al Qaeda's messaging and many of its propaganda actions take place within Arab countries, and it is for this reason that Dr. Telhami conducted surveys about Al Qaeda within the Arab world. Al Qaeda of course claims that it represents Muslims, but the organization's political and social activity within the Arab world indicates efforts to gain legitimacy and support on a broader scale, among the Arab public and within Arab nations, for the larger purpose of establishing a united Muslim community. Usually, the terror group seeks to generate support, rather than fear, in their constituency. The proclaimed enemy of the organization is the group in which they seek to inflict fear. According to Soriano, jihadist propaganda by Al Qaeda directed at a Western audience was structured to "demoralize through fear rather than attempting to invoke feelings of sympathy for or comprehension of motivations of Global Jihadist Movement members."¹⁹ Al Qaeda's principle strategist Abu 'Ubeid al-Qurashi also articulates this sentiment in describing the goals of propaganda

¹⁹ Soriano, 2007.

directed toward a more global audience. Soriano cites him as writing, “They did not aspire to gain Western sympathy; rather, they sought to expose the American lie and deceit to the peoples of the world.”²⁰ Meanwhile, with the constituent audiences, “sympathy and support from the populace for their cause is the ultimate goal.”²¹

The active and passive supporters previously mentioned also comprise the constituency. The active supporters of Al Qaeda are those individuals who agree with the terror organization and elect, the key word here being “elect,” to participate in and take on a role within the organization. They are not necessarily Muslim but they are active sympathizers. The passive supporters, meanwhile, are the rest of the individuals within Al Qaeda’s constituency who agree with Al Qaeda’s ideology. It is not all, or even most Arabs or Muslims. They are everyday people who do not necessarily have radical ideas, but who Al Qaeda sways into agreement with the organization’s values. They are also exposed to a great deal of Al Qaeda propaganda (of the deed, and media propaganda) due to their geographic proximity to Al Qaeda’s activity. Many of them are subsequently concentrated in the Arab world, which makes surveys of the Arab world particularly useful. Active supporters and passive supporters are both important to the terrorist campaign, and do not seem to be distinguished in public opinion surveys. However, the distinct ways in which active and passive supporters are important to terrorist campaigns illustrates just why public opinion matters in the first place. Active supporters are those who operate within the organization in a functional capacity. They are “critical to terrorist campaigns,” maintaining “communication

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lumbaca and Gray, 46.

channels...safe houses...and...logistical needs.”²² Meanwhile, passive supporters represent the majority of the support system, since they are common individuals who do not know they are being utilized by the terrorist organization. They are useful to examine in order to perceive where the terrorist organization stands in terms of overall popularity. Since they constitute the majority, it is largely from this group that I measure whether the terrorist organization is “alienating the mainstream,” or succeeding in garnering mass support.²³

Comparing Methods

Literature on terrorist efforts to win over “hearts and minds” demonstrates several influential factors: the politics of the organization, the relationship of the organization to the public, levels of violence, provocation of counterterror responses, and the use of various forms of propaganda. I have also observed from all three Arab Public Opinion Surveys that I utilized: Brookings Institute (October 2004-May 2009), World Public Opinion (February 25, 2009), and the Pew Research Global Attitudes Project (May 2, 2011), that there was a decline in support for/sympathy with Al Qaeda’s goals, and an overall decline in confidence in Osama bin Laden from 2001 until 2009. The question is, which factor primarily influenced these changes in public opinion? Which factor impacted hearts and minds the most? Here, it is central to clarify that “hearts and minds” is not simply a poetic term. In this context, it is imbued with meaning about the perspective held by individuals within a terror group’s constituency (or the people they claim to represent). Terror groups that win over hearts and minds are those that convince their constituency of

²² White, 36.

²³ Ibid.

their legitimacy, and instill their values within them. The battle for hearts and minds is essentially one for support. It does not have to be active support, but it is moral and intellectual agreement with the terror group, and an alignment of values. Of course, the terror group prefers that supporters take action for their cause. But most of the time, it is sufficient to simply agree with and not take any action against the organization. The battle for hearts and minds within the Arab world is Al Qaeda's battle to win favor amongst Arabs, and establish a broad Muslim community.

In spite of the existence of *As Sahab*, which is wholly dedicated to internal, Al Qaeda-only media productions, the organization has lost public support since 2005.²⁴ Instead of winning over hearts and minds, in other words, gaining favor with the Arab public, it won them and lost them, without any signs of recovery ahead. So is media propaganda truly a powerhouse for generating public support?

Some scholars (White,²⁵ Cragin & Daly,²⁶ Rohner & Frey,²⁷ Lumbaca & Gray,²⁸ Clauset et. al²⁹) do see media propaganda as influential upon the public's opinion of a terrorist organization. Others predict that propaganda of the deed is key to influencing public opinion. These advocates are Schmid,³⁰ Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson,³¹ and Wilkinson.³² Proponents of the levels of violence argument are

²⁴ Telhami, 2009.

²⁵ White, 31-37.

²⁶ Cragin and Daly, 1-93.

²⁷ Rohner and Frey, 129-145.

²⁸ Lumbaca & Gray, 45-55.

²⁹ Clauset et. al, 6-33.

³⁰ Schmid, 137-146.

³¹ Bueno de Mesquita, 364-381

³² Wilkinson, 51-64.

primarily Henar Criado,³³ and Kull et. al,³⁴ and supporters of the counterterror activity argument are Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson. Most of the literature that I collected supports all of the independent variables listed above. However, the arguments for the variables of mass media propaganda and politics of the organization initially seemed strongest, since these mechanisms for support were discussed in the largest number of sources as devices for winning people over. They also appeared to be the least disputed. Unfortunately, none of the sources I utilized had actually compared various methods of garnering public support. This is where my research stands as a unique and valuable resource.

Procedure

My research determines if media propaganda is the most salient factor in influencing public opinion. I compared my six independent variables against Arab-world support for Al Qaeda at a particular time. Using a variety of news and data-gathering sources, I collected incidents of each independent variable. I organized them by year, then added up each independent variables' number of incidents to determine a total for that given year. This number represented the frequency in which that independent variable occurred within a specific time frame. This frequency was placed in chart form and compared with three different public opinion survey results. All of this was organized by year to see how public opinion fluctuated in conjunction with each independent variable. This enabled me to see which variable most impacted the terrorist-organization constituency relationship.

³³ Criado, 497-508.

³⁴ Kull, 2009.

What follows is a single-case study of Al Qaeda, a transnational terrorist organization that has heavily utilized new forms of media propaganda. Research regarding terrorist organizations provided several hypotheses, based upon several potentially influential independent variables. I explore each variable individually within my research, with each chapter devoted to one of them.

The research problem was framed specifically by Al Qaeda's public opinion dilemma. In the most recent iterations of his survey, from 2009 until 2011, Telhami saw such a decline in Al Qaeda's relevance within the Arab public's collective conscious, that he did not include questions about the organization.³⁵ Prior to 2009, Al Qaeda enjoyed more support from the Arab world, but did see fluctuations. These fluctuations are indicated in answers to the 2004-2008 survey question, "When you think about Al Qaeda, which aspect, if any, of the organization do you sympathize with the most?" One potential answer was "None." Other answer options were: "Confronts the U.S."; "Stands up for Muslim causes such as the Palestinian issue"; "Its methods of operation"; "Seeks to create an Islamic state"; or "Other." These responses were the only options given each year from 2004 until 2009.

My goal is to explain dependent variable trends using information from the years 2003 through 2009, based upon three distinct public opinion surveys. One measures "Support for an aspect of Al Qaeda," the other measures, "Sympathy with Al Qaeda," and the third measures "Confidence in Osama bin Laden." The Brookings Institute survey measuring "Sympathy for an aspect of Al Qaeda" covers the years

³⁵ Shibley Telhami, Telephone interview, May 16, 2012.

2005 to 2006, and 2008 to 2009. There are no survey results for 2007, and the 2004 survey only incorporates 2004 data for some of the sections. The section asking about sympathy with AQ only contains data from 2005. The Confidence in Osama bin Laden survey covers the year 2003, then skips to 2005 through 2009, making it the most comprehensive of the surveys in terms of time span. For the purposes of this study, “Confidence in Osama bin Laden” is linked closely with overall support for Al Qaeda. While they are not inextricably linked, since bin Laden’s death did not mean the end of Al Qaeda, during the time span of the surveys (through 2009), bin Laden was a key figurehead in the organization. I believe it safe to say that those who supported bin Laden would also support the organization he helped to thrive. When I distinguish between “confidence in bin Laden” and support for the organization, it is because these terms reference separate surveys that both, in my view, contribute to measuring support for Al Qaeda. This survey augments the other surveys; it covers a broader time span, and provides additional perspective on views about Al Qaeda. I included the “Support for an aspect of Al Qaeda” survey because it expressly addresses the 2007 to 2008 time frame, which is a gap year in the “Sympathy” survey.

The other discrepancy in the surveys that I had to address was countries surveyed. For the sake of consistency, I only included countries that were considered Arab countries, since this was what the original Brookings survey included. This survey, which says it is a survey of the Arab world, asked its questions of people in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Meanwhile, the Pew Research Global Attitudes Project survey questioned Muslim

countries and the Palestinian territories. I only included the three countries that were both Muslim and Arab, to avoid any outlying factor influencing results. These countries were Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon.

The same process was used for the World Public Opinion survey measuring support for different Al Qaeda views. Of the four countries surveyed, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Morocco, only two of the countries were specifically Arab countries applicable to my research. Therefore, I only incorporated data results from these two countries.

After all of the surveys were made to represent a similar constituency (the Arab world), I examined the survey results and took notes of those years where there was a falloff in overall public support for Al Qaeda. After collecting the data from the surveys, I correlated it using Excel charts representing each specific independent variable. My null hypothesis was that mass media propaganda has no impact on public opinion in the Arab world. Initially, then, I tested mass media propaganda as an independent variable. The other independent variables were graphically represented afterwards. Each graph was used to detect overlaps between the independent and dependent variables. Those graphs that showed the most consistency between rises and falls in dependent/independent variable trends represented the strongest IV/DV relationships.

Conclusion

What follows in the coming chapters are the graphs representing the relationships detected between each independent and dependent variable. Explanations of the data findings and further investigation into each variable are

included within each respective chapter. My calculations of the number of incidents of each independent variable, and the graphs that represent these calculations, are based upon the specific information that I was able to find in my research process. It is my best estimation of the frequency with which each variable occurred, and how this corresponds with the specific Arab Public Opinion surveys that I chose to utilize for my research. Findings may be different among those using different surveys, or coding their variables differently from myself.

Chapter 2: Al Qaeda Propaganda & Public Opinion

Exploiting Media Outlets: External Media

This chapter investigates how propaganda influences Arab public opinion. Propaganda in its various iterations accomplishes a terror organization's need for publicity, which helps the terrorist group accomplish its goals and continue to exist. According to Kim Cragin, the publicity gained by a terrorist group is crucial to its ability endure and succeed. Publicity, she writes, "helps sustain the group's existence as a cohesive entity".³⁶ It is an organizational tool that contributes to the group's legitimacy, recruitment, and audience-access.

But there is more to propaganda than simple publicity, as it also wages the battle for hearts and minds of the populace. Propaganda itself is publicity with the intent to persuade. It involves "winning or conquering with the use of emotional or logical reasoning".³⁷ Therefore, it is about more than just garnering attention; it is about garnering support. It is an emotional appeal to an audience.

Propaganda is not about simply making a statement, some kind of political or social commentary or expression of a viewpoint. Al Qaeda's political and religious stances on certain issues may inform its propaganda, but propaganda itself is more than just a statement. It is a statement, "ideas, doctrines, or special appeals disseminated to influence the opinion, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any specified group in order to benefit the sponsor either directly or indirectly."³⁸ Based

³⁶ Kim Cragin and Sara A. Daly, *The Dynamic Terrorist Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation Project Air Force, 2004) xiii.

³⁷ White, 31-37.

³⁸ Maurice Tugwell, "NATO Glossary of Military Terms": 2-205.

upon this, for the purposes of this thesis and my own definition, propaganda is an idea or doctrine, expressed in media or through actions, that is intended to influence, and ultimately benefit the cause of Al Qaeda.

One such form of propaganda is the exploitation of media outlets. A terror group whets the media's appetite for sensationalism by offering violence, and controversial statements about religious or political issues. In turn, the media provides the terror group with the publicity it so craves and benefits from in terms of gaining legitimacy, recruits, and an audience. It is a symbiotic relationship that Al Qaeda has notoriously exploited in its interaction with *Al Jazeera*, the American news media, the pan-Arab newspapers *Al Hayat* and *Al Sharq al Awsat*, the Muslim newspaper *Al Ansar*, and pan-Arab news magazine *Al Majallah*.

Al Qaeda's interaction with these outlets serves as the basis of this chapter's analysis of Al Qaeda's relationship with the mass media. Al Qaeda provides these newspapers and television stations with audio tapes citing the *Quran* and calling listeners to *jihad*, or email statements explaining why they committed an attack. But these are only some of the propaganda statements made by the organization. Its interaction with them in terms of specific instances of propaganda releases aired by the above media outlets, is available in the "Alternate Hypothesis Descriptions by Year" (see Appendix Figure 1).

Other Islamist groups have similarly exploited mass media technology to spread their messages, and Al Qaeda has clearly followed in their footsteps. This is discussed extensively by Seib, who indicates that the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb "endorsed a 'unified *umma* in the novel sense of a transterritorial ideaocracy."

Thanks to technology, this concept of transterritorial has expanded even further; it is not about tangible territory but an abstract sense of community. The Internet, Seib writes, is *supraterritorial* because boundaries within and among states are not merely inconsequential, they need not, in the cyberworld, be acknowledged at all.”³⁹ An example of this is Hizb ut-Tahrir, a radical Islamic political movement that has a Web site available in Arabic, English, Russian, Turkish, Urdu and German. This illustrates a broader *umma* that transcends region. Hezbollah, meanwhile, has leveraged technology to reach Shiites in “countries where they are a minority.”⁴⁰ Its television channel, which it partially owns and controls, is used to encourage Shiites to assert themselves more strongly in these countries. Al Manar proved to be such a powerful tool within Hezbollah’s war effort that Israel labeled it a “quasi-combatant.”⁴¹ There are many more examples of Islamist groups and terror organizations utilizing technology to spread their propaganda. While this document of course focuses upon Al Qaeda, it is useful to put their efforts with a context. They are not the first, nor will they be the last of their kind, to leverage modern technology for propaganda purposes.

The question at hand in this chapter is the nature of this relationship in terms of its benefit to Al Qaeda. Does embedding yourself in the media marketplace attain the kind of publicity that elicits public support among your constituency?

³⁹ Philip Seib, “The Rise of the Virtual State,” *The Al Jazeera Effect*, Potomac Books 2008: 80-90.

⁴⁰ Seib, 168.

⁴¹ Ibid.

While some scholars^{42,43} argue in that the media functions as an enabler for terrorist groups,⁴⁴ others see the media as hindering support because it focuses on violence.⁴⁵ This chapter seeks to ascertain who is right.

While the answer to this question most likely varies by terror organization, in the case of Al Qaeda, it appears that media coverage of violence, and media coverage of public statements and propaganda videos, do not elicit mass public support within much of the Arab world. According to Telhami⁴⁶, this is easily explained by the “marketplace of ideas” that media outlets like *Al Jazeera* provide. By way of example, Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi (1966-2006) was featured in 2005 on the channel, in a debate with a Salafi jihadi named Muhammad al-Maqdisi (b.1959), his spiritual advisor. The two leaders fundamentally disagreed about how to treat Shia Muslims, as Maqdessi advocated for a less violent approach and spoke out against a radicalized approach to religious differences⁴⁷. Such debate provided a forum for alternative thinking, and highlighted discrepancies even within jihadi Islamist thought. According to the Brookings Institute 2003-2011, surveys of Arab Public Opinion⁴⁸, *Al Jazeera* was by far the most watched international news station within the six surveyed Arab countries. Fifty-four percent of Arabs watched the satellite network in 2005 alone. The second most watched station was *The*

⁴² Dominic Rohner and Bruno S. Frey, “Blood and Ink! The Common-Interest-Game between Terrorists and the Media” *Public Choice* 133:1-2 (2007): 129-45.

⁴³ Sonise Lumbaca and David H. Gray, “The Media as an Enabler for Acts of Terrorism” *Global Security Studies* 2:1 (2011) 45-55.

⁴⁴ Rohner and Frey 2007; Lumbaca and Gray 2011

⁴⁵ White, 31-37

⁴⁶ Shibley Telhami, telephone interview, May 16, 2012.

⁴⁷ *Intel Center al-Qaeda Messaging/Attacks Timeline* (Alexandria, VA: Tempest Publishing, LLC, 2010), 43-45.

⁴⁸ Telhami, 2005.

Egyptian Television Network, which only 12% of the Arab world viewed. These numbers indicate that most Arabs do tune in to *Al Jazeera*, and they prefer it substantially more than other news networks. The influence *Al Jazeera* can have is meaningful, and its power is illustrated in no small part by the *lack* of influence Al Qaeda media propaganda as a whole has on Arab public opinion.

Self-Generated Media

Internally produced propaganda is another aspect of media propaganda. This form of propaganda involves the use of media distributed directly by Al Qaeda using the Internet or its own production company, *As Sahab*. According to Nisbet and Myers⁴⁹, this form of media propaganda allows for a “socialization mechanism that lead(s) to the formation of national or transnational identity.” It is information, albeit skewed in favor of the terror group, from the direct source’s mouth to the audience’s ears. No countering voices can intrude, and there is no room for debate. This identity-formation effort can “elicit psychological reactions and communicate complex political messages”.⁵⁰ The terror group can say exactly what it needs to say, and can make meaningful appeals to the hearts and minds of its audience. By way of example, in the fall of 2005, Zarqawi began releasing regular internet news broadcasts and calling them “ ‘the sole outlet for mujaheddin media’ ”.⁵¹ Through this internally produced and self-distributed forum, Zarqawi was able to release a

⁴⁹ Erik Nisbet and Theresa Myers, “Challenging the State: Transnational TV and Political Identity in the Middle East” *Political Communication* 27:4 (2010): 350.

⁵⁰ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology: CRS Report for Congress* (Washington, DC: 2007).

⁵¹ Lynch, 2006.

2007 audiotape identifying the “three foundations” of Al Qaeda’s political ideology, as applied to events in Iraq and elsewhere. *Al Jazeera* only aired a 2-minute excerpt, but due to his own distribution capabilities, Zarqawi offered the full extent of his political explanations for Al Qaeda activities. There was no trimming down, no debate, and no one to edit the release other than the Al Qaeda webmasters uploading the audio tape to Zarqawi’s Internet news forum.

Through self-generated media Al Qaeda has been able to socialize the Arab world through its own, unfiltered media releases and productions via the Internet and As-Sahab. In his study of jihadist propaganda, Michael Torres Sorriano argues that internally-produced media propaganda does not cause any significant increase in levels of popular support for the organization.⁵² His argument is rooted in his belief that a significant number of Arabs refrain from seeking out explicitly terrorist-backed media. They would be more likely to offer their time and attention to *Al Jazeera*, which gives airtime to Al Qaeda propaganda messages but does not directly support terrorism⁵³.

In many instances, Al Qaeda leadership favored issuing email statements or sending articles to newspapers. This was a popular approach in 2004, when jihadi training leader Abu Muhammad al-Ablaj sent email statements to the *Al Majallah* newspaper addressing attacks within the Arab World.⁵⁴ AQAP leader Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin (1971-2004) utilized a similar approach in releasing an article to the *Sawt*

⁵³ Hugh Miles, “Think Again: Al Jazeera” *Foreign Policy*, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/node/64275> (June 12 2006).

⁵⁴ Intel Center, 38.

al-Jihad jihadi forum justifying kidnapping. Two articles were released to the forum in this year to attempt to justify the abduction of Americans.⁵⁵

Within this study, self-generated media was often inseparable from externally-produced media. In many instances it was impossible to distinguish. Sometimes, internally-produced audio or video tapes would appear on jihadi websites. Other times, they would appear on major news media stations. The *Intel Center Al Qaeda Messaging/Attacks Timeline* reports instances of internally produced propaganda being released, without mention of whether it was picked up by media outlets. Sometimes, the propaganda was simply distributed by *As-Sahab* and released on an Al Qaeda-backed network such as *Al Zawraa* TV (viewership results for this station were not available in Brookings Institute surveys), or distributed via Internet. The inability to make this distinction in many instances, as well as the simple fact that a good deal of internally produced propaganda ultimately *was* picked up by American and Arab news media, warranted collapsing the categories of internally produced propaganda and propaganda aired on news media outlets into a single independent variable: Media Propaganda.

Media Propaganda Hypothesis and Description of Findings

Initially, I anticipated a positive relationship between public support for terrorist organizations and media propaganda disseminated through the mass media outlets, or distributed directly by Al Qaeda. The idea behind this assumed positive relationship is that if it were not beneficial to the media to show the propaganda, they would not do it. Meanwhile, if it were not beneficial for a terrorist

⁵⁵ Intel Center, 39.

organization to distribute their propaganda through the mass media and online, they would not do so. Therefore, one hypothesis was that media propaganda would influence public opinion in support of the terror organization.

When instances of media propaganda were measured against sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda results from 2005 to 2009, it indicated diminished sympathy with Al Qaeda, despite gains in media propaganda releases by the terror group (see Figure 2.1). Al Qaeda's media propaganda releases grew from 29 in 2005, to 71 in 2006, 250 in 2007, and only diminished in 2008 and 2009, to 66 and 101.5 releases, respectively. These gains in media propaganda took place in the midst of a November 9, 2005 series of suicide bombings at various hotels in Amman, Jordan. They also took place in the context of a July 7th and 21st, 2005 bombings in London that Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for. In 2006, a series of vehicular bombings took place in Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt, almost consecutively from February to April of this year. I don't think it too far a stretch to link these numerous acts of violence with the increase in media propaganda; part of an effort to drum up support for and in the face of potentially controversial acts by the organization. In spite of the 2008-2009 drop off in media propaganda events, which partly coincided with the July 2008 end of the surge in Iraq, there was still an overall growth in media releases for Al Qaeda during the time 2005-2009 time frame. In spite of this, Al Qaeda experienced a decline in sympathy, from 77% sympathizing in 2005 to 65% in 2006, 65% in 2008, 65% in 2008 and 60% in 2009. This represents an overall decline in public sympathy. This set of data demonstrated an inverse relationship between instances of media propaganda and sympathy with an aspect

of Al Qaeda. Similar findings arose from a comparison of confidence in Osama bin Laden (Pew) with instances of media propaganda.⁵⁶ Despite an overall increase in instances of media propaganda from 2002 to 2009, there was an overall decline in confidence in bin Laden (see Figure 2.2). Confidence in bin Laden declined from a steady 44% in 2003 and 2005 to 27% in 2006, 18% in 2007, 19% in 2008, and a slight increase to 22% in 2009. In fact, every time span analyzed illustrates an inverse relationship, except 2005-2006, which features a decline in confidence in Osama bin Laden *and* a decline in media propaganda. Since the Brookings Institute surveys measuring sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda left out the 2007-2008 time frame, results from the World Public Opinion Survey measuring support for an aspect of Al Qaeda were brought in.⁵⁷ This survey shows that during the 2007-2008 decline in media propaganda, there was also an increase in support for an aspect of Al Qaeda (see Figure 2.3). Support grew from 19% in 2007 to 21% in 2008. This inverse correlation is consistent with the correlation between decreased Al Qaeda media propaganda and increased confidence in Osama bin Laden, which in my view is also indicative of likely support for Al Qaeda.

The consistency of the correlation lends itself to the idea that rather than gaining the support of the Arab population, Al Qaeda's media propaganda campaign only alienates. While it may "serve vital functions in maintaining ideological militancy among members and sympathizers, and [spread] their ideas to other potentially sympathetic groups," it evidently does not increase public support

⁵⁶ Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, 2011.

⁵⁷ Steven Kull, "Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies," *World Public Opinion.org* (February 25, 2009).

among the population.⁵⁸ It supports Sorriano's 2007 argument indicating a lack of increase in popular support resulting from media propaganda. It also supports Telhami's larger idea that media outlets airing Al Qaeda propaganda may feature Al Qaeda statements justifying attacks and explaining why enemy countries deserve to be attacked, but provide powerful counterarguments that have a meaningful impact on the way the public perceives Al Qaeda.⁵⁹

It is worth noting that around the time the surveys of Arab Public Opinion began, in 2003, the Arab media began to become a more competitive and fragmented media environment. *Al-Arabiya*, a Saudi-owned pan-Arab news channel, launched in 2003 as a rival to *Al Jazeera*. U.S.-based Arabic-language satellite television channel *Al Hurra* began broadcasting in 2004. This was accompanied by *al-Sawa* radio, which is a US sponsored radio station. Radio Sawa, as it is popularly called, is a sister-network to *Al Hurra*, and translates televised messages into a more portable and more accessible form. These examples further establish the Arab news media as a marketplace, filled with diverse voices that can drown out the voice of a singular terror organization.

There is no record of every instance of counter-terror programming from *Al Jazeera*, *Al Hurra*, and like-minded Arab satellite channels. It is not necessarily the case that with every instance of Al Qaeda media propaganda aired, there was and is a talking head available to drown out the jihadi ideology. Further, *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya*, and Arab daily newspapers have featured interviews with Osama bin Laden

⁵⁸ Paul Wilkinson, "The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9:2 (1997): 54.

⁵⁹ Telhami conversation, May 16 2012.

(1957-2011), and other Al Qaeda leadership, primarily in the early 2000's. There is no evidence that these interviews featured anything other than the words of the interviewee, rather than a formal debate.

In examining the relationship between media propaganda and Arab public opinion, we see that the cause-effect relationship between media propaganda and support for Al Qaeda should be re-evaluated. It is not necessarily propaganda that influences public opinion, but public opinion that influences propaganda. It could be both, but there is no indication in this experiment of a consistent causal effect of media propaganda on public opinion. It may be that *As-Sahab* released more media propaganda productions in response to declining support for Al Qaeda. By 2007, Al Qaeda media propaganda had reached its highest point. As of September 9, 2007, according to *Al Qaeda Messaging Statistics*⁶⁰, *As-Sahab* alone had released 74 videos, averaging a release very three days. In *The Al Qaeda Media Machine*, by Philip Seib, this number of *As-Sahab* releases is estimated at 90⁶¹. The increase in media productions by *As-Sahab* coincides almost perfectly with the time period of the Anbar Awakening, which occurred from 2005 to 2007 and led to an assault on Al Qaeda in the region. At this time, support for Al Qaeda was low due to increased regional and sectarian violence. Instances of Al Qaeda media propaganda consistently rose during this 2004-2007 time period, with a substantial spike from 2006 to 2007. Confidence in Osama bin Laden had declined substantially at this time, further indicative of negative feelings toward Al Qaeda and its leadership.

⁶⁰ Intel Center, 59.

⁶¹ Philip Seib, "The Al-Qaeda Media Machine," *Military Review* 6 (2008) (<http://www.jstor.org/>).

If media propaganda's increases were caused by declining support for Al Qaeda and its leadership, the question still remains: What caused this decline in Al Qaeda public support? There was no evidence media propaganda correlated directly with a decline in support. The answer may lie in another form of propaganda linked with media propaganda: propaganda of the deed.

Al Qaeda Propaganda of the Deed

Peter Kropotkin, a 19th century anarchist theorist, wrote that propaganda of the deed actions are those "which compel general attention," and cause the terror group's "new idea to seep into people's minds and win converts. One such act may, in a few days, make more propaganda than a thousand pamphlets. Above all, it awakens the spirit of revolt".⁶²

But in the case of Al Qaeda's acts of violence perpetrated in the name of "Islam," exploiting religion to justify violence, this doesn't seem to be the case. Tessler cites a 2002 survey finding that "the overwhelming majority of Muslims are appalled that violence is committed in the name of Islam."⁶³ The media coverage, in this instance, only seems to exacerbate the problem, spreading news of bloodshed to the Arab population worldwide. Even Ayman al-Zawahiri (b.1951), the leader of Al Qaeda in the wake of Osama bin Laden's death, recognized this early on. Al-Zawahiri stated that, "Among the things which the feelings of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable are the scenes of slaughtering of

⁶² Alex Schmid "Terrorism as Psychological Warfare," *Democracy and Security* 1:2 (2005): 139.

⁶³ Mark Tessler and M.D.H. Robbins, "What Leads Some Ordinary Arab Men and Women to Approve of Terrorist Acts Against the United States?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:2 (2007): 307.

the hostages.”⁶⁴ He wrote this to al-Zarqawi in 2005 as an explicit warning about the consequences of public violence.

Question, Design, and Description of Findings: Propaganda of the Deed

Propaganda of the deed, while held here as its own independent variable, is inextricably linked with media propaganda. When the media covers acts of violence, it can have an alienating effect. This led to a hypothesis that political violence would cause a decline in public support. While terror organizations usually commit to propaganda of the deed in order to strengthen public support, by showing the terrorist organization as strong and capable of fulfilling objectives,⁶⁵ it does appear that in the case of Al Qaeda, it did not have such an impact. It is also possible that Al Qaeda did demonstrate strength, but by behaving so ruthlessly, this strength was not accompanied by a sense among the public of justness or morality. This may matter more to its supporters.

Political violence, covered by major news media outlets, explains the decline in sympathy with Al Qaeda and confidence in Osama bin Laden that coincides with increases in Al Qaeda media propaganda. As incidences of violence within Al Qaeda increased, so too did incidents of media propaganda, as if to counteract the bloodshed with the assuaging voice of reason that media forums could allow for. During Al Qaeda’s peak in incidents of political violence in 2005, when, among other things, Al Qaeda killed 91 civilians in vehicular bombings of hotels, restaurants, and

⁶⁴Seth G. Jones, *Hunting in the Shadows*, (New York, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 159.

⁶⁵ A. Clauset, L. Heger, M. Young, and K.S. Gleditsch, “The Strategic Calculus of Terrorism: Substitution and Competition in the Israel-Palestine Conflict,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 45:1 (2010): 6-33.

tourist areas in Sarm el-Shekh, Egypt (July 23, 2005), the organization thereafter had a notable increase in incidents of media propaganda, after a decline since 2002. 2005, the year that rumblings of the Anbar Awakening began, the year that Al Qaeda committed the most acts of “propaganda of the deed,” was also the year of the strongest effort to saturate the media with statements describing Al Qaeda’s “core principles” (June 2005), and demonstrate Al Qaeda’s strength by promising future attacks and an ability to combat U.S. efforts in Iraq (2006). This tells us that acts of violence impact media propaganda, but media propaganda in and of itself does not have a direct relationship with Arab public opinion. After all, in spite of Al Qaeda’s efforts to explain away their acts of violence, they consistently *lost* support.

The impact that political violence had on sympathy with Al Qaeda, support for Al Qaeda, and confidence in Osama bin Laden, is evident not only from the charts (Figures 2.1-2.3) tracking the correlation between this independent variable and Arab public opinion. It is also evident within the content of the surveys, which indicate that of all of the aspects of Al Qaeda the Arab population may support, its methods of operation (namely, violence) are among its *least* popular qualities, other than its desire to create an Islamic state.

In examining the data collected, it is evident that *most* of the time, there was an inverse relationship between confidence in OBL, support for/sympathy with Al Qaeda and instances of propaganda of the deed. However, from 2005 to 2006, and 2008 to 2009, a decrease in sympathy with Al Qaeda was matched by a decrease in instances of propaganda of the deed (see Figure 2.1a). In 2005, Al Qaeda committed 168 acts of political violence, which declined to 9 in 2006. Meanwhile, sympathy

with an aspect of Al Qaeda also declined from 77 to 65%. From 2008 to 2009, Al Qaeda committed 29 and 18 acts of political violence, respectively. This corresponded to a decline in public support from 29 to 18%. What these pieces of data do not incorporate but the levels of violence data do, is the *quality* of the instances of propaganda of the deed. That is, how many people are killed in propaganda of the deed events, and how many of them are civilians. While propaganda of the deed does decline in number from 2005 to 2006, it is worth noting that the survey was conducted between October 18th and 24th 2005, just days after the deadly, mass casualty bombings in Bali, Indonesia on October 1, 2005. This may explain why sympathy with Al Qaeda diminished in spite of a decrease in propaganda of the deed instances.

The category of confidence in Osama bin Laden, on the other hand, has an almost perfectly inverse relationship with instances of propaganda of the deed (see Figure 2.2a). This provides an indication of the impact propaganda of the deed does have. After the highest incidence of propaganda of the deed in 2005, there is a significant drop in confidence in Osama bin Laden, from 44% to 27%. As previously mentioned, for the purposes of this study, the “confidence in Osama bin Laden” category is used as an indicator of support for the terror organization that he led and guided during the time frame of my research. From 2007 to 2008, the survey measuring support for an aspect of Al Qaeda indicates an inverse relationship between support and propaganda of the deed (see Figure 2.3a). From 2007 to 2008, incidents of propaganda of the deed decline from 42.5 to 29%, while support for an aspect of Al Qaeda increases from 19 to 21%. Even though the countries surveyed

in all three Arab public opinion surveys were not always the ones targeted by attacks, violence in Arab and Muslim-dominant countries still reached them, and still affected their opinions toward Al Qaeda.

The four time frames showing this relationship, in contrast to the two that do not,⁶⁶ provide greater insight into the impact that acts of violence have due to the consistency of the correlation. The strength of this correlation is further supported by the data that most Arabs simply do not support the “deeds” committed by Al Qaeda, though they may agree with their mistrust of the United States. The Brookings Institute surveys consistently show much greater support for Al Qaeda’s willingness to “confront the U.S” and representation of “Muslim causes such as the Palestinian issue” than for its “methods of operation.” In the 2004 survey, 56% of Arabs surveyed supported Al Qaeda’s willingness to confront the U.S. and to stand up for Muslim causes, but only 7% supported its methods.⁶⁷ This took place within an interesting context: In April 2004, bin Laden had proposed a “truce” with Europeans if they agreed to abandon their support for the United States and their military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. This kind of rhetoric was language Arabs were more inclined to support: language opposing the U.S. and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But acts of violence clearly undermined any kind of pacifying language bin Laden could have used, since they put bloodshed into the equation.

⁶⁶ 2005-2006 in the Brookings Institute/Pew surveys, and 2008-2009 in the Brookings Institute survey

⁶⁷ Shibley Telhami, Principal Investigator, *Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2004 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey*, <http://sadat.umd.edu/new%20surveys/surveys.htm>.

It is unlikely that the relationship between propaganda of the deed, confidence in Osama bin Laden, and support/sympathy for Al Qaeda is mere correlation. A similar relationship exists between the dependent variable and levels of violence, which are direct results of acts of propaganda of the deed. Counterterror responses, which can also increase or minimize civilian casualties, also correlate strongly with fluctuations in Arab public opinion. This indicates that events that impact everyday Arab people, and could jeopardize their safety, are those that most strongly influence attitudes towards Al Qaeda. It is not truly about what Al Qaeda says, but what it *does* to impact Arab people's lives.

Conclusion

Propaganda as a whole clearly can have an impact upon public opinion. Research by scholars, as well as my own findings, supports this idea. In the specific case of Al Qaeda and this experiment, it appears that propaganda in the form of political violence, rather than media propaganda, is central to influencing Arab public opinion. Meanwhile, there is no strong evidence supporting the idea of a causal relationship between media propaganda and a decline in public opinion. The decline in Arab support for Al Qaeda is attributable to an increase in propaganda of the deed, rather than a decline in media programming.

The next Chapter will explain how Al Qaeda's professed political ideas coincide with public opinion. I will examine whether or not this independent variable has a causal relationship with Arab public opinion, and if so, the nature of this relationship.

Figure 2.1

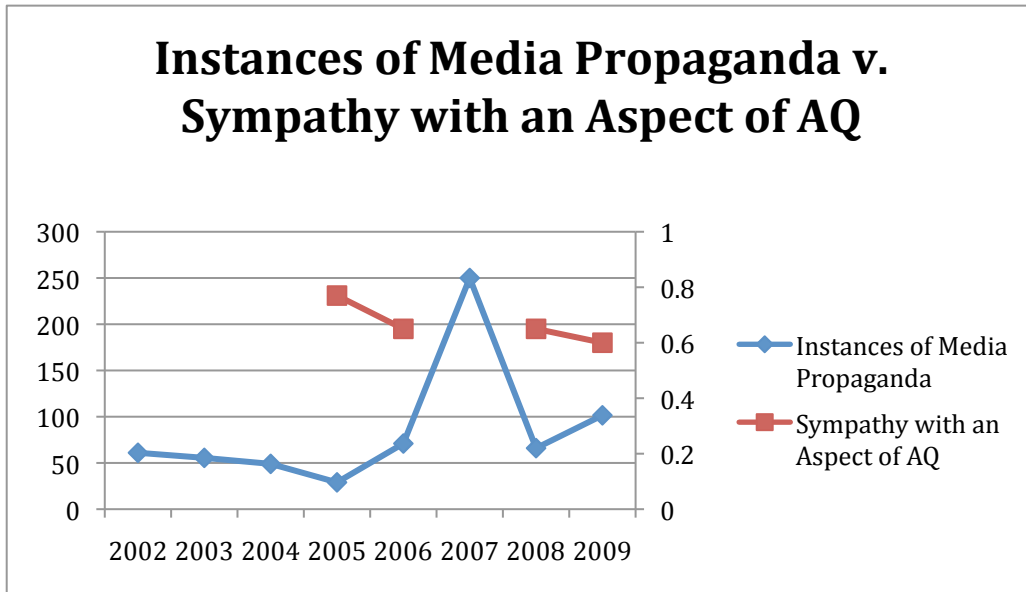


Figure 2.1a

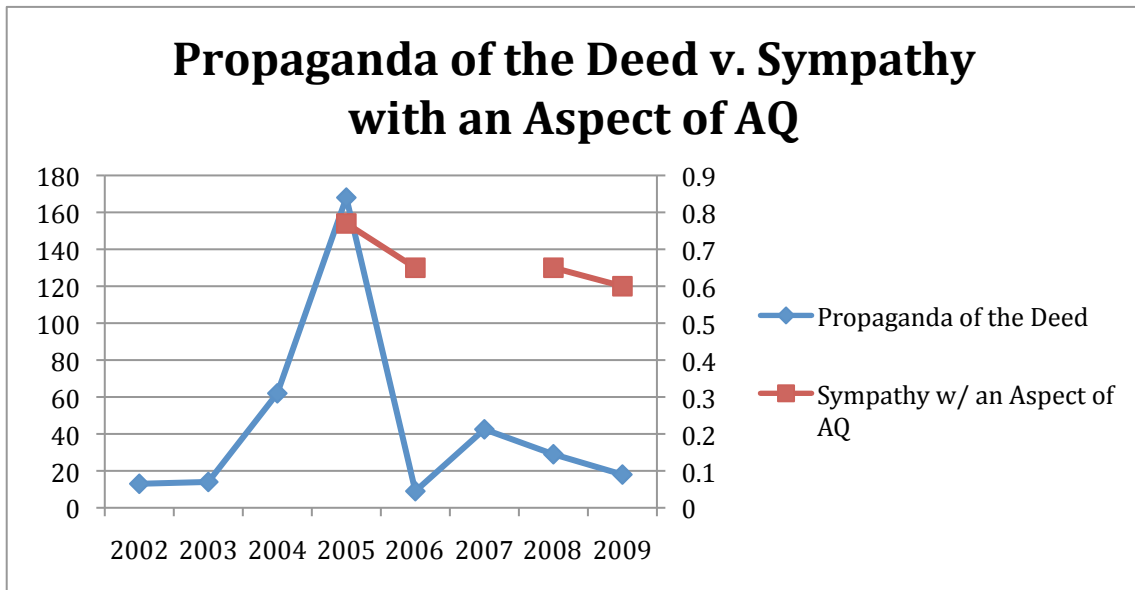


Figure 2.2

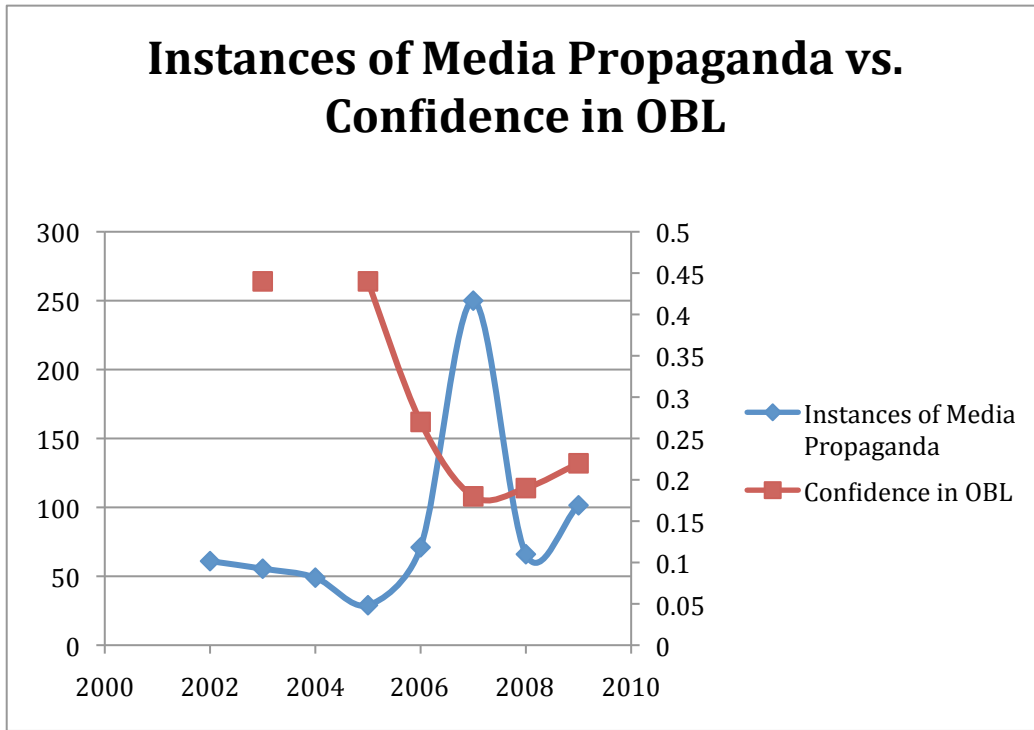


Figure 2.2a

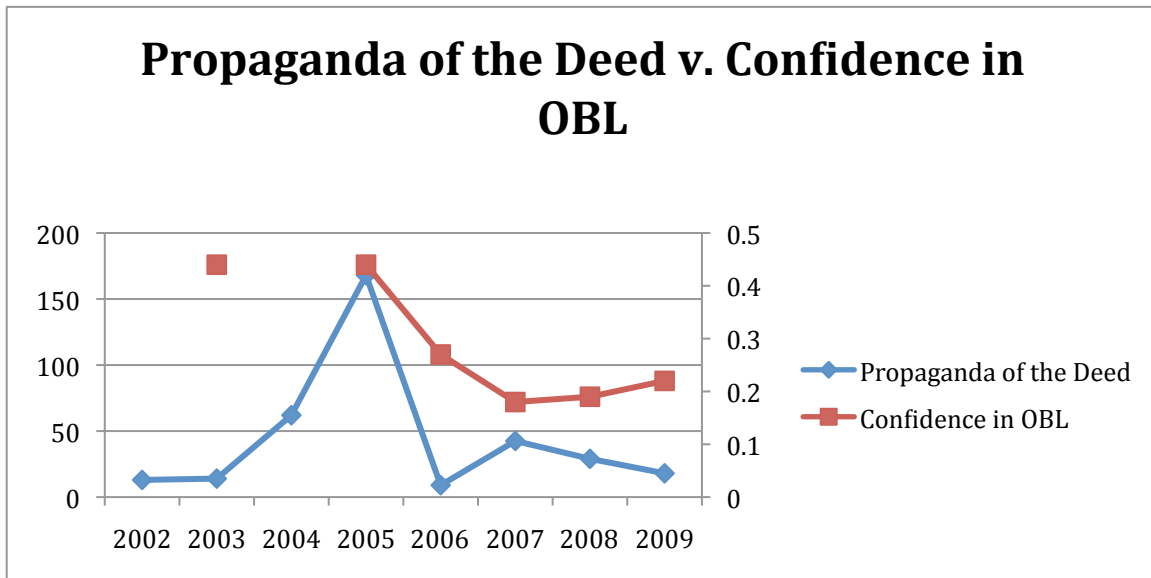


Figure 2.3

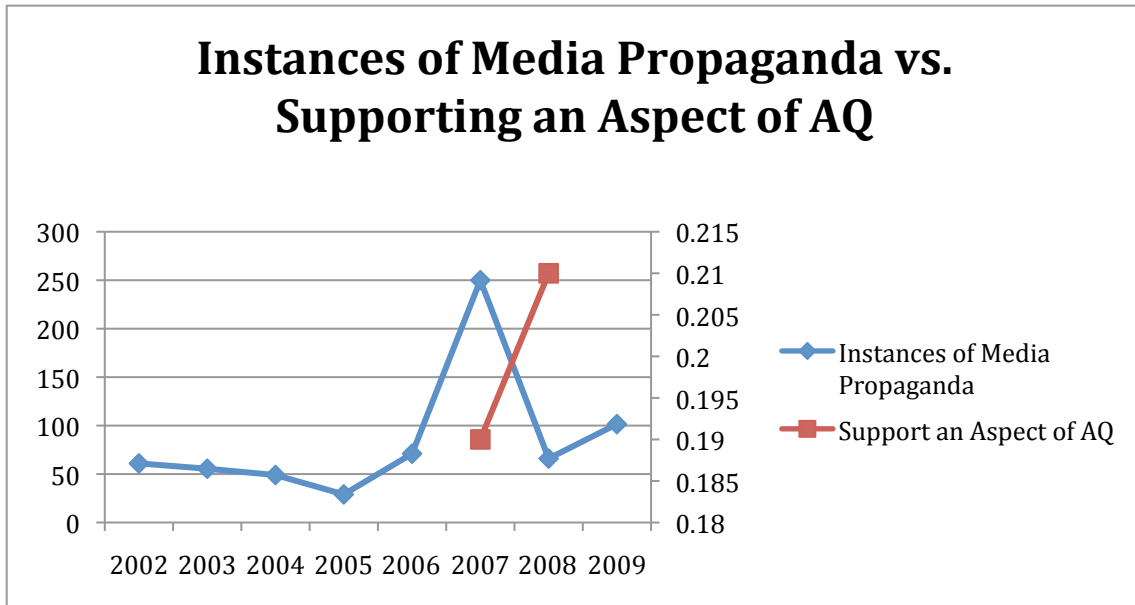
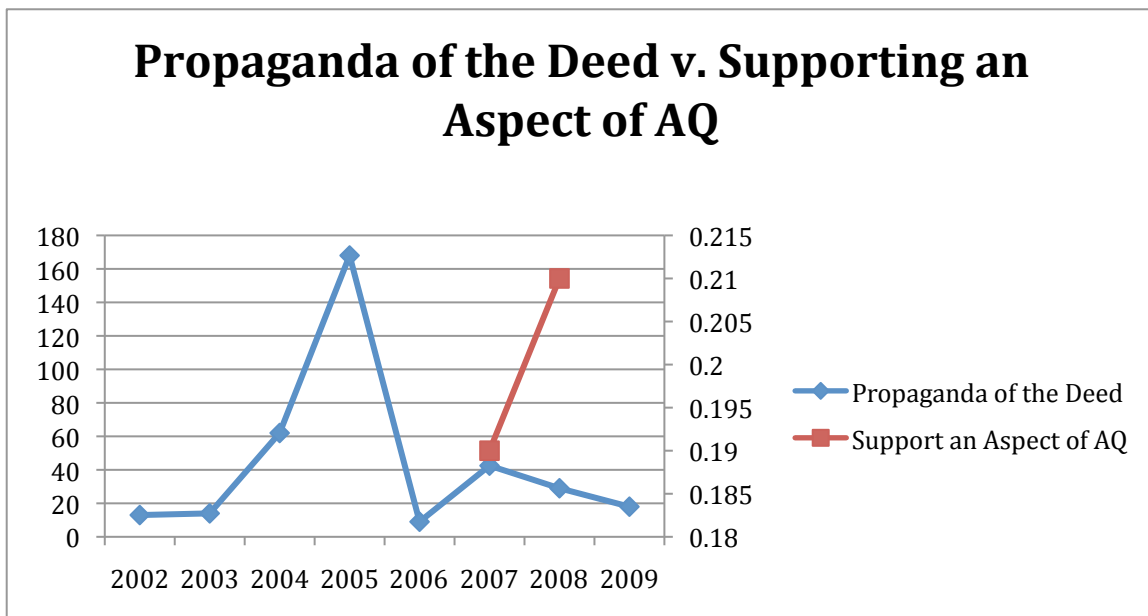


Figure 2.3a



Chapter 3: Politics of the Organization & Politics of the Public

Al Qaeda's Political Agenda

Another potential factor in influencing public opinion toward Al Qaeda is its professed political ideology. Terrorism is typically rooted in an attempt to achieve political goals so it is unsurprising that a political agenda would accompany acts of terror.⁶⁸ If the organization's political goals are widely shared ones, and the organization professes them clearly, it is hardly remarkable that this would elicit support. While the terrorist group's constituency may "agree or not with the measure of violence applied to improve the terrorists' bargaining position," they may be able to align themselves with the larger goals of the group.⁶⁹

This chapter investigates the influence of political ideology within Al Qaeda upon its constituency. It shows that Al Qaeda's professed political ideas were not key in influencing support for the organization. Al Qaeda's language initially focused on much more religious themes and Quranic quotes. The chronology of Osama bin Laden's statements as Al Qaeda leadership and figurehead illustrates the thematic and linguistic changes. Although this precedes the chronology of this thesis, one can look at bin Laden's March 1997 interview with CNN journalist Peter Arnett, "From Somalia to Afghanistan. In this conversation he speaks about "the Saudi regime" committing acts "against Islam."⁷⁰ In this same speech, and others that

⁶⁸ Henar Criado, "Bullets and Votes: Public Opinion and Terrorist Strategies," *Journal of Peace Research* 48:4 (2011): 497.

⁶⁹ Criado, 499.

⁷⁰ Osama bin Laden, "To the People of Iraq: February 11, 2003" in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (New York: New Left Books, 2005). 47.

followed and preceded it in the 1990's, he speaks about Muhammed and his revelation, and the importance of Muslims returning to their original source of influence, their religion, and the "peak of this religion: jihad."⁷¹ At least within the context of this documentation of bin Laden's speeches/interviews, it appears that from 1994 until 2001, essentially leading up to the September 11th attacks, bin Laden's speeches on behalf of Al Qaeda were riddled with religious language. In my view, 9/11 was a turning point. A distinctly religious focus is supplanted with talk of war, namely the Israeli Palestinian conflict and American and Soviet activity in Afghanistan.⁷² By 2004, political lingo had thoroughly supplanted an emphasis on religion. Bin Laden delivered a speech on October 29, 2004 to the people of Europe, that was "designed as an intervention in the US Presidential elections."⁷³ This speech focuses on the idea that the U.S. permitted Israelis to invade Lebanon, killing innocents. He announces that the events of September 11th were part of a larger response to this event, which he deems an injustice. Instead of invoking Muhammad, jihad, or Quranic references, bin Laden focuses on political labels such as "democracy," "freedom," and "terrorism." His language choices represent a shift towards political messaging as Al Qaeda became more focused on political goals and values.

Al Qaeda's constituency has distinguished between their support for Al Qaeda's ideas, and their rejection of Al Qaeda's actions.⁷⁴ This supports the idea that an organization's political goals may help the group retain a measure of support,

⁷¹ Ibid, 49.

⁷² Ibid, 157.

⁷³ Ibid, 237.

⁷⁴ Telhami, 2005-2009.

even when they are committing acts of violence. Arabs surveyed distinguished between Al Qaeda's "Methods of Operation" and their political objectives, namely their willingness to confront the United States, their ability to stand up for the Palestinian "issue," and their interest in Islamic statehood. There was considerably more support for Al Qaeda's willingness to confront the U.S., and represent "Muslim causes" (which could be both a religious and political issue), than there was for its methods, which were, and are, nearly always violent in nature. This pattern existed throughout the surveys, even as overall support for Al Qaeda diminished considerably.⁷⁵

The World Public Opinion Surveys conducted in Morocco and Egypt also illustrated cognitive dissonance between Al Qaeda ideology and actions. In Egypt, 33% of individuals surveyed in 2008 opposed Al Qaeda's violence against Americans, but not its attitudes towards the U.S.⁷⁶ In the 2006 Morocco survey, 26% opposed attacks but shared Al Qaeda's attitudes. While the majority of those surveyed in Morocco (35%) opposed all aspects of Al Qaeda, it is meaningful that such a sizable percentage shared some of Al Qaeda's ideas.⁷⁷

The ideas that have helped Al Qaeda maintain some degree of legitimacy to the Arab public are expressed regularly in Al Qaeda's propaganda messages and public statements. Al Qaeda's political messaging was not only expressed in its video propaganda efforts, but in pointed statements intended to express political sentiments and elicit responses from political leaders. This includes bin Laden's

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Steven Kull, et al., "Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies," *World Public Opinion.org* (February 25, 2009), 14.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

2004 proposal of a "truce" with Europeans if they agreed to abandon their support for the United States and their military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁷⁸

Some propaganda efforts, such as a 2005 essay released by al-Zawahiri called "The Freeing of Humanity and Homelands Under the Banner of the Quran," also carried distinct political messages. This essay represented al-Zawahiri's first attempt to "appeal to anti-globalization and environmental activists" in order to gain support.⁷⁹

Propaganda Messaging versus Political Messaging

Although inextricably intertwined, it is important to realize that propaganda messages are not *always* expressions of political sentiments, and vice versa. By way of example, Al Qaeda videos promising to send fighters and attack U.S. military targets (17 March, 2005 audio tape by Saleh al-Oufi) are viewed for the purpose of this research as efforts to *threaten*, rather than express an ideology.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Zarqawi's 2006 statement reiterating AQ's interest in the Iraqi insurgency, and political developments in Iraq, is viewed in this research as an expression of political ideas more-so than a propaganda message.⁸¹ There is no indication in *Al Qaeda Messaging Statistics* that this statement was released in a video or audio recording, or in a published document. Its exact format is undisclosed, so there is no evidence that enables us to label it part of a media propaganda campaign. Further, instead of attempting to impose an ideology, or explicitly attempting to win

⁷⁸ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology: CRS Report for Congress* (Washington, DC: 2007), 7.

⁷⁹ Bill Braniff and Assaf Moghadam, "Al Qaeda's Post-9/11 Evolution: An Assessment," in Russell D. Howard, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 339.

⁸⁰ IntelCenter, 43.

⁸¹ Blanchard, 8.

supporters, this type of political statement is centered on professing one of the values of the organizations, as well as its interest in current events in the Arab world. Zarqawi's statement, for example, is an attempt to underscore the importance that Al Qaeda gives to the conflict in Iraq. While this certainly could influence public opinion, it is not necessarily a *pointed* effort to do so. Only statements that are clearly meant to be released for public consumption, and persuade the public, are labeled "media propaganda" within this research.

Of course, some Al Qaeda leadership statements are both media propaganda, and political statements, among them many al-Zawahiri videos. By releasing video statements, Al Qaeda leadership illustrated an interest in having a visual media presence. However, the nature of these video statements was often political, expressing, for example, ideas about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (for example, the July 27, 2006 al-Zawahiri video statement called, "The Zionist Crusader's Aggression on Gaza and Lebanon").⁸² Were these ideas expressed in meetings with international leaders, they would be classified as "political" in nature, exclusively. However, because they were released in video form, to be distributed and aired to the public, they were considered instances of propaganda *and* political statements.

Al Qaeda's political agenda was sometimes expressed in acts of propaganda of the deed. By targeting political leaders, Al Qaeda expressed its political objective of eliminating opposition to its establishment of an Islamic emirate.⁸³ In 2008, Al Qaeda Yemen made four assassination attempts against Saudi Prince Muhammad

⁸² IntelCenter, 51.

⁸³ Bruce Riedel, "Al Qaeda's New Murder Plot," *The Daily Beast*, Aug. 28, 2009 (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2009/08/28/al-qaedas-new-murder-plot.html>).

bin Nayef after he “orchestrated a very successful crackdown on Al Qaeda’s franchise in Saudi Arabia in the last few years.”⁸⁴ Assassination attempts directed at political targets also included Americans working abroad, as Al Qaeda sought to diminish U.S. presence in territory it deemed to be its own. These targets included U.S. Diplomat Lynne Tracy in Pakistan (August 26, 2008), and a U.S. Foreign Service Officer in Karachi (potentially timed to precede President Bush’s visit to the region) on March 2, 2006. After al Zarqawi called for attacks on former President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf on September 28, 2003, several attempts were made on his life as part of a pointedly political agenda by Al Qaeda to punish individuals who allied themselves with the United States against the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan, and supported the “War on Terror.” Another American ally targeted by Al Qaeda was President and Chairman of the Afghan Transitional Administration, and subsequent President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai. His U.S.-sponsored opposition to the Taliban regime, and support from the United States, inspired at least two assassination attempts by Al Qaeda on July 29, and September 5, 2002.

Al Qaeda also expressed its political ideology through its political maneuvering, instances of which are also recorded as examples of “Al Qaeda politics” in this research. By way of example, when the Iraqi government collapsed after the war in Iraq began in 2003, Al Qaeda notoriously found sanctuary in the western Anbar Province of Iraq, so that it could continue to maintain presence in the region in spite of Western intervention. Al Qaeda also flexed its political muscles during its creation of new branches, such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which

⁸⁴ Ibid.

was formed in January 2007 after the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat officially joined Al Qaeda. Instances such as these are recorded for the purposes of this research as examples of Al Qaeda politics because they illustrate Al Qaeda's efforts to sustain its existence as a multinational organization in the face of international opposition, and to strengthen its global presence. These efforts are part of its larger goal of dominance and the establishment of a global Islamic caliphate, which is both a religious and political objective.

This is, of course, subjective territory, and while some may disagree with the way these matters are classified and coded, transparency in how they were coded is used here to support the research and allow for debate. While instances of political activity within Al Qaeda vary, they generally involve language about *jihad* against a political target, commentary on foreign policy, and actions by Al Qaeda involving alliances with militants, pushing government authorities such as Pakistan's from tribal areas, and propaganda of the deed aimed at political targets. Al Qaeda's political goals are numerous, and vary based upon current events. But the nature of most Al Qaeda political statements illustrate a goal of establishing credibility within the world as leaders of the global Muslim population, in stark opposition to Western and pro-Western forces.

Research Question, Design and Results

Of course, what matters most for the purposes of this research about Al Qaeda's political efforts is the impact that they have on public opinion. Was Al Qaeda able to garner support with efforts like the creation of AQIM, and the 2009 merger of Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda Yemen? Were these displays of unity within the

organization, and a global strength and presence, meaningful to the Arab public? One of hypothesis was that political language against American foreign policy resonated with the Arab public, since the public opinion surveys utilized in this research underscored the Arab world's overall distaste with the United States' actions in the region.

Group ideology within Al Qaeda has shifted focus. During the war in Iraq, political propaganda by the organization was more strongly targeted against U.S. and coalition forces in the area. By 2008, however, Al Qaeda's political language focused more on responding to their "deteriorating standing" within the general, non-radicalized Arab population.⁸⁵ At this point, language gravitated around Al Qaeda's political competitors who were also seeking Arab support, "principally Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood."⁸⁶ With these shifts, were there also shifts in public support? For that matter, did its increasing or decreasing use of political language have any impact on Arab public opinion? It appears that this is not the case.

From 2005 to 2006, as Al Qaeda used more political rhetoric, it seems that AQ only lost sympathy within the Arab public (see Figure 3.1). Al Qaeda instances of political messaging, which consist of my measured occurrences of political statements by Al Qaeda, increased from 14 to 17 during this time frame, while sympathy with Al Qaeda declined from 77 to 65%. This is also the case from 2008 to 2009, when instances of Al Qaeda political activity increased from 10 to 17, while

⁸⁵ Philip Seib, "Public Diplomacy, New Media, and Counterterrorism," in Russell D. Howard, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: NY McGraw Hill, 2012), 626.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

sympathy with AQ declined from 65 to 60%. In spite of the increase in political activity from 2005-2006 and 2008-2009, Al Qaeda's political language and actions still did not bolster its public support levels. Concurrent with this political messaging, major acts of violence were taking place within the Arab world. In September 2008, for example, Al Qaeda conducted its largest attack to date, targeting the U.S. embassy in Sana'a, Yemen using two vehicle bombs that detonated outside the compound. These time frames demarcating a decline in sympathy with Al Qaeda in spite of political messaging also preceded efforts by Al Qaeda that began in late 2008 to focus *less* on targeting civilians, and more on police, military, and other government officials. Whether it was attempting to justify violence in Iraq, or to urge Arabs to rally against Israel (a key focus in Al Qaeda's 2009 language), Al Qaeda still did not see an increase in sympathy during the 2005-2006, and 2008-2009 time frames.

There was minimal change in the amount of political language and behavior Al Qaeda implemented from 2002 to 2009, but still an overall decrease in sympathy with the organization. The lack of coinciding patterns indicates that Al Qaeda politics most likely did not rally public opinion toward sympathizing with the organization. This same pattern is evident in results from the "Confidence in Osama bin Laden" survey (see Figure 3.2). From 2005 to 2006, a decline in confidence in OBL from 44 to 27% is matched by an increase in instances of political language/maneuvering by Al Qaeda. From 2006 to 2007, an increase in instances of political language or political activity, from 17 to 27, is matched by a decrease in confidence from 27 to 18%. From 2007 to 2008, a decline in instances of politics,

from 27 to 10, is matched by an increase in confidence from 18 to 19%, and from 2008 to 2009, both “AQ Politics” and “Confidence in OBL” increase. “AQ Politics” increases from 10 to 17, while “Confidence in OBL” increases from 19 to 22%. Much like the comparison of “AQ Politics” with “Sympathy with Al Qaeda,” an increase in “AQ Politics” corresponds only with a decrease in confidence in bin Laden. In a comparison of “Al Qaeda Politics” and “Support for an Aspect of Al Qaeda,” an increase in support (19 to 21%) for an aspect of Al Qaeda from 2007 to 2008 corresponds with the 2007-2008 decrease in instances of Al Qaeda politics (see Figure 3.3).

Most of the time, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is inverse. This could indicate that Al Qaeda’s political language had an alienating effect on Arab public opinion. However, it could simply point to an overall decline in support for Al Qaeda and its leader and figurehead Osama bin Laden, *in spite* of Al Qaeda’s best efforts at issuing political statements. This would indicate that political statements and actions by the organization do not have an impact on public opinion. I believe this to be more likely, since there is no prior research indicating that political statements have a particularly alienating effect (as there is with the relationship between violence and public opinion).

If political statements were to have an impact, it would most likely be a positive one that improved public opinion. For example, when Osama bin Laden proposed a truce with Europeans in 2004 in exchange for an end to support for the U.S. and their military commitments, it could easily have enhanced support within the Arab world. Rhetoric about a truce with Europe was reiterated by al-Zawahiri in

2005, and the idea of a truce with the U.S. was floated by bin Laden in 2006 when he stated that, “Al Qaeda is not opposed to a truce with the U.S. if all conditions are fair.”⁸⁷ However, since 2004, support for Al Qaeda and confidence in bin Laden either stagnated or declined. This occurred in spite of an observation by Criado that “terrorist groups convene truces in order to start conversations,” which would certainly make a positive impression on the public.⁸⁸ In some instances, as observed by Basque Fatherland and Liberty, or ETA militants in the early 1990s, mere declarations of a truce can increase support for the organization.⁸⁹ For ETA, “periods of truce significantly increase[ed] support.”⁹⁰

The idea that political statements would not cause a decline in support is also indicated in Gilles Kepel’s book *The War for Muslim Minds*, in which he attributes Al Qaeda’s alienation of the Muslim community, or *umma*, to violence only. He argues that political or religious statements were used to “compete for the hearts and minds of believers and to seek their acceptance of Al Qaeda as its belligerent vanguard.”⁹¹ The alienating factor was Al Qaeda’s abundance of Muslim victims of violence. This not only indicated a lack of “professionalism” within Al Qaeda, but a counterproductive approach to the formation of the *umma*. He points out that it was violence against Muslims that, beginning in 2003, caused the population in “Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Turkey” to “reject terrorism virulently, cutting the radical Islamists off from many potential supporters—as had been the case in Egypt in

⁸⁷ Blanchard, 6.

⁸⁸ Criado, 499.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Criado, 503.

⁹¹ Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 193.

1997, when the Luxor massacre caused widespread revulsion.”⁹² Kepel observes that violence confuses political messages that attempt to rally the population to *jihad*.⁹³ This idea is supported by the openness of the Arab population to Al Qaeda’s political and religious messaging, but not its methods.

My comparisons of Al Qaeda politics and the public opinion surveys also indicate that Al Qaeda made the most political statements in 2007. From 2006 to 2007, the Arab world saw a substantial rise in political efforts by Al Qaeda. This coincides with a great deal of anti-Al Qaeda activity from the summer of 2006 into early 2007, when tribes revolted against Al Qaeda in Iraq, and American forces joined with Iraqi tribes to gain control of Ramadi. June 2007 marked a major effort by U.S. forces in the eastern Anbar Province that enabled the United States to secure Fallujah. It is not surprising that in response to these efforts, Al Qaeda would issue political statements to attempt to bolster its image. Indeed, in looking at the specifics of this time frame, we see that many Al Qaeda statements focused on Iraq. These included statements by al-Zawahiri “reiterating the interest of AQ’s leadership in the Iraq insurgency,”⁹⁴ a letter from Zawahiri expressing concern about attacks on Iraqi Shi’a, and an effort by Al Qaeda to show strength by consolidating *jihadist* forces in North Africa, merging Algerian and Libyan Islamist groups into Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. In spite of these attempted demonstrations of strength and concern about Iraq, Al Qaeda leadership saw no improvement in sympathy or confidence during this time frame. Confidence in bin

⁹² Kepel, 140.

⁹³ Kepel, 141.

⁹⁴ Blanchard, 8.

Laden declined from 2006 to 2007, which in no small part was related to the levels of violence perpetrated by Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the counter terror measures that responded to this.

Conclusion

There is no evidence that Al Qaeda political activity and language bolstered public support. Politics appear to coincide with a decline in support within the Arab world for the organization. Research by scholars supports the idea that the politics of an organization often enhance public support. This is also consistent with survey results from the Arab world that indicate agreement with the content of Al Qaeda political messaging. It appears that Al Qaeda’s politics could not help it recover from the damage done to it by another variable, namely, its actions. This is further explored in the next chapter, where we see the substantial impact that Al Qaeda-caused violence within the Arab world have had on its constituency.

Figure 3.1

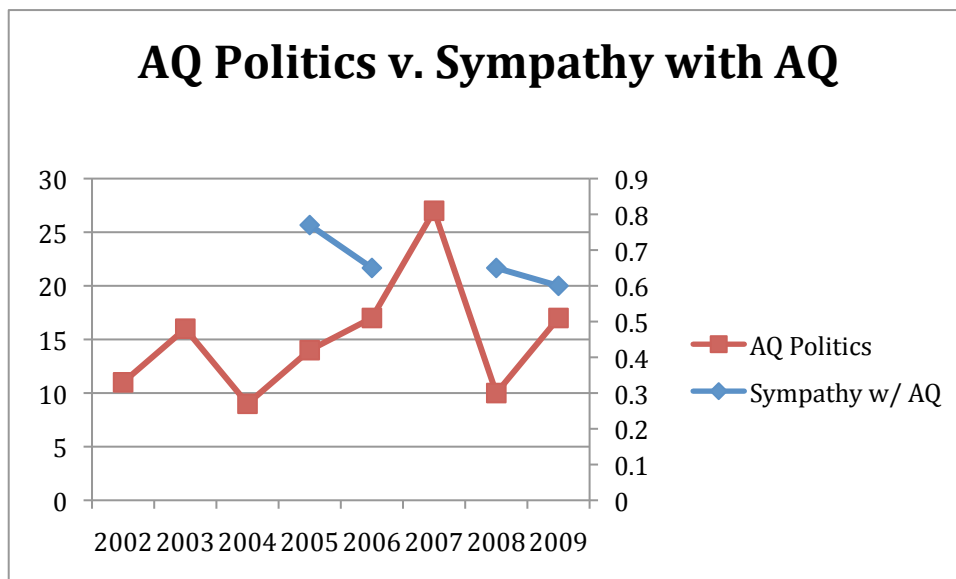


Figure 3.2

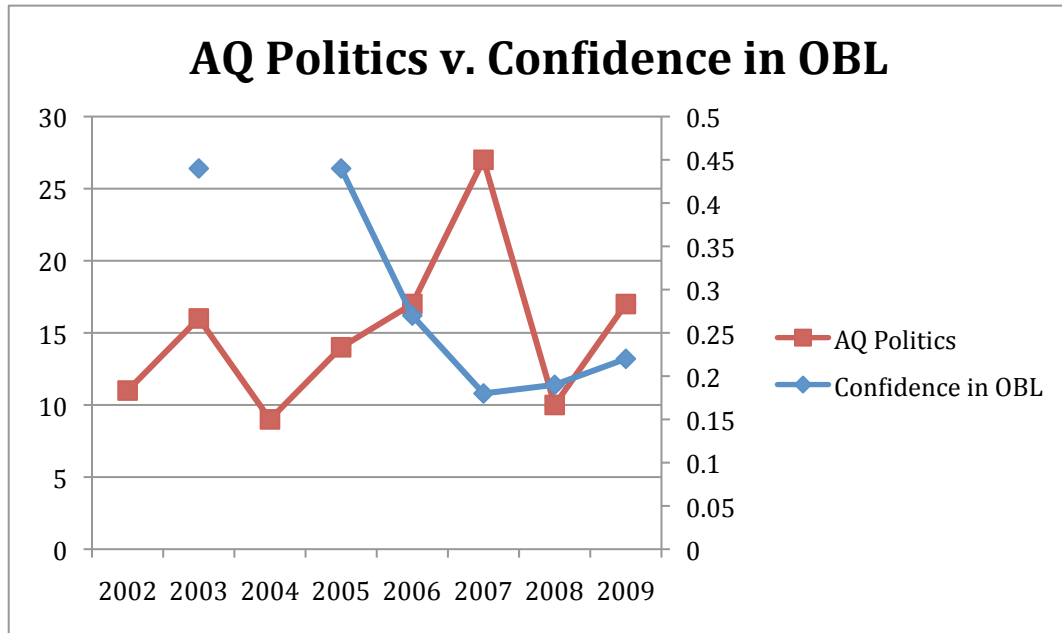
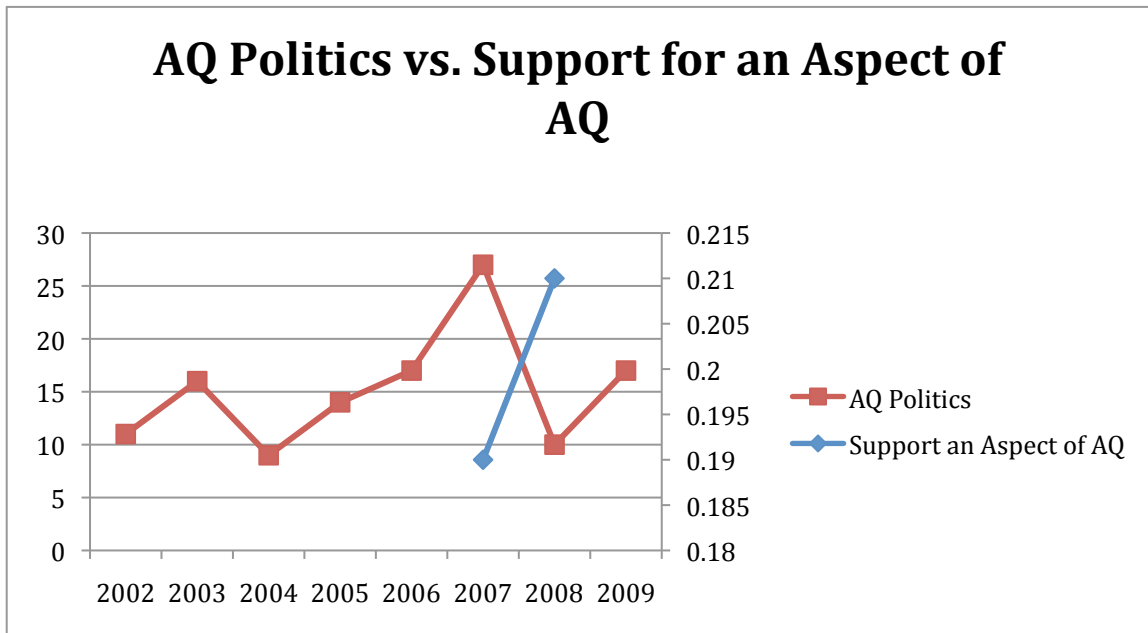


Figure 3.3



Chapter 4: Levels of Violence at Home and Abroad

Types of Violence

Levels of violence within a terror organization may have an unpredictable impact on public opinion. One might intuitively assume that everyone views violence as bad; it would only have a negative impact, “undermining the terrorists’ favorable audience.”⁹⁵ However, Criado observes that it can have a “positive impact on political support.”⁹⁶ One instance where violence elicits support is regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which Mia Bloom observes is increasingly supported by Palestinians, as a result of frustration with deadlocked peace processes and Israeli actions.⁹⁷ This diverges somewhat from surveys of the Arab population about Al Qaeda’s acts of violence. In the Arab Public Opinion surveys from WorldPublicOpinion.org and the University of Maryland, conducted in late 2006 and early 2007, findings indicate a “rejection of attacks on American civilians.”⁹⁸ Kull also observes that in a general sense, attacks on U.S. troops are approved of “by significant numbers—majorities in some nations.”⁹⁹ The negative influence of violence against civilians appears much more significant than violence against the military. This would indicate that violence would occasionally be acceptable to Al Qaeda’s constituency in Arab nations.

⁹⁵ Henar Craido, “Bullets and Votes: Public Opinion and Terrorist Strategies,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48:4 (2011): 499.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Mia M. Bloom, “Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119:1 (2004): 61.

⁹⁸ Kull, 2.

⁹⁹ Kull, 3.

This chapter investigates the impact that levels of violence have upon public opinion among a terror group's constituency. It finds that levels of violence have a meaningful, sustained impact upon the Arab public's views of Al Qaeda.

Research Question & Design

These ideas lead to my hypothesis that the number of Arab civilians killed in Al Qaeda terror attacks negatively impacts Arab public opinion. The focus was on civilian casualties, though I did make note of military casualties, because acts of terrorism typically involve a pointed effort to target civilians rather than military members. Unfortunately, within this research, it was not possible to distinguish between civilian and military deaths from an act of terror in terms of the impact they had on public opinion. Most Al Qaeda attacks focused primarily on civilians to achieve maximum damage (they are certainly easier targets than soldiers). When military members were killed, the number was almost always within the single digits. Further, there was no accurate way to consistently isolate military casualties, and see how one or two deaths per incident impacted public opinion for a given year. Based on prior research, it is safe to assume that most military casualties would not typically lead to a decline in support for the terror organization. They are not numerous enough, nor does the Arab public have much incentive to be concerned about foreign military casualties.

What the Arab public *is* concerned about are civilian casualties, which numbered well into the hundreds most years. The Arab public does not seem to distinguish between nationalities of civilians in their concern. In most instances of Al Qaeda attacks, civilians were not Western. In 2003, of the 377 deaths, 10 were

Americans, and 100 were “Western casualties.”¹⁰⁰ Of the 2005 death count of about 1600, over 1500 were non-Western. This pattern continues for every year within the survey.¹⁰¹

It is also worth noting that, “Al Qaeda hurts Muslims most.”¹⁰² Despite a claim by al-Zawahiri in 2007 that “we haven’t killed the innocents; not in Baghdad, nor in Morocco, nor in Algeria, nor anywhere else,” the organization has.¹⁰³ A report published in December 2010 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point “concluded that Al Qaeda has done just the opposite and that the group’s terrorist actions from 2004 to 2008 led to more non-Western deaths than Western killings; they have turned many of Islam’s faithful against the extremist group”¹⁰⁴. This research also found that from 2006 to 2008, 98% of those killed were inhabitants of Muslim majority countries. This data is consistent with findings from my own research indicating a dearth of Western casualties compared with non-Western.

Tracking levels of violence is imprecise, and data had to be combined since different sources provided records of different incidents of Al Qaeda attacks. There is no exact number of casualties, but my data is based upon a combination of numbers from the Nonproliferation for Global Security Foundation (NPS Global),

¹⁰⁰ NPS Global, *Death toll of Al Qaeda attacks: more than 4,400 lives*, <http://npsglobal.org/eng/news/29-non-state-actors/1034-al-qaeda-attacks-death-toll-more-than-4400-lives.html> (May 6, 2011).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “Al Qaeda hurts Muslims most,” *The Washington Times*, January 14, 2010 (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/14/al-qaeda-hurts-muslims-most/?page=all>).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

NCTC's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), the CTC Deadly Vanguard Report, and University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database.

Al Qaeda attacks were typically large in scale, even if there were few casualties as a result. Suicide bombers were, unsurprisingly, the favored mode of attack (see Alternate Hypothesis Descriptions by year for specific incidents). This is typical of acts of propaganda of the deed, which take place to maximize public attention. The grander the scale of the attack, the greater the attention. Typically, suicide bombers commit more deadly acts due to their proximity to the target. Their willingness to martyr themselves enables them to take bold risks, and makes their attacks particularly frightening and harmful.

Not every attack measured in the research was perpetrated by Al Qaeda directly, but every attack is credited to Al Qaeda within the sources used. In one source crucial to tracking incidents of Al Qaeda attacks, the Intel Center's *Al Qaeda Messaging/Attacks Timeline 1992-2009*, an attack by a terror cell strongly linked to Al Qaeda was sufficient cause for them to attribute the act to Al Qaeda. As long as more than one source confirmed Al Qaeda involvement, I was willing to consider the act, and subsequent level of violence, as attributable to AQ. This includes the 2004 Madrid train bombings that killed 191 people and the hostage taking of a school in Beslan, Russia, also in 2004, that resulted in the deaths of 344 Russians.

One particularly important year in tracking Al Qaeda levels of violence was 2007, which featured 'unprecedented casualty figures' from Al Qaeda attacks in Iraq, according to NPS Global.¹⁰⁵ Al Qaeda-linked death tolls from Iraq are particularly

¹⁰⁵ NPS Global, 2011.

interesting to track, since they led to a particularly noteworthy campaign against Al Qaeda within the Arab world. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was founded in 2003, but diminished in power after many of its leaders were killed or captured in 2010. Therefore, AQI's attacks are encompassed in the span of this research. However, AQI and AQI affiliated attacks in Iraq during the Iraq War were numerous. Included in the research are those events that were recorded as clearly attributable to AQI. It is doubtful that every small incident perpetrated by AQI during the war is mentioned in this research. Ideally, the research does give a general picture of the scale of the attacks.

Al Qaeda's "most devastating" attacks, according to a May 6, 2011 article published by *The Economist*, were 9/11, with about 3,000 deaths (not encompassed within the scope of the research), the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, with about 301 deaths (not included in research), the Bali nightclub attack, killing 202 people, and the Madrid attacks that killed 191.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the research here encompasses 2 of the 4 most deadly Al Qaeda attacks. It is worth noting that all of these "most deadly" attacks produced mostly civilian casualties. The majority of these civilians were native to the country where the attack took place. While they are not Arab countries, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country. Meanwhile, Islam has had strong a presence in Spain since the 700's. Further, the United States Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life indicates a massively increasing Muslim

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

population in Spain.¹⁰⁷ Al Qaeda's willingness to commit some of its most deadly acts in one Muslim majority country, and another increasingly Muslim country, point to a disregard for the religion of its targets despite Al Qaeda's insistence that it is not targeting Muslims. This of course begs the question of how alienating this is to the many Muslims within the Arab world, as well as any Arab civilian.

Results and Analysis

The findings from my research point to an overall inverse relationship between levels of violence and public support. From 2005 to 2006, Al Qaeda levels of violence declined, as did sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda (see Figure 4.1). However, this could be a result of the massive amount of violence perpetrated by Al Qaeda in 2005. This is the year of the highest number of Al Qaeda casualties: 1600. Sympathy with Al Qaeda had also been at its highest point during this year, at 77%, but it is worth bearing in mind that the survey was conducted in October 2005, not at the end of the year. This was before the Amman, Jordan suicide bombings in November, and close in time to a concerted effort by Zawahiri to diminish violence committed by AQI. It is plausible that the reaction to the massive number of casualties would have had its greatest impact on sympathy with Al Qaeda the following year, in 2006, when there were 225 incidents of violence and sympathy was at 65%. The end of 2005/early 2006 also marks the time frame wherein Al Qaeda had, according to Jones, decentralized. By this time, CIA analysts had begun calling the organization a "complex adaptive system" rather than a centralized

¹⁰⁷ "The Muslim population in Spain will increase 82% by 2030," *SpainReview.net*, (<http://www.spainreview.net/index.php/2011/01/29/the-muslim-population-in-spain-will-increase-82-to-2030/>).

terror organization.¹⁰⁸ The lack of coherent structure could add to this decline in sympathy in spite of a decline in deaths. The same pattern exists for 2007 to 2008, where there is a decline in sympathy with Al Qaeda despite a decline in overall levels of violence from 2007 to 2008. Incidents of violence decrease from 719 in 2007 to 305 in 2008, and levels of sympathy are not available for 2007, but in 2008 remain the same as 2006 at 65% of the population offering sympathy. Like 2005, 2007 was a pivotal year in Al Qaeda-caused casualties. As previously mentioned, this was the year that the organization created “unprecedented” casualty figures from attacks in Iraq. Reaction to this would also most likely manifest itself the following year, after the entirety of the attacks had played out and the public was aware of the full scope of deaths. Of course, these prospective explanations are not necessarily *the* explanations for a break in the observed pattern. It is worthwhile, however, that the break in observed patterns came during two of the standout years in Al Qaeda’s levels of violence. A similar break takes place from 2008 to 2009, when violence falls from 305 to 89 incidents, and support falls from 65 to 60. Any conclusions I make on the front of this aberration are speculative at best. But due to the fact that Al Qaeda actions rather than rhetoric seem to resonate more with the Arab public, I would conclude that perhaps the quality rather than quantity of the attacks impacted support. In September 2008, Al Qaeda Yemen conducted its largest attack to date (as previously mentioned). This is also the time period of the Sunni insurgency in Anbar, which resulted in sectarian violence that undoubtedly divided Muslims and created further animosity toward Al Qaeda. While Shia

¹⁰⁸ Jones, 158.

Muslims faced a heightened anti-Shia agenda, Sunni Arabs who may have shared this agenda were exposed to what can only be described as “AQI’s fanatic religious program, in which it terrorized those it claimed to defend.”¹⁰⁹

The two other public opinion surveys point more strongly to a relationship. It is here that I find meaningful connections. This is unsurprising, considering the impact that propaganda of the deed clearly had on Arab public opinion. There’s no denying that acts of violence, and their resultant deaths, are inextricably intertwined and would likely have a similar influence on the public. The “Confidence in Osama bin Laden” survey does show a decline in confidence consistent with a decline in violence from 2005 to 2006, again during the year of highest AQ violence levels (see Figure 4.2). This decline in violence is matched by a decline in confidence from 44% to 27%. This peak in violence in 2005 is sufficient to cause a decline in confidence the following year in spite of a decline in acts of violence from the 2005 to 2006 time frame. This is the only time frame in my comparison of Al Qaeda levels of violence and “Confidence in OBL” that contradicts the pattern. 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 all demonstrate an inverse relationship. From 2006 to 2007, confidence declines from 27% to 18%, while incidents of violence increase. From 2007 to 2008, confidence slightly increases from 18 to 19%, while violence decreases. From 2008 to 2009, confidence increases from 19 to 22%, while violence decreases from 305 to 89 incidents. It is especially interesting that levels of violence by Al Qaeda and “Confidence in OBL” are almost perfectly inverse from 2006 to

¹⁰⁹ David McCormack, “Understanding the Anbar Awakening,” *The Weekly Standard*, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/understanding-anbar-awakening_524770.html?page=1.

2007. This may be attributable to the fact that the “Confidence” surveys were conducted in March and April, right *after* a vehicular bombing in Pakistan, suicide bombings in markets in Egypt, and a casualty-free suicide bombing at a Multinational Forces and Observers base in al-Jura. With these bloody events fresh in Arabs’ minds (21 killed, almost entirely citizens of the respective countries), it is possible that they would have a meaningful impact on survey results.¹¹⁰

The survey measuring support for an aspect of Al Qaeda also indicates an inverse relationship (see Figure 4.3) . As violence decreased from 2007 to 2008, “support for an aspect” of Al Qaeda increased from 19 to 21%, demonstrating the willingness the Arab population had to accept Al Qaeda’s ideology when violence was less prominent.

Of course, the violence numbers are not universally agreed upon, but are my best approximation of the number of deaths caused by Al Qaeda attacks. Further, the inverse relationship between public support and violence levels is not inverse 100% of the time. However, intervening incidents such as unprecedented levels of violence, a surge of violence in a particular region with a large Arab/Muslim population, or decentralization of the terror organization, are all feasible explanations for occasional inconsistencies. Patterns are not always perfect, but I do view this inverse relationship as a consistent pattern. The inverse relationship manifests itself most often. Although there is no data for 2004 in the “Confidence in OBL” survey, it appears that confidence in OBL does not change significantly during

¹¹⁰ *Intel Center al-Qaeda Messaging/Attacks Timeline* (Alexandria, VA: Tempest Publishing, LLC, 2010), 47-55.

the 2003 to 2005 span. There is an increase in violence during these years, but the lack of change in confidence inhibits any solid and justifiable conclusions.

This relationship between demonstrations of support for Al Qaeda and levels of violence points to a larger realization that acts resulting in injuries and deaths have the most substantial influence on public opinion. There is no indication that levels of violence have *more* of an impact on public opinion than propaganda of the deed. In fact, levels of violence and propaganda of the deed both match Arab public opinion data equally as often within my research. This is consistent with their shared causal impact on public opinion.

Violence notoriously has an alienating effect on a given constituency, as indicated by researchers such as Mark Tessler, who cites a 2002 finding that “the overwhelming majority of Muslims are appalled that violence is committed in the name of Islam.”¹¹¹ Of course, Dr. Telhami’s survey results themselves indicate much more willingness to support Al Qaeda ideology, rather than its methods.¹¹² This most likely does not apply to violence against U.S. troops, considering Kull’s findings that many Arabs approve of violence against these alleged “invaders.”

Al Qaeda’s public opinion dilemma as a result of violence against largely Arab civilians could be falsified by a look at the overall data. It is worth noting that overall levels of violence by AQ have declined since 2002. Considering the extent of counter-terror campaigns, and a falloff in support for Al Qaeda, this is unsurprising.

¹¹¹ Mark Tessler and M.D.H. Robbins, “What Leads Some Ordinary Arab Men and Women to Approve of Terrorist Acts Against the United States?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:2 (2007): 307.

¹¹² Shibley Telhami, Principal Investigator, *Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2005 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey*, <http://sadat.umd.edu/new%20surveys/surveys.htm>.

However, it also indicates that changes in levels of violence may not always coincide with levels of public support. If we look at the overall picture, this certainly seems to be the case.

In this instance, it is important to look at causation. Two of the three Al Qaeda surveys reviewed indicate an overall decline in sympathy with and/or confidence in Al Qaeda, within the time periods they respectively cover.¹¹³ These declines both commence in 2005, after Al Qaeda violence has reached its peak. It is likely that they reflect a backlash against the years of prior violence, since two different surveys indicate falloffs in support at the same time. It is as though, at the pinnacle of AQ violence, Arabs finally said, “We’ve had enough. We’ve lost faith.” Of course, in the years following, there were increases in confidence in Osama bin Laden. However, these were consistent with falloffs in levels of violence that perhaps inspired glimmers of hope (albeit brief ones), that Al Qaeda was lessening its violence. Ultimately, Al Qaeda levels of violence did begin to decline steadily after 2007, after a massive counter-terror effort against Al Qaeda in Iraq. But by this time, it seems it could not restore any faith the Arab world may have had in the group.

Confidence would continue to decline until 2011, when Dr. Telhami’s survey did not ask about Arab public opinion toward Al Qaeda. As he notes, the organization had clearly lost so much support, it was not worth further investigation.¹¹⁴ Levels of violence had done their damage, and it seems that while their impact wasn’t always immediate, they did have an effect. Overall levels of

¹¹³ Telhami & Kull.

¹¹⁴ Shibley Telhami, telephone interview, May 16, 2012.

violence would decline within Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda became increasingly less coordinated. Important Al Qaeda leaders such as Abu Laith al Libi (1967-2008) and al Zarqawi, were killed. While it had brought about its own loss of public support, this loss of support ushered in a decline in Al Qaeda activity. The decline in public support coincides with a decline in Al Qaeda levels of violence, a decline in propaganda of the deed, and a decline in Al Qaeda's use of political rhetoric. There was less to say and less to do because fewer people were watching, and the organization was weakening in structure and coordination.

Acts of violence are inevitably difficult to explain away. In 1998, Al Qaeda became much more known to the Western world with an attack on U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Kenya. In attempts to justify killing fellow Muslims, journalist Lawrence Wright points out that Al Qaeda named the Nairobi bombing after the Holy Kabaa in Mecca in an effort to provide religious meaning to the event.¹¹⁵ The idea was that this was a religious act and those Muslims who died in it were martyrs, part of a larger cause, rather than senseless victims. Additionally, the bombings were scheduled for August 7th to mark the eight anniversary of the arrival of American troops in Saudi Arabia. This was a nod to the notion that this was an act of retaliation. Al Qaeda could explain that the deaths of innocent Muslims were necessary. They were part of a bloody statement that Muslims would die for the cause of revenge against U.S. incursion into Arab countries. Regardless of the meaning Al Qaeda may have attempted to imbue upon acts of violence, historically

¹¹⁵ Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Knopf, 2006. Print.

and within the time span of this research, it was repeatedly unable to recover and fully justify its acts to the Arab public as a whole.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Al Qaeda's acts of violence appear to have substantially alienated the organization from its constituency. My research, as well as the Arab public's responses to two public opinion surveys,¹¹⁶ point to a strong distaste within the Arab world for acts of violence, in spite of any agreement with the ideology behind the violence. As they became more numerous and more deadly, these acts of violence eroded support for the group's ideology, clearly to an irrevocable point. Al Qaeda remains a threat in 2013, but has yet to show signs of recovering to its previous status in the hearts and minds of the Arab population.

In an attempt to bolster support, Al Qaeda attempted to appeal to its constituency for support. Like organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, it could have resorted to acts of charity that would show AQ in a more positive light. Instead, it exploited religion and religious language from the *Quran* to presents its actions as religiously-sanctioned. The following chapter explains how and why Al Qaeda appealed to its constituency through religion, and the success or failure of this effort.

¹¹⁶ Telhami & Kull.

Figure 4.1

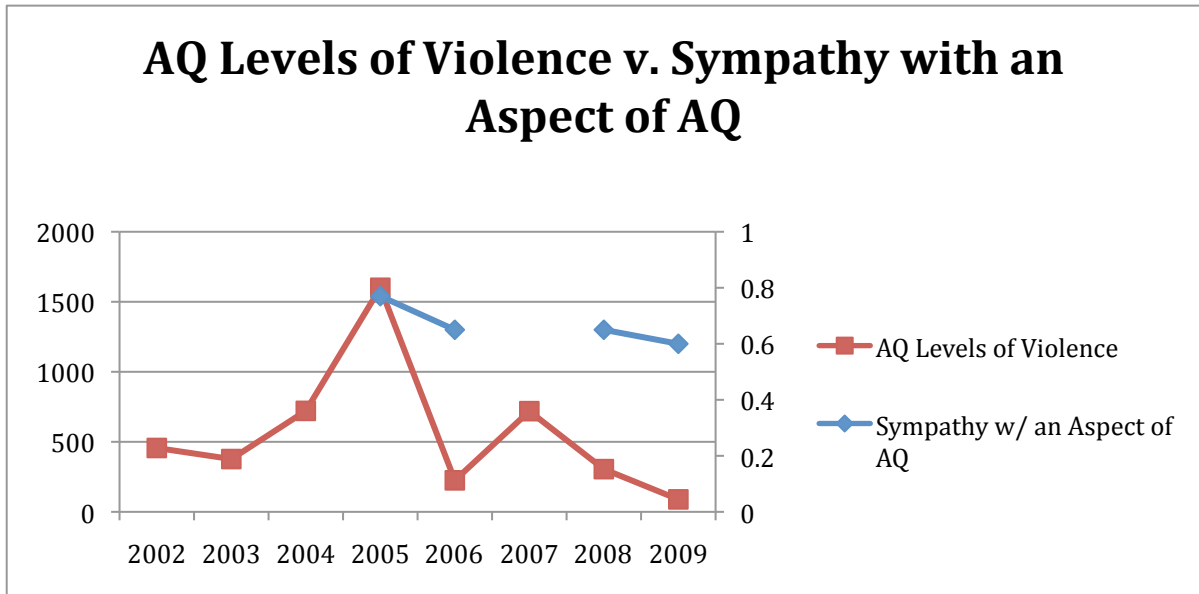


Figure 4.2

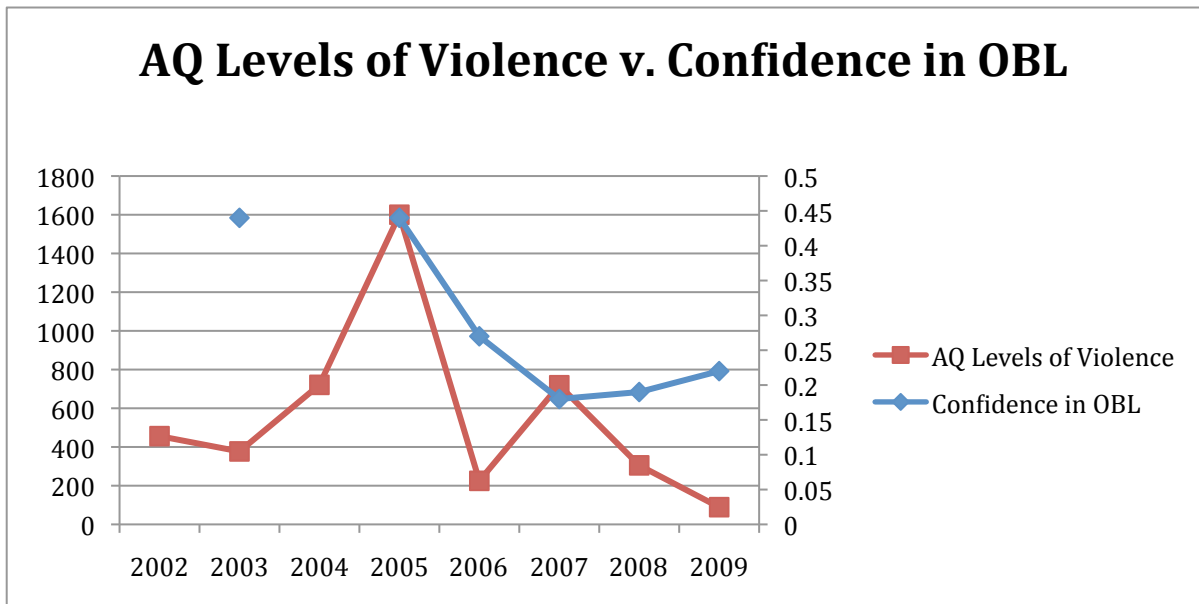
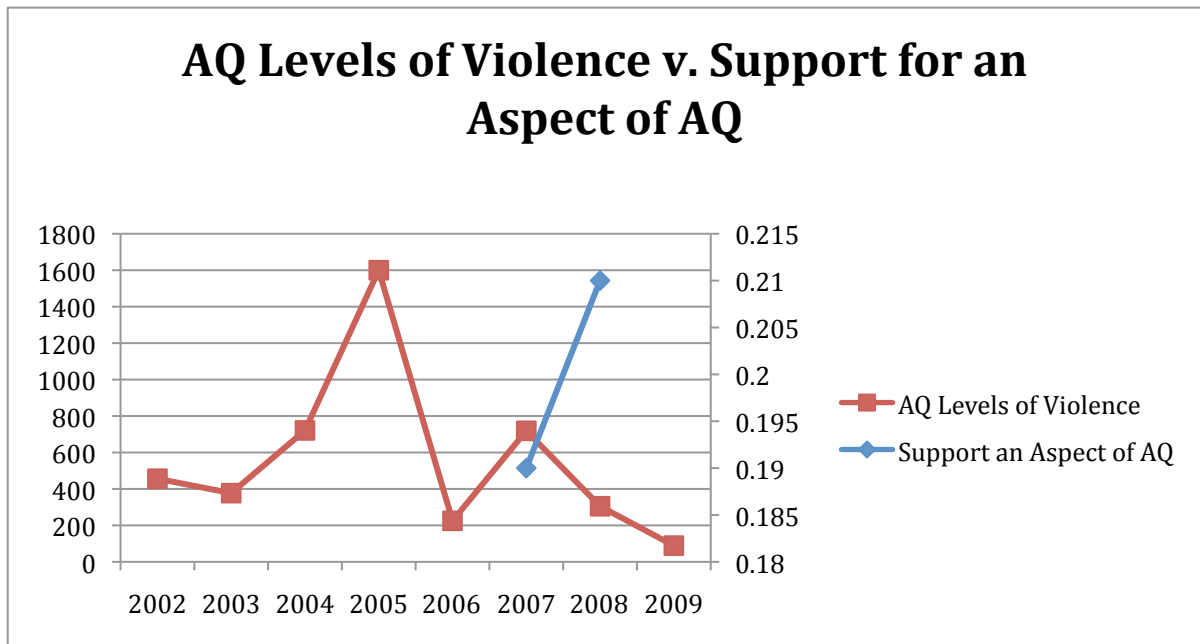


Figure 4.3



Chapter 5: Appealing to Constituency for Support

Introduction

One hypothesis I held upon beginning my research was that the way Al Qaeda related to its constituency would impact public opinion towards the organization. For the purposes of my study, I considered use of religious rhetoric, and acts of charity, to be methods of relating to the population. Both of these factors involve interactions between the terrorist organization and the average citizen in the country or countries in which they operate.

In this chapter, I investigate the impact that professed religious ideas have upon Arab public opinion towards Al Qaeda. I ultimately found that the expression of religious ideas does not have a meaningful and consistent impact upon Arab public opinion towards Al Qaeda.

Appealing to Constituency: Religion

Religion seems as though it would be a strong factor in influencing public opinion towards a terrorist organization, if that organization operates under the banner of a professed organized religion. Al Qaeda's professed goal of giving Islam greater prominence in Arab society is viewed in a positive light by most Arabs.¹¹⁷ According to the report, as of 2009, "Majorities agree with nearly all of Al Qaeda's goals...to preserve and affirm Islamic identity."¹¹⁸ Further, insurgent efforts in Iraq specifically leveraged religious language to speak about enemies, much in the same way Bin Laden had in his calls to arms. Western occupying forces were called

¹¹⁷ Steven Kull, et al., "Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies," *World Public Opinion.org* (February 25, 2009).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 3.

“crusaders,” and Shia, “rejectionists” by Iraq’s Sunni insurgents.¹¹⁹ Mimicking the language of the global jihad, these insurgents claimed that the U.S. and coalition forces “seek to impose Christianity on Iraq,” and Arab governments have “turned their backs on Islam.” This language, at least leveraged against the West, seemed to resonate with the Arab public in surveys throughout the 2000s. According to Kimmage and Rodolfo, “Arab respondents overwhelmingly supported attacks on Western forces in Iraq” due in part to the way in which the argument against a Western presence was framed: as a call to arms against secular and Christian forces.¹²⁰

This kind of rhetoric has actually been used for centuries by Islamist thinkers in the Arab world, from the Muslim Brotherhood and Egyptian author Sayyid Qutb (1906-1996), to political activist and Islamic ideologist Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), all the way back to Islamic theologian Ibn Taimiyya (1263-1328 CE). That it has withstood the test of time is a testament to its resonance with the Muslim community.¹²¹ By regurgitating this language, and using it to garner support, Al Qaeda has taken historical Arab ideas and used them to justify and explain actions that they were not necessarily intended to account for.

Context is important, and a global *jihad* against the West was not the central focus of thinkers like al-Afghani. Al-Afghani was born in 19th century Afghanistan, and focused more on pan-Islamic unity rather than violence. He valued Western

¹¹⁹ Daniel Kimmage and Kathleen Ridolfo, *Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas* (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2007), 10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 38.

¹²¹ Carl L. Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2001).

advances in the sciences and technology. However, his own words and those of other Islamic thinkers have been turned toward Al Qaeda's causes. By way of example, al-Afghani "argued that religion was necessary for the well being of society and Islam properly practiced would make its followers strong."¹²² Similarly, in a February 11, 2003 address to the people of Iraq, Bin Laden discusses "the Crusaders' preparations for war to occupy one of Islam's former capitals."¹²³ In response to this "preparation," he urges Muslims to look to God, because "victory comes only with" him.¹²⁴ He goes on to say that the West cannot "triumph over the entire Islamic world" because of "God's will, as long as people stay true to their religion and insist on waging *jihad* for it."¹²⁵ He echoes the sentiments of al-Afghani, the idea that religion provides power, strength, and triumph, but uses it to rally Muslims to a bloody and dangerous cause.

The instances of Al Qaeda, especially Osama bin Laden, using religious rhetoric to rally Muslims are numerous. In Lawrence's *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, every major statement included, from 1994 until 2004, incorporates citations from the *Qur'an* that are used to justify violence. In one particularly surprising stretch of Quranic injunctions, bin Laden explains that purchasing weapons is sanctioned by God. In his speech in December 2001, he says that "there are two elements to fighting; there is the fighting itself and then there is the financial element, such as buying weapons. This is emphasized in many verses of the *Qur'an*, such as the following: 'God has purchased the persons and possessions

¹²² William Shepard, *Introducing Islam* (New York: New York: Routledge, 2009), 204.

¹²³ Osama bin Laden, 180

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 181.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 182.

of the believers in return for the Garden.”¹²⁶ To bin Laden, any Al Qaeda action against the Crusader enemy is acceptable within Islam. His speeches make this clear to any who will listen.

Religious statements are distinct propaganda messages. But while religious statements may be used *within* media propaganda messaging (another independent variable for this research), they are their own independent variable. Not all propaganda messaging from Al Qaeda has religious intent. Sometimes the language is political, and sometimes it’s specifically intended to claim responsibility for an attack. When Al Qaeda does invoke religion as a motive for violence, the group shows itself in a more sympathetic and relatable light. They appear religiously motivated, rather than driven by sheer bloodthirstiness. On the other hand, this use of religion could be perceived as exploitation, and turn the Arab population against the terror group.

Research Question, Design & Results: Religion

In researching the way that Al Qaeda relates to its constituency, answering the question “Do Al Qaeda’s efforts to appeal to its constituency for support succeed in garnering this support?” I researched statements Al Qaeda made during the 2002-2009 time frame. I sought out those statements that evoked Islam and Islamic ideas for the purpose of justifying Al Qaeda actions to a population that generally disapproves of violence against civilians, but is inclined to support religious values. Other than its willingness to “confront the U.S.,” the second most supported “aspect

¹²⁶ Osama bin Laden, “Nineteen Students: December 26, 2001” in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (New York: New Left Books, 2005). 146.

of Al Qaeda” in the Brookings Institute surveys is “that it stands for Muslim causes.” Wisely, then, bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leadership seized upon its constituency’s religious inclinations.

My research finds that, in spite of its constituency’s interest in religious values, there is not a clear relationship between religion and support for Al Qaeda. This could be related to the fact that not all Arabs surveyed were Muslim. It could also be related to the fact that variables such as violence overwhelm any levels of support for Al Qaeda’s religious language. It appears that religious justification is not sufficient to explain away the deaths of innocents. Most Arabs, and probably Muslims as well, are not willing to see their friends and family die for Al Qaeda’s cause.

In a comparison between religious statements and confidence in Osama bin Laden, religion and confidence showed an inverse relationship 50% of the time. Looking at the specific timing of the survey, there is no clear indication of meaningful correlation. The confidence surveys were conducted from March to April (see results in Figure 5.1). In March 2006, there was no increase in confidence in bin Laden despite his rhetoric against the famous Danish cartoons depicting Muhammad in a “mocking” fashion. During this year, there were 18 incidents of religious rhetoric, an increase from the 8 in 2005. However, confidence in OBL declined during this time frame from 44 to 27%. Confidence had remained stagnant prior to this time. In 2003, when there were 13 incidents of religious rhetoric, confidence was also at 44%, and did not change despite the decline in religious language in 2004 and 2005.

Although the aforementioned cartoons provoked outrage in the Arab world, as well as globally, they did not elicit any greater confidence in bin Laden when he spoke out against them. He also issued 8 statements within the March to April 2006 time frame that strove to rally supporters by publicly portraying the Iraqi *jihād* as part of the wider regional cause to “liberate Jerusalem.” Even the more greatly supported pro-Palestinian argument did not bolster confidence in bin Laden.

In the “Religion versus Sympathy with an Aspect of Al Qaeda” chart, (see figure 5.2), both times frames measured show an increase in religious rhetoric by Al Qaeda, accompanied by a decline in sympathy. From 2005 to 2006, when incidents of religious talk or activity increased from 8 to 18, confidence declined from 77% to 65%. From 2008 to 2009, when incidents increased from 23 to 30, confidence decreased from 65 to 60%. There is no indication here that more religious language leads to more sympathy with the organization. This does contrast with the “Religion versus Support for an Aspect of Al Qaeda” chart, which shows an increase in support for the organization from 2007 to 2008, from 19 to 21%, as well as an increase in religious language from 20 to 23 (see Figure 5.3). Still, the relationship is an inverse one more frequently than it is not. There is no consistent correlation between the variables.

Although this is a cliché, the results of the research on religion tell us that actions speak louder than words. In spite of its efforts to explain away its bloodshed and acts of terror as “self-defense...against God’s enemies,” the Arab public simply

isn't willing to give in.¹²⁷ If actions speak louder than words, than can Al Qaeda elicit support through charitable actions?

Acts of Charity

Acts of charity to benefit the constituency also serve to strengthen support for an organization, according to a study of Hamas' efforts within the Palestinian territories. Clauzet, et al find that these efforts help counter any negativity that may be associated with the organization resulting from acts of violence.¹²⁸ Israeli scholar Reuven Paz is cited on the Council on Foreign Relations' website as finding that "approximately 90 percent of [Hamas'] work is in social, welfare, cultural, and educational activities."¹²⁹ It is through actions such as these that Hamas has been able to "make strong showings in municipal elections, especially in Gaza."¹³⁰ Al Qaeda could similarly leverage acts that benefit Arab communities in order to gain more supporters.

I realize that acts of charity are not necessarily conducted for public support purposes. Sometimes, terrorist groups exploit non-profit organizations for financial reasons. Public support may be of peripheral benefit, and more than just an afterthought. But, "charitable giving" also "provides 'a significant source of funds'

¹²⁷ Ibid, 152.

¹²⁸ A. Clauzet, L. Heger, and K.S. Gleditsch, "The Strategic Calculus of Terrorism: Substitution and Competition in the Israel-Palestine Conflict," *Cooperation and Conflict* 45:1 (2010): 10.

¹²⁹ Jonathan Masters, *Hamas*, Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/israel/hamas/p8968> (July 26, 2013).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

and acts as a cover for terrorist organization financing.”¹³¹ According to Bell, charities are an ideal disguise for putting large sums of money together for terrorist use.¹³² Therefore, we cannot assume all acts of charity by terrorist groups are done simply for public support. It is not always a weapon of winning over ‘hearts and minds’; it may simply be a tool for making money.

For my research, I determined that I would see if Al Qaeda had engaged in any efforts to fund schools, mosques, or healthcare clinics (reminiscent of Hamas). If they have, does this correspond with increases or decreases in public support? Unfortunately, I was ambitious in this endeavor, assuming there would be a reasonable amount of charitable activity within the organization. In fact, Al Qaeda has only dipped its feet in the water of charitable activity.

In all of my research, I found indication of only a few acts of charity by Al Qaeda, just one of which occurred over the seven-year time span examined. In this instance, Al Qaeda appealed to people’s hearts not through charitable action, but through words only, which is also worth noting. On October 23, 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri called on Muslims to provide earthquake aid in Pakistan. This did demonstrate some semblance of compassion and sympathy, but it is only one instance, and it is only a statement rather than a real *act*. In 2011, Al Qaeda “took advantage of all the chaos that was sweeping across the Arab world... and the breakdown in law and order, the split within the military” in Yemen.¹³³ At this time,

¹³¹ Jennifer L. Bell, “Terrorist Abuse of Non-Profits and Charities: A Proactive Approach to Preventing Terrorist Financing,” *Kansas Journal of Law & Public Policy* 17:3 (2008), 451 (<http://www.jstor.org/>).

¹³² Bell, 456.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Al Qaeda operatives came into government-built schools to teach young boys, provided electricity (which the Yemeni government had failed to do), dug water wells, and implemented a police and court system. Then, the U.S. joined with Yemeni troops to kick them out. These are the only instances that I was able to find that involved charitable action by Al Qaeda. Overall, it appears that Al Qaeda has not been heavily involved in acts of charity. If acts of charity were meaningful within the organization, and utilized to garner public support, I believe they would be more numerous, and would not be such a struggle to discover. Therefore, I did not include charts for this specific independent variable. There is no progressive data to track since there is only one incident I could find within the time frame.

Conclusion

It is entirely possible that acts of charity could have been helpful to Al Qaeda, and rallied support. As we can tell from the research into Al Qaeda's political and religious rhetoric, in comparison with its actions, the latter does seem to resonate more loudly with the public than words. Al Qaeda's only clear effort to relate to its constituency came through rhetoric; it used religious language to attempt to make violence more palatable. With no acts of charity to potentially indicate a desire to help its constituency, Al Qaeda seems only to have found ways of alienating itself from the Arab world it claimed to serve. The next chapter explains another variable that led to a decline in support for Al Qaeda, counterterror actions. Acts of charity did not exist, and religious language was not sufficient, to rally the Arab public in the face of a substantive counterterror campaign coming from the West and within some of Iraq's tribal communities.

Figure 5.1

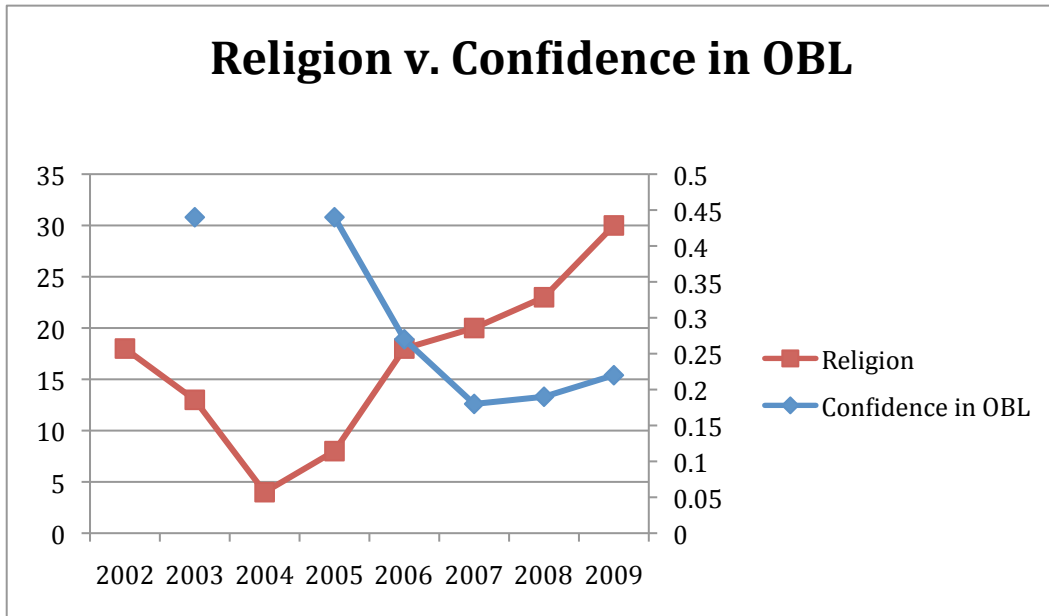


Figure 5.2

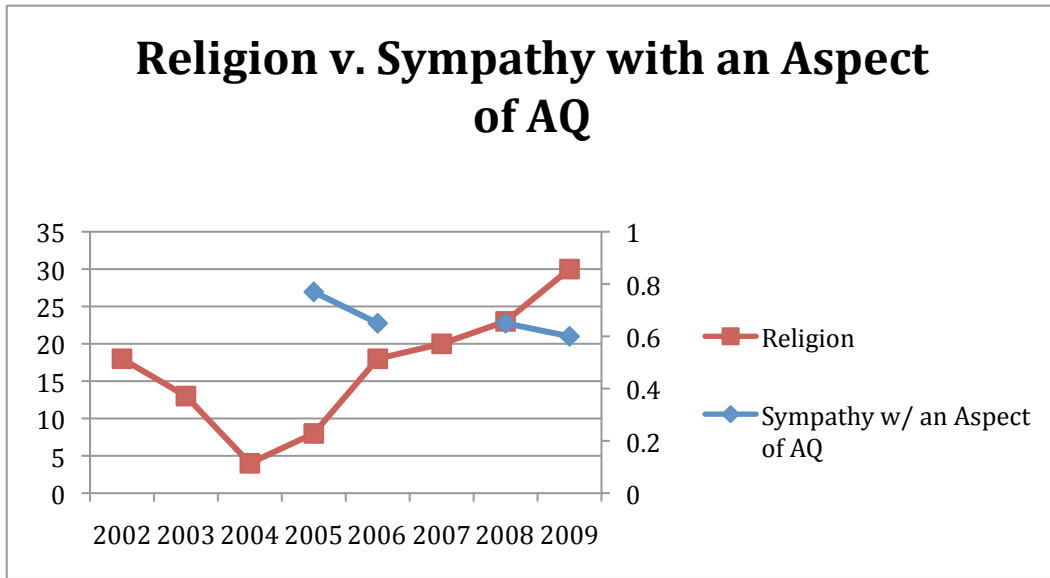
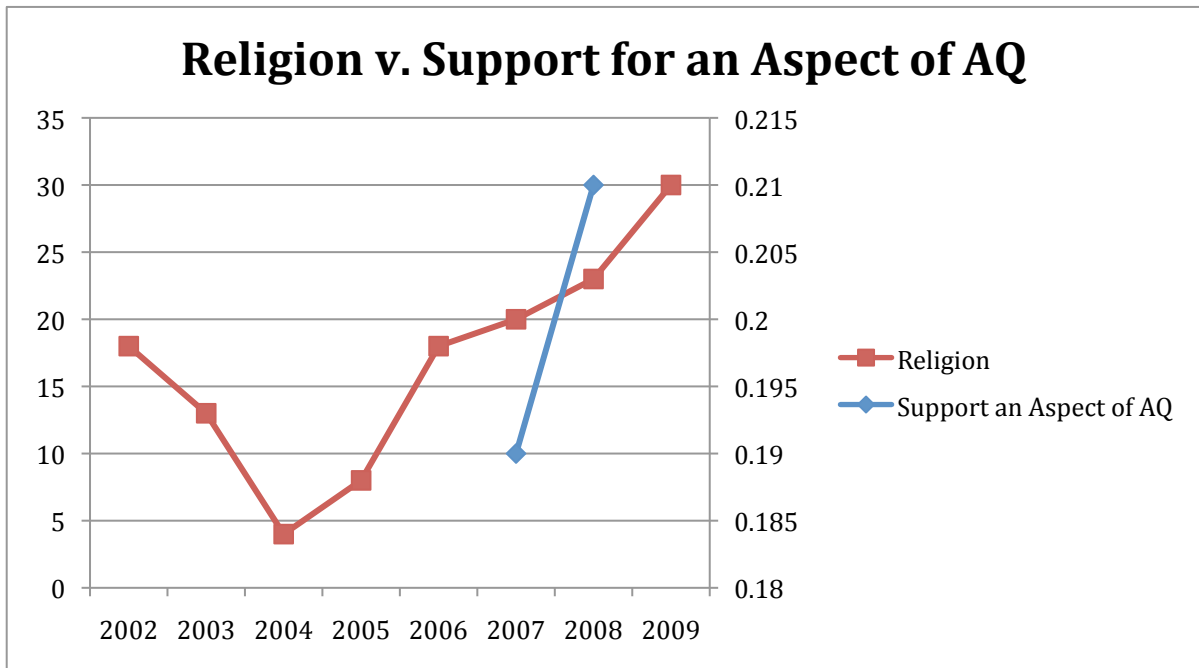


Figure 5.3



Chapter 6: Counterterrorism & Public Support

Introduction

Recognizing that acts of violence and the casualties they cause appear to influence Arab public opinion, it would not be surprising if counterterror responses could have a similar impact. While counterterror responses do not always involve acts of violence, they certainly can. In the case of Al Qaeda, drone attacks were a very popular counterterror response that notoriously impacted innocent civilians. This left me wondering, would counterterror actions be counterproductive, increasing support for the terror organization when innocent civilians were killed by the “good guys?” Or would the public see the larger picture, that the terror organization brought such attacks to the region? Also important was the impact that non-violent counterterror actions would have. Could Arab leaders denounce acts of violence by Al Qaeda, and effectively convince their followers to do the same? Or was this just rhetoric, no more powerful than media campaigns, or strongly worded public statements by Al Qaeda leadership?

Acts of Counterterror by Governments

Prior research indicated that counterterror responses could go either way in terms of increasing or decreasing public support for a terror group. Henar Criado finds that interactions between terrorist organizations and governments often influence public support. He cites a 1993 ETA internal document indicating the organization’s uncertainty about public response to an ETA truce with the Spanish government. The document acknowledges that government truces impact public opinion towards the organization, but in ways that the organization cannot be sure

of.¹³⁴ However, Criado himself finds that periods of truce significantly increase support for the terrorist organization within its Spanish constituency.¹³⁵

The more surprising government-terrorist organization interaction comes from findings by Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson that terrorists gain public support by provoking government countermeasures.¹³⁶ They can accomplish this simply by committing violent acts. These acts in turn “divert (government) money towards counterterrorism and away from public goods,” which in turn gives the public a negative opinion of the government.¹³⁷ The public develops this negative opinion because of an overall diminishment of economic opportunities for the population, which in turn makes them “inclined towards direct struggle against the government” and can lead them to support the extremists.¹³⁸ A key factor in this, however, is that the public already has reason to support the extremist terrorists. If this is in place, the public will start to question whether or not the government actually has an interest in the populace’s welfare, and will see greater appeal in challenging the government. Crackdowns on terrorists, then, can prove counterproductive.

Research tells us that counterterror responses are unpredictable. They may at once hurt the organization and help it. It is key that counterterror efforts minimize harm to innocents, and establish within the constituency an understanding that the terror group is ultimately *causing* any outbreaks of violence.

¹³⁴ Criado, 499.

¹³⁵ Criado, 503.

¹³⁶ Bueno De Mesquita and Dickson, 366.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 365.

Al Qaeda is a somewhat unique case, in that the government(s) opposing it are not always local to the constituency. The United States and its allies have been central in counterterror efforts against the organization, which is somewhat problematic for the U.S. considering the negative views many average Arabs have of America. Of all of the potential “aspects” of Al Qaeda that the Arab public surveyed in the Brookings Institution questionnaire could have sympathy with, the number one quality was its willingness to “confront the U.S.” In 2004, 36% of those surveyed sympathized with this aspect. It would not be unwise to assume that U.S. attacks within the Arab world, targeted against Al Qaeda but sometimes causing civilian casualties, would only increase this number and diminish support for Western goals against AQ. This number did decrease to 33% by 2006, and to 26% by 2009 (without Egypt, 31% with Egypt). Were drone attacks less detrimental to the Arab attitude towards the U.S. than we imagined? Was Al Qaeda increasingly so disliked, that the Arab world simply would not side with it against the U.S.?

Of course, there were other central counterterror measures taking place that could also have had an impact. This category is not a narrow one; it encompasses numerous types of activity, including military actions. For example, in early March 2002, Operation Anaconda, a U.S. and Afghan joint effort, removed the majority of the Al Qaeda and Taliban presence from the Shahi-Kot Valley in Afghanistan.¹³⁹ Around the same time, three different Al Qaeda leaders were captured.

¹³⁹ Jones, 77.

The U.S. also wasn't acting alone in enacting counterterror activity. In 2003, the Saudi government launched a media campaign against Al Qaeda in response to Al Qaeda's attacks within the kingdom. Not only did the Saudi government increase border monitoring and security, and wage its propaganda campaign; it also created a militant rehabilitation program.¹⁴⁰ Al Qaeda lost a great deal of ground in this year, not only in Saudi Arabia but Yemen and Afghanistan.¹⁴¹

Just as U.S. counterterror responses can have a positive or negative impact on public opinion, so too could Saudi efforts. While some saw the Saudi counterterror campaign as a largely positive effort, others perceived a similar problem to the one the U.S. faced: backlash.¹⁴² Gunaratna writes that "the suppression and repression of the Islamists of the al-Qaeda brands are likely to generate a fresh wave of recruits...While the Saudi over-reaction is likely to decrease the threat in the short term, it will increase Saudi public support for al-Qaeda in the long term."¹⁴³

A similar impact is discussed in Jones' analysis. He points out that one of Al Qaeda's successes in Iraq was its ability to launch a "second wave of terrorism."¹⁴⁴ He argues that the American decision to utilize overwhelming force and large-scale deployment "radicalized scores of Muslims."¹⁴⁵ The question is, in the scheme of the population, how many were actually radicalized and inspired to support Al Qaeda, in the wake of this "overwhelming force" approach?

¹⁴⁰ Carl J. Ciovacco, "The Contours of AL Qaeda's Media Strategy," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32 (2009): 853-875

¹⁴¹ Jones, 77.

¹⁴² Ciovacco, 859.

¹⁴³ Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda* (Cambridge, UP, 2002), 221.

¹⁴⁴ Jones, 160.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Other counterterror efforts that may have hurt the American cause include Abu Ghraib. Once stories of abuse of prisoners surfaced, the Arab world had further reason to hold onto any distaste for the U.S. Later, in 2005, payola efforts by the U.S. military to run propaganda articles in Iraqi newspapers were exposed, which also provoked a backlash against the U.S. Drone attacks furthered concerns. On average, about 35-43% of the deaths from drone attacks between 2004 and 2007 were militants.¹⁴⁶ Later attacks, in 2008, were 80-84% militant deaths, indicating an improvement in precision in attacks against terrorist leaders. In 2009, militant deaths numbered 69-70%. However, drone statistics conflict with each other. Data regarding numbers of attacks vary between the New America Foundation and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Further, according to an article called “U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan,” from 2004 to 2010, 2/3 of those killed in attacks aimed Al Qaeda were actual militants, with a 32% civilian fatality rate. While Pakistan is not an Arab nation, attacks against Al Qaeda in the region still impacted Muslim civilians, which potentially impacted the opinions of fellow Muslims and others impacted by Al Qaeda activity in the surveyed Arab countries.

Acts of Counterterror and Media

Another aspect of counterterror efforts was Al-Jazeera’s efforts to provide more than one perspective on Al Qaeda. By 2006, *Al Jazeera* was clearly not committed to only airing AQ propaganda. For example, a Zawahiri tape about the “Enough” movement in Egypt was punctuated by commentary from an Islamist lawyer and Bin Laden critic. Ciovacco argues that this turned Zawahiri’s “lecture

¹⁴⁶ New America Foundation, The National Security Studies Program, <http://natsec.newamerica.net/> (May 6, 2013).

into a discussion.”¹⁴⁷ This format became common on *Al Jazeera*, as it invited Arabic-speaking American diplomats and other Bin Laden critics to respond to Bin Laden and Zawahiri messages on air.

Al Jazeera’s marketplace-style programming was very much a counterterror effort emanating from the state, not unlike the efforts of Jordan’s King Abdullah and Saudi leadership. Al Jazeera is a Qatari broadcaster headquartered in Doha. It is owned by the government of Qatar, and the idea that Al Jazeera officials are independent of the Qatari government is much disputed.¹⁴⁸ This is a testament to the power of counterterror efforts taking place within the Arab world, perhaps more so than those coming from the U.S. (i.e. the epically unsuccessful *Al Hurra* television and *Al Sawa* radio).

Another crucial media counterterror event was the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi in 2006. According to Seib, “It was al-Zarqawi...who most thoroughly exploited online venues. [He] understood the value of maintaining a consistent media presence by systematically disseminating ‘news’ about his activities.”¹⁴⁹ The death of Zarqawi had a resounding impact in the world of Al Qaeda media propaganda, making it a crucial counterterror event.

¹⁴⁷ Ciovacco, 856.

¹⁴⁸ “Al-Jazeera’s political independence questioned amid Qatar interventions,” *The Guardian*, September 30, 2012, (<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/sep/30/al-jazeera-independence-questioned-qatar>).

¹⁴⁹ Philip Seib, “Public Diplomacy, New Media, and Counterterrorism,” in Russell D. Howard, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2012), 654.

Research Question, Design, and Results

Military actions against Al Qaeda, compared with drone attacks, compared with the deaths and captures of AQ leaders, make counterterror responses a very mixed bag. The only way to know what impact efforts against AQ had on the Arab world is to survey the general Arab population. Survey results were compared with my findings of incidents of counterterror events to answer the question: What impact does counterterror action have on Arab public opinion?

Although levels of violence/propaganda of the deed appear to heavily influence Arab public opinion, counterterror responses also show a strong relationship, justified by consistent correlation and backed up by scholarly research. In my comparison of counterterror responses with “Sympathy with an Aspect of Al Qaeda” (see Figure 6.1), I found that in both time frames measured, increased counterterror actions were met by declines in sympathy with Al Qaeda. From 2005 to 2006, a decline in sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda from 77 to 66% was matched by an increase in counterterror responses from 8 to 12 incidents. During this time frame (the survey was conducted in mid-October 2005 and 2006), key counterterror responses included a successful Iraq vote on the constitution, which Ciovacco calls a “loss for Al Qaeda.”¹⁵⁰ Also at this time, Jordan’s King Abdullah declared a “total war” on *takfiri* thought. This *takfiri* line of thinking was utilized by Al Qaeda to denounce Muslims as insufficiently pious. He declared his battle on Al Qaeda’s ideology after the November Amman bombings, and “publicly instructed the Jordanian media” to follow suit.

¹⁵⁰ Ciovacco, 856.

The decline in sympathy with Al Qaeda occurred despite drone attacks by the U.S. (most drone attacks were centered on Pakistan or Yemen). Perhaps this is because in addition to the drone attacks, counterterror measures also included Saudi Arabia's crackdown, *Al Jazeera's* inclusion of a multitude of perspectives on Al Qaeda, and "new momentum" gained in 2006 in Anbar Awakening efforts. It was at this time that "Marines, CIA operatives, U.S. special operations forces, and many agencies offered aid to Anbar's tribal sheikhs. Also during this time period, the CIA placed sheikhs on its payroll, and began to target Al Qaeda leaders, killing a "number of mid- and senior-level officials."¹⁵¹ It may also matter that the drone attacks were in the countries surveyed, and therefore did not *directly* impact them. There is no measure of solidarity with individuals in Pakistan and Yemen, to determine how disturbed Arabs surveyed may have been by drone attacks concentrated in these areas.

Interestingly, all of these disparate counterterror measures, except the drone attacks, have one key factor in common. They all involve internal efforts leveraged against Al Qaeda. Even in instances where the U.S. was involved in countermeasures, Arab leadership helped efforts. Whether they were tribal sheiks or a Saudi prince, natives to the land rather than foreign forces, took matters into their own hands to extricate Al Qaeda and destroy its leadership. This indicates that it is not necessarily counterterror measures in and of themselves, but internally-led counterterror measures that make a difference to the Arab public. While the U.S. alone was responsible for drone attacks, the Arab public saw its own leadership

¹⁵¹ Jones, 255.

acting out against Al Qaeda in ways that did not harm civilians. This, more likely than drone attacks, bolstered support for anti-Al Qaeda efforts.

It is also important to note that the majority of drone attacks against Al Qaeda took place in Pakistan. Pakistan is not one of the countries surveyed, since the surveys are of the Arab world. I still consider Pakistan to be part of Al Qaeda's constituency, since it is an Islamic Republic that harbored Osama bin Laden. But it is not part of the surveyed constituency. Had Pakistanis, those most directly affected by drone attacks, been surveyed, the results could be very different. Pakistani leadership did not act out against Al Qaeda, and public opinion in Pakistan could paint a very different picture.

In the 2008 to 2009 comparison of sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda and counterterror responses, sympathy with Al Qaeda also declined in spite of 2009 being the "year of the drone," according to Seib.¹⁵² During this time period, incidents of counterterror responses increased from 37 to 58, while sympathy with Al Qaeda declined from 65 to 60%. In December of 2009, the drone program in Pakistan was expanded, and 30,000 new U.S. troops were sent to Afghanistan. Importantly, this took place *after* the survey was conducted in April to May of 2009. 2009 also marked a substantial increase in drone attacks after President Obama came into office that January. Again, these drone attacks were almost entirely in Pakistan, and primarily killed militants rather than civilians (69-70% militant deaths).¹⁵³

¹⁵² Seib, 625.

¹⁵³ New America Foundation, June 1, 2013.

Very few counterterror efforts other than drone attacks took place in the 2008-2009 time frame. Drone attacks had become more accurate by this time, with civilian fatality rates minimized to an average of 32% by 2010. So why did counterterror responses elicit a decline in sympathy for Al Qaeda during this time frame? Most likely, attitudes in 2008-2009 reflect a response to the increasing number deaths of Al Qaeda leadership and militants, and the end of the surge in Iraq. The diminishment of U.S. presence in the area would certainly put the U.S. in greater favor with the Arab world, considering the distaste many had for the United States. Further, by the end of the surge, the U.S. had shown its prowess in extricating Al Qaeda from the Iraq region, where AQ had caused numerous civilian deaths. Prior to this time frame, sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda was also declining. It was at its peak in 2005, at 77%, then decreased to 65% in 2006, was not measured in 2007, and remained at 65% into 2008. This steady decrease indicates a consistent response to counterterror efforts.

In my comparison of counterterror responses with support for an aspect of Al Qaeda, I found conflicting information (see Figure 6.2). Both counterterror responses and support for an aspect of Al Qaeda increased from 2007 to 2008. Counterterror responses increased from 11 in 2007 to 37 in 2008, while support increased from 19 to 21%. In 2007, and leading up to it in late 2006, there were lots of counterterror efforts taking place, including a union of Shi'ite clerics against Al Qaeda, a protest against AQ violence against civilians by the "ideological grandfather of AQ," Dr. Fadl, and a growing police force in Anbar that targeted Al Qaeda. Additionally, the former head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad published a book entitled

Rationalization of Jihad in Egypt and the World, launching a caustic attack on Al Qaeda's interpretation of Islam. This makes it difficult to determine why support for Al Qaeda rose. All logic would point to a different result. The increase in support for Al Qaeda this year could certainly have been attributable to levels of violence and propaganda of the deed, which also influenced public opinion towards Al Qaeda.

In a comparison of counterterror responses with confidence in Osama bin Laden (see Figure 6.3), the pattern demonstrates itself from 2003 to 2005, when the number of counterterror responses changes only by 1 number (from 9 in 2003 and 2004, to 8 in 2005). Meanwhile, confidence in bin Laden stays the same over this time period, at 44%, which does reflect the negligible change in incidents. A meaningful relationship is also demonstrated between 2005 and 2006, when counterterror responses increased and confidence in OBL decreased from 77 to 65%. From 2006 to 2007, counterterror responses decreased slightly from 12 to 11 incidents, and confidence in bin Laden decreased from 27 to 18%. This negligible decrease in incidents does not correspond as greatly with the substantial drop in confidence.

However, the timing of the survey certainly influenced the results. The "Confidence in Osama bin Laden" surveys were conducted between March and April. The last few months of 2006 would be reflected in the results of the 2007 survey. During these months, the Revolutionaries of Anbar emerged to operate against Al Qaeda, and the police force in Anbar increased substantially. This could certainly cause the decline confidence in bin Laden, in spite of relatively no change in counterterror incidents.

Results from the remaining years, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, do not show that counterterror efforts positively influence support for Al Qaeda. While counterterror efforts increased in 2007-2008 from 11 to 37, confidence increased by one percentage point from 18 to 19%. This is still treated as increase, but it is not a strong counterexample to my findings. But from 2008 to 2009, counterterror incidents increased from 37 to 58, and confidence from 19 to 22%. Why would confidence in OBL increase at all during these times? One explanation for an increase in confidence in OBL from 2008 to 2009 is the increased strength of Al Qaeda in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area by 2008. Additionally, Al Qaeda made efforts to target more military and government sites, rather than civilian areas in 2008. Additionally, during the 2008-2009 period, Obama took office and substantially increased the use of drone attacks. While this did not increase sympathy with an aspect of Al Qaeda, it could have increased confidence in Bin Laden, with Arabs turning to the enemy's leadership in the face of a more drone-supportive American leader.

Conclusion

Overall, most incidents of increased counterterror responses correspond with decreases in support for Al Qaeda. This occurs more frequently than increased counterterror responses correlating with increases in support for Al Qaeda. They do not appear to correspond more or less than propaganda of the deed/levels of violence, which leads me to conclude that counterterror activity also has an influence on Arab public opinion. This should not come as a surprise. Just as acts of violence and their subsequent casualties, counterterror activity involves tangible

actions that kill civilians, which in and of itself impacts public opinion. The results of these surveys, however, point to drone attacks overall having no major impact on public opinion towards the terror group, at least according to the surveys used. They may increase mistrust of the United States, but that does not mean they lead most Arabs to support Al Qaeda. It is popular to argue that drone attacks are counterproductive. My study shows that this may not be the correct word for it. They may not help gain the U.S. any friends in the region, but there is no indication that, for most Arabs, they have a radicalizing effect. While some Arabs may translate the deaths of Arab (but primarily Pakistani-Muslim) civilians at the hands of the U.S. government into an allegiance to Al Qaeda, this is not a popular choice. Just as joining/supporting Al Qaeda is not, in general, popular among the average Arab civilian. Radical ideology is just that: radical. The very term lends itself to ideas of being abnormal, extreme, straying from the average.

It appears that most counterterror measures launched within the Arab world (which of course excludes Pakistan), were wisely conducted from within. By enlisting the help of the Saudi government, tribal sheikhs, as well as a former Al Qaeda leader, efforts against Al Qaeda had the potential to become a grassroots movement. In Iraq, it certainly was. In the Arab world itself, counterterror responses certainly helped to rally more of the public against the terror organization, diminishing confidence in its leadership and allegiance to its ideologies.

Next, I will summarize the findings from my investigation into each independent variable. I will also explain why I believe those variables that most

influenced Arab public opinion had such a significant effect. Finally, the following chapter will include my explanation of how and why Al Qaeda lost support.

Figure 6.1

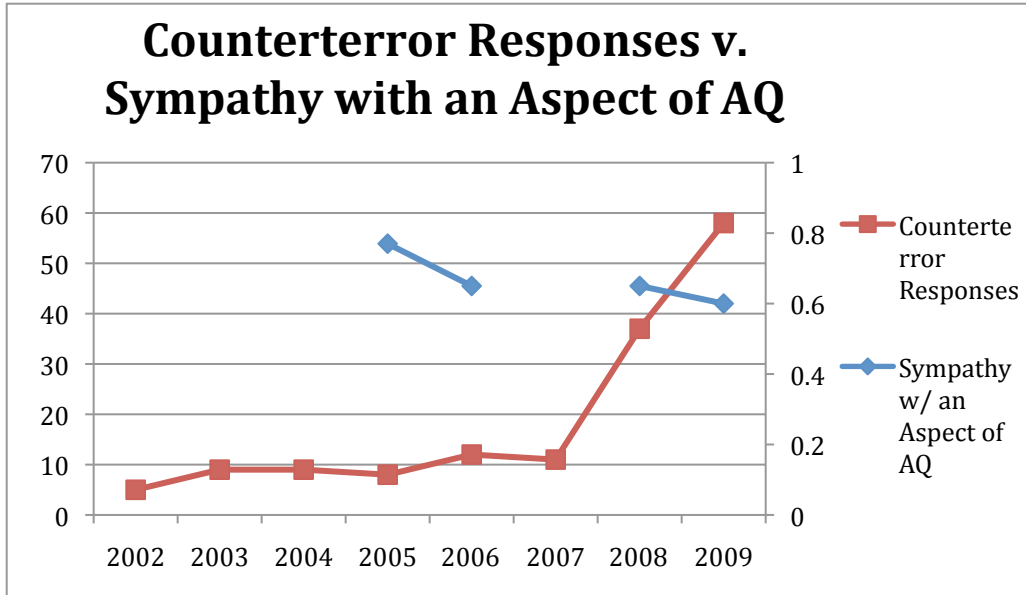


Figure 6.2

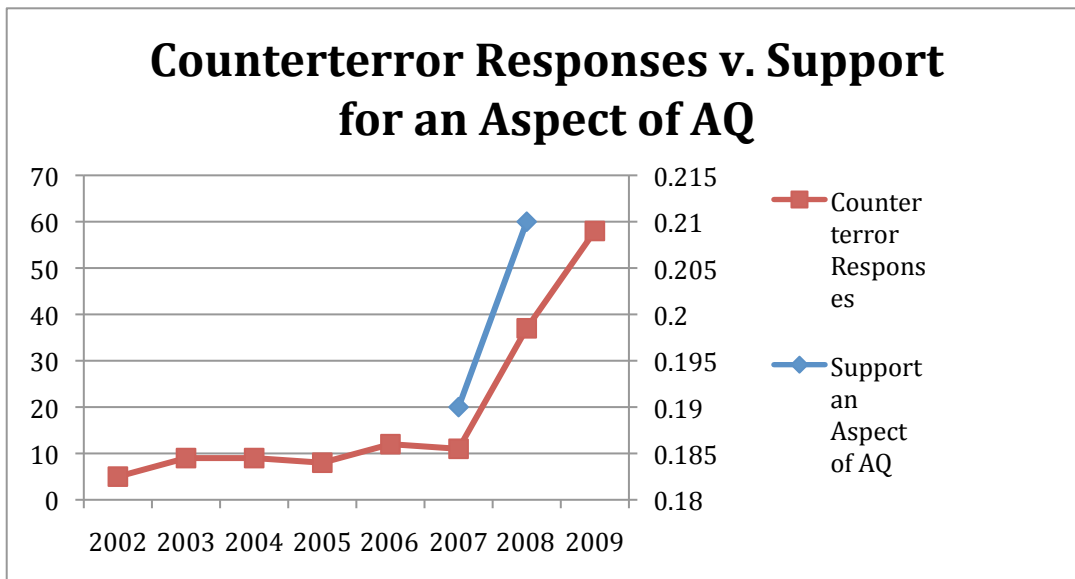
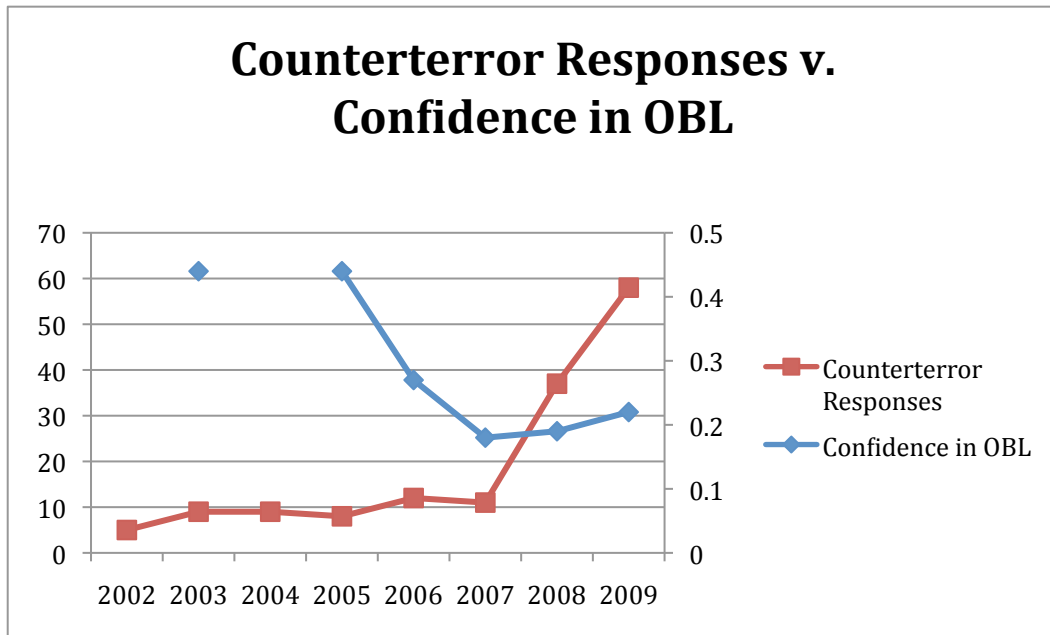


Figure 6.3



Chapter 7: Analysis of Findings

The literature on terrorist efforts to win over “hearts and minds” demonstrates several influential factors: the politics of the organization, the relationship of the organization with the public, levels of violence, provocation of counterterror responses, and the use of various forms of propaganda. I contend that mass media propaganda, which reaches the widest audience, was most influential in the battle for hearts and minds. I saw that Al Qaeda exploited this tool to sustain support. I observed that the Telhami survey showed a decline in support for Al Qaeda’s anti-Western goals, and fluctuations in support for its methods.¹⁵⁴ This was corroborated by results of a World Public Opinion survey,¹⁵⁵ and a Pew survey.¹⁵⁶ It also demonstrated a decline, then a slight increase, and an ultimate falloff in overall support for the organization. My research sought to determine what is responsible for changes in Arab and Muslim support for Al Qaeda. Do media propaganda efforts influence Arab public opinion, or is something else creating these changes year by year?

A single case analysis of Al Qaeda led to a determination of which method(s) used by terrorists to win over hearts and minds were most successful. I found that counterterror methods, levels of violence (figures of how many were killed in

¹⁵⁴ Shibley Telhami, Principal Investigator, *Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International 2004-2011 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey*, <http://sadat.umd.edu/new%20surveys/surveys.htm>.

¹⁵⁵ Steven Kull, et al., “Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies,” *World Public Opinion.org* (February 25, 2009).

¹⁵⁶ “Obama bin Laden Largely Discredited Among Muslim Publics in Recent Years,” Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-largely-discredited-among-muslim-publics-in-recent-years/> (May 2, 2011).

attacks), and the incidence of political violence (propaganda of the deed) equally impacted public opinion. I did not find a meaningful relationship between media propaganda and support levels for Al Qaeda. This was based upon a comparison of three Arab Public Opinion surveys' results, and changes I tracked in Al Qaeda's media propaganda, levels of violence, etc. over time. In my findings, I also took scholarly analyses into account, and incorporated them with my own to help understand why some methods had much more of an impact than others.

I ultimately found that results of my research were contrary to my expectations. Mass media propaganda had not revolutionized the battle for hearts and minds, at least for Al Qaeda.

For Al Qaeda, the "ultimate goal" was to elicit "sympathy and support from the populace for their cause."¹⁵⁷ It appears that Al Qaeda did not accomplish this for very long. At best, it sustained levels of sympathy between 2006 and 2008. Confidence in Osama bin Laden was also maintained from 2003 to 2005, only to fall off substantially until 2007, when it began to rise again. The 2007 to 2008 time span shows an increase in support for "an aspect of Al Qaeda." But these successes are dwarfed by the overall picture of a substantial falloff in support that ultimately led the Brookings surveys to no longer even inquire about feelings toward Al Qaeda. The organization had become largely "irrelevant" in terms of the question of support levels. Dr. Telhami already knew what the results would be: levels of support so low they weren't worth further inquiry.

¹⁵⁷ Lumbaca & Gray, 45.

These levels of support did not correspond perfectly with *any* of the independent variables. Therefore, I do not claim a perfectly coordinated relationship between my independent variables and public opinion results. However, my results do show sufficient, consistent correlation that is further corroborated by my research into those factors that influence public opinion towards terror groups. In addition, all three of the independent variables that seem to influence public opinion are very similar in that they all involve actions that directly impact the quality of life of the terror group's constituency.

While some scholars (White,¹⁵⁸ Cragin & Daly,¹⁵⁹ Rohner & Frey,¹⁶⁰ Lumbaca & Gray¹⁶¹) indicated that terrorist media propaganda had a strong impact on public opinion, my findings demonstrated that this was not the case. I expect this is not only because public opinion was simply *more* influenced by the other variables. It is also because consumers of media do not *just* consume terrorist propaganda. The leading network news broadcast in the six countries surveyed by Brookings was consistently *Al Jazeera*. Its viewership results outnumbered all other networks by a landslide 45% to MBC's 12%.¹⁶² It is also telling that this major news network, which is previously described in Chapter 2 as a "media marketplace" with an array of perspectives voiced on air, is vastly preferred to *Al Manar*. In the same Brookings Survey, 53% of Arabs reported that they *never* watch *Al Manar*, which is generally

¹⁵⁸ White, 31-37.

¹⁵⁹ Kim A. Cragin and Sara A. Daly, *The Dynamic Terrorism Threat: An Assessment of Group Motivations and Capabilities in a Changing World* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation 2004), 1-93.

¹⁶⁰ Dominic Rohner and Bruno S. Frey, "Blood and Ink! The Common-interest-game between Terrorists and the Media," *Public Choice* 133:1-2 (2007): 129-145.

¹⁶¹ Lumbaca & Gray, June 2012.

¹⁶² Telhami, 2005.

considered Hezbollah's tv station.¹⁶³ *Al Hurra* ties with *Al Manar* in this survey. *Al Hurra*, of course, is a U.S.-based Arabic language station. This indicates to me that those networks with an evident or perceived bias, be it pro or anti-Western/Israel, are simply less preferable within the Arab world. Not unlike many Americans, they generally prefer to consume news media that does not have a decided agenda. They want to form their own opinions. This being the case, why would they then be inclined to consume the decidedly biased media releases of *As Sahab*, or any network that provides Al Qaeda media releases without any subsequent discussion or debate?

I also found that political ideas, which may be expressed in media releases, press releases, or literature released by the organization, do not have any clear impact on levels of public support. There is no consistent correlation, in spite of findings by Criado¹⁶⁴ and Hewitt¹⁶⁵ that may support a strong connection. According to Hewitt, those groups with ethnic-nationalist objectives will often find sympathy among "their fellow ethnics."¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile, those with revolutionary goals do not have a built-in constituency, and instead find support in the working class and those of higher socio-economic status. Al Qaeda does not necessarily fit either of these two categories. It's not particularly nationalistic; its goals are pan-Islamic. It is revolutionary, but against many governments. It is not a rival against one particular, oppressive regime. To Al Qaeda, any non-Islamist government in the

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Criado, 497-508.

¹⁶⁵ Christopher Hewitt, "Terrorism and Public Opinion: A Five Country Comparison," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2:2 (1990): 145-70.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 145.

Arab world is oppressive and worthy of revolt. Its political goals are broad and ambitious, as it actively seeks a global Islamic caliphate that stands in stark opposition to Western ideals and values. It does not have “fellow ethnics” to appeal to, only fellow Muslims and in some cases, fellow Arabs. It does not have defined revolutionary goals against a clear enemy; only broad objectives of domination of the Arab/Muslim world. This is not easily relatable, particularly for those Arabs that are not Muslim, those that are content with their governments or want a secular government, and those that have not been radicalized. The oppressive ways of the Taliban in Afghanistan certainly did not inspire confidence in Al Qaeda-backed leadership.

Religion also fails to inspire confidence in/support for Al Qaeda and its leadership, largely because not all Arabs surveyed are religious, not all Muslims hold the radical views about Islam that Al Qaeda does, and because views are extremely diverse and divergent even within a single religion. Kull et al.,¹⁶⁷ Kimmage & Rodolfo,¹⁶⁸ and Brown¹⁶⁹ all provide research that predicts a strong relationship between religion and public opinion. But this simply does not prove to be a point on which Al Qaeda successfully relates to its constituency. Al Qaeda has used language that alienates *Shia* Muslims, and to many Muslims exploits the term *jihad*. Further, it interprets the *Quran* in its own, distinct fashion consistent with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Sayyid Qutb. Its interpretation allows for violence and the

¹⁶⁷ Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, Stephen Weber, et al, *Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, Al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies*, (University of Maryland, 2009).

¹⁶⁸ Daniel Kimmage and Kathleen Ridolfo, *Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas* (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty: 2007).

¹⁶⁹ Carl L. Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007).

imposition of religion on others, which is a radical ideology that has a more narrow audience. Al Qaeda's proclaimed allegiance to Islam certainly does not make its ideology universally appealing to Muslims. Al Qaeda essentially has its own brand of Islam that is distinct and limited in its appeal.

Acts of charity were ultimately few and far between, and could not be considered a true measure of Al Qaeda's efforts to relate to its constituency. Perhaps charity would help its cause, but this is not territory that the organization has frequently ventured into.

Actions, rather than rhetoric, are what seem to help or hinder the terror group. The three independent variables that *did* prove to influence public opinion were counterterror responses, propaganda of the deed, and levels of violence. All three of these variables showed correlation with 4 distinct time frames (8 different years) of public opinion data. Therefore, while I cannot say that one has the most impact, it is fair to say that all three are closely related. It is unsurprising that they would all have an impact on public opinion. Levels of violence and propaganda of the deed both involve actions by the terror group, and their oftentimes bloody results. Al Qaeda's acts of terror typically took place within the Arab or Muslim world, thereby directly affecting their constituency. Even when the incidents did not take place in the Arab world, but did occur in a Muslim-majority country, one would expect predominantly Muslim Arab countries to feel the impact. The sense of kinship within a religion could easily cause one attack on a Muslim-majority region to be felt within another Muslim country. Tessler's research points to the larger picture in the case of Al Qaeda: "The overwhelming majority of Muslims are

appalled that violence is committed in the name of Islam.”¹⁷⁰ Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson both saw propaganda of the deed as a variable that would enhance support for the terror group by “awakening a spirit of revolt.”¹⁷¹ However, it did not seem to gain Al Qaeda any friends. Instead, it had an alienating effect. Increased acts of propaganda of the deed and increased levels of violence coincided with diminished support/sympathy/confidence in Al Qaeda and/or Osama bin Laden.

Counterterror responses also seemed to have an impact on public opinion, consistently correlating with diminished public support for Al Qaeda. Counterterror responses *can* cause the population to support the terror organization in opposition to the perpetrator of the counterterror response.¹⁷² With that said, this would most likely work only if the population had reason to be supportive of the organization/already agreed with many of its ideas. It seems that the Arab world saw so much violence related to AQ already, it was not inclined to support it, even when drone attacks hit the Arab world. While drone attacks could have angered the Arab population, and turned them against the attacking nation/government, this does necessarily mean the population would then support the organization the attacks were aimed at. In this instance, the public clearly saw counterterror measures of any kind as efforts against an organization it generally did not approve of. The success of these counterterror measures seems to have inspired *less* support for/sympathy with the organization they were aimed at.

¹⁷⁰ Tessler, 307.

¹⁷¹ Alex Schmid, “Terrorism as Psychological Warfare,” *Democracy and Security* 1:2 (2005): 139.

¹⁷² Bueno de Mesquita & Dickson, 375.

It is worth noting that while most drone attacks, a popular “counterterror measure,” did have “collateral damage,” they were more often than not successful in primarily killing militants. In Pakistan, fatality rates from drone attacks against Al Qaeda militants/affiliates were much higher than they were in other countries. Still, the majority of those killed in Pakistan were militants, under both U.S. President Bush and President Obama. Outside of Pakistan, the non-militant fatality rate under President Bush was around 0%, and under President Obama was approximately 10.5%.¹⁷³ This could also explain why drone attacks may have upset some Arab civilians, but did not result in a vast increase in support for Al Qaeda. Even if more Arab civilians were killed, this would not necessarily result in more support for Al Qaeda, only less support for the West/the perpetrators of the drone attacks.

It appears that Arab public opinion in the countries surveyed is largely influenced by direct action, perpetrated either by or against the terror organization. Civilians seem to respond to what they see every day: the bloodshed caused either directly or indirectly by Al Qaeda. The rhetoric of the terror organization may matter, but it does not have any kind of noticeable impact on the number of organization supporters/sympathizers.

How Al Qaeda Lost Support

Counterterrorism strategy often focuses on denying terror organizations their support base, because “denying terrorists the support of these constituents is a crucial component in the war on terrorism.”¹⁷⁴ It seems that counterterrorism strategy, accompanied by Al Qaeda’s own self-destructive tendency to attack

¹⁷³ New America Foundation, 2013.

¹⁷⁴ Simon & Martini, 639.

innocent Arab and Muslim civilians, helped the war against Al Qaeda to diminish support for the group.

In my estimation, once Al Qaeda truly began to suffer a substantial decline in support levels, beginning around 2005 (with 2007-2008 showing a small increase in support), it could not recover. Once the combination of counterterror responses, propaganda of the deed, and levels of violence began to do their damage, it was unlikely Al Qaeda would see improvement. Simon and Martini point out that “simply by responding positively to their tactics,” public supporters can help a terrorist organization to be perceived as credible, effective, and a viable threat to its enemy.”¹⁷⁵ Once the public showed they were not responding positively to Al Qaeda’s tactics, Al Qaeda began to lose any credibility and effectiveness it may have once held. In my estimation, it was a downward spiral from 2005. The public instills legitimacy upon the organization. Without the public’s support, there is much less of a sense of legitimacy.

Of course, the increase in support from 2007-2008, and a minor increase in confidence in OBL from 2007-2009, could contradict the idea of a downward spiral. By comparing these increases with my data, it appears to me that the 2007-2008 increase in “support for an aspect of Al Qaeda” corresponds almost perfectly with a decline in acts of propaganda of the deed (see Figure 2.3a). This could point to a hopefulness within the constituency that fewer acts of violence would be perpetrated, and cause less anxiety about/animosity toward the terror group. I would explain the minor increases in confidence in OBL by looking to the “levels of

¹⁷⁵ Simon and Martini, 639.

violence” independent variable. Interestingly, it provides a mirror image on the graph (see Figure 4.2) of the “confidence in OBL” line. This indicates that with the diminishment in levels of violence came a tempered increase in confidence in OBL. While this is by no means a surge in confidence, it does indicate that fewer casualties at the hands of AQ likely alienated fewer Arabs during the survey years.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that Al Qaeda lost support. Levels of violence and propaganda of the deed appear to correspond most closely in terms of slope of the line with the measures of the dependent variable. Thus, I would venture to say that Arab public opinion is most directly influenced by propaganda of the deed/levels of violence. Still, the “counterterror responses” variable corresponds with the “support/sympathy/confidence” data as frequently as the two aforementioned variables. It just does not change to the same degree. It is still influential, but perhaps slightly less so.

Research data confirms my findings about Al Qaeda’s loss of support. The Arab public opinion surveys conducted by the Brookings Institute indicate cognitive dissonance among the Arab population. While Arabs appear to support certain terrorist group philosophies, there is a decisive lack of support for their violent acts, or “deeds.” According to Gistaro, “even as Al Qaeda attempts to push its propaganda in the West, its support has suffered several setbacks among its key constituents. Al Qaeda’s brutal attacks against Muslim civilians are tarnishing its image among both mainstream and extremist Muslims.”¹⁷⁶ While this does not mention their attacks’

¹⁷⁶ Ted Gistaro, “Assessing the Fight against al-Qaeda,” <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/assessing-the-fight-against-al-qaeda>.

impact on Arabs specifically, most Arabs do adhere to Islam. Additionally, a 2009 article explains that the counterterror measures by the U.S. government against Al Qaeda, proved to have “significantly reduced the terrorist organization’s effectiveness.”¹⁷⁷ Of course, these are only some samples of resources that have published findings similar to my own. But there is strength in numbers, and the sheer volume of scholarly reports finding that actions speak louder than words in reducing support for Al Qaeda is telling. Sawyer and Vittori indicate that “sustained and continual pressure on AQI has degraded the organization and disassembled its support networks. Going forward, the ability for AQI to shape the future jihadist fight outside of Iraq will be limited.”¹⁷⁸ In terms of the impact of violence, Lynch goes so far as to highlight Al Qaeda’s willingness to kill “growing numbers of innocent Muslims” rather than Americans,” and the extent to which the U.S. could “lower its profile” in the war on terror because Al Qaeda’s violence had caused it to suffer “self-inflicted wounds.”¹⁷⁹

Al Qaeda still exists, not as a monolithic entity, but in pockets throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Some of these “pockets” are stronger than others, but it has clearly lost support among its constituency. It’s important to note that I am not saying Al Qaeda can’t and won’t orchestrate other large scale attacks. There is no

¹⁷⁷ Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus, “Success Against Al-Qaeda Cited,” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2009 (http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2009-09-30/news/36842955_1_qaeda-al-qaeda-counterterrorism-effort).

¹⁷⁸ Reid Sawyer and Jodi M. Vittori, “The Uncontested Battles: The Rule of Actions, Networks, and Ideas in the Fight Against Al Qaeda,” in Russell D. Howard and Bruce Hoffman, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 652.

¹⁷⁹ Marc Lynch, “Rhetoric and Reality: Countering Terrorism in the Age of Obama,” in Russell D. Howard and Bruce Hoffman, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012) 678.

denying that it is a tenacious and adaptable organization. But it is important to acknowledge that the West is not alone in its distaste for the group. Should the U.S. and its allies properly appeal to the Arab public, perhaps we could take advantage of diminished agreement with/confidence in/sympathy with Al Qaeda, and help to force Al Qaeda operatives out of their hiding places.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Implications

The generalizability of the Al Qaeda case is crucial. It does not appear to be an exceptional instance of a terrorist group attempting to utilize propaganda to gain support. Propaganda campaigns have been waged throughout the decades, to varying effect. Organizations such as Hamas, Hezbollah, ETA, the PKK, the IRA, and the PLO have all made strong efforts to utilize propaganda and win support. The trajectory of public support for a terrorist organization is a complicated one, and it requires deeper probing to determine what is influential, when.

Mention of other terror organizations begs the question of whether or not these groups' acts of violence and subsequent counterterror responses would influence public support more so than media propaganda. There is no way to know for certain without investigating each group individually. However, it is safe to assume that those variables that influenced Al Qaeda's constituency would also influence these groups' respective constituencies. Al Qaeda is different from these groups in that it is a transnational terror organization; its constituency is probably much larger than that of, say, Hamas. If a particular variable influences such a vast array of individuals in the case of Al Qaeda, I'm inclined to think that it would influence a smaller group of people in the case of a less globally-minded terror group. I would imagine that acts of violence, counterterror responses, and local casualties would have an even greater impact in a smaller context. This would require further investigation, however, and would be a valuable research project.

Why is this Important?

Whether Al Qaeda fully represents the array of other terror groups or not, this single case study is still valuable. Al Qaeda remains a present threat, having recently released an issue of online magazine *Inspire* that focused on the Boston bombings, and incited Muslims to carry out similar attacks.¹⁸⁰ While the magazine itself has become increasingly small in size, and sloppily edited and written, AQAP still works to maintain a social media presence.¹⁸¹ A message from AQAP military commander Qassem Al-Rimi “warns Americans that such acts will continue and that the U.S. government is unable to stop them.”¹⁸² This is primarily rhetoric, but an article in *The Atlantic* published in 2012 indicates that regardless of Al Qaeda’s debatable decline, “a growing number of insurgencies are reaching out to Al Qaeda for legitimacy and support.”¹⁸³ This article also points out that while some analysts argue Al Qaeda is stronger than ever, others say it is dead or dying. Foust speculates that it is probably somewhere in the middle.

As we know from the Brookings Institute surveys, Al Qaeda’s support within the Arab world has dwindled tremendously. While it clearly remains relevant, it appears that convincing Arabs not to support the organization is not a major challenge. While events like the Boston Marathon bombings indicate that Al Qaeda

¹⁸⁰ Doug Stanglin, “Al-Qaeda magazine warns of more ‘lone-wolf’ attacks,” *USA Today*, May 31 2013 (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/05/31/al-qaeda-inspire-magazine-lone-wolf-terrorism-jihad/2375571/>).

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Joshua Foust, “How Strong Is al Qaeda Today, Really?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1 2012 (<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/05/how-strong-is-al-qaeda-today-really/256609/>).

still has sympathizers, it has fortunately lost many of them over a period of several years, primarily during its years of greatest violence: 2006 and 2007.

Conclusion

The seven independent variables explored certainly paint a picture of a failed propaganda effort by Al Qaeda. While its “media machine,” a term coined by Al Qaeda scholar Philip Seib, certainly revolutionized the way we see terror organization propaganda, it did not revolutionize the ability of the terror group to influence its constituency. Surely, it made communication to the constituency easier, more frequent, and more tech-savvy. But technology, ease of communication, and frequency of communication do not necessarily equate to greater efficacy.

I had assumed that one of the independent variables would have been responsible for bolstering Al Qaeda support, namely the variable of media propaganda. I had expected that as Al Qaeda leadership was killed or brought into U.S. custody, and as counterterror campaigns were waged, the organization’s media machine would diminish and its support base would in turn decline substantially. Instead, no independent variable bolstered support for the group. Rather, three independent variables, to relatively equal degrees, brought about diminishing returns for AQ. Efforts it made to show strength and determination, and to cast U.S. counterterror measures in a negative light, only backfired to alienate those it sought to win over. It is possible that another reason Al Qaeda could not bolster support, only lose it, was also nationalism. Mounting nationalist efforts that culminated in the Arab Awakening could have contributed to an increased loyalty to nation rather

than religion, and the idea of non-radicalized, trustworthy leadership. The Arab Spring, which began in December 2010 (about one year after the final year of survey data in my research) could be a manifestation of anti-Islamist, pro-nationalist sentiments among the Arabic-Muslim public. This requires further investigation, but growing nationalism could be an intervening variable.

According to Egyptian author Sayyid Qutb and Muslim revivalist leader Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), nationalism could not co-exist with pan-Islamism.¹⁸⁴ Al-Qaeda, of course, advocated for pan-Islamism. Qutb and Maudid would most likely argue that a nationalism movement such as those in Egypt and Libya would directly challenge pan-Islamist efforts. Al Qaeda transnational ideology runs counter to nationalist sentiments. Ayoob cites Fawaz Gerges as describing Al Qaeda jihadis as “a new transnational generation of warriors....Muslim men of various national and social backgrounds” who defended an “imagined community.”¹⁸⁵ These warriors “viewed themselves as the vanguard of the *ummah*, not as citizens of separate countries.”¹⁸⁶ This would give Al Qaeda a decidedly supra-territorial flavor that runs counter to the idea of national governments focused on national issues instead of the broader concerns of the Muslim community, the *ummah*.

What Al Qaeda’s loss of support will mean for the organization in the coming years, we cannot predict. What we can do is utilize information such as this to perpetuate negative perceptions of terror groups, and further extricate constituencies from the terror organization’s grasp. This study means a lot for

¹⁸⁴ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 131-151.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 146.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

counterterrorist effort. It points to the fact that counterterror efforts to make a difference, and Al Qaeda is a foe we can fight, particularly if the U.S. aligns with allies in the Arab world so that counterterror efforts come from the Arab-Muslim public, and Arab leadership itself. We can continue to diminish support for Al Qaeda with persistence and focus on actions rather than rhetoric.

Appendix

Figure 1 – Instances of Alternate Hypotheses

This figure tracks the number of events taking place, based upon my personal research process, that fit into each of the Independent Variable categories. While there are five main independent variables, I separated out Media Propaganda and Propaganda of the Deed so that they were no longer in the “Propaganda” category. For the purposes of my research, instances of media propaganda were classified as internally or externally produced film or video, and propaganda of the deed tracked instances of political violence. I also separated Religion & Acts of Charity from the Independent Variable “Relating to the Population” to track instances of religious expression as distinct from instances charitable activity. These categories are consolidated into “Al Qaeda Propaganda” and “Appealing to the Constituency for Support” within the research. Numbers provided largely by *Intel Center Al-Qaeda Messaging/Attacks Timeline 1992-2009*, except where noted.

Counterterror Responses

2002: 5
2003: 9
2004: 9
2005: 8
2006: 12
2007: 11
2008: 37
2009: 58

Media Propaganda

2002: 61. 6 were As-Sahab Produced (Internal)
2003: 52-59, 11 As-Sahab Produced
2004: 49 (Most OBL videos in a given year), 13 As-Sahab Produced
2005: 29 (No appearances by OBL), 16 As-Sahab Produced
2006: 71 (Most Al-Zawahiri videos), 58 As-Sahab Produced. 1st video to show Zarqawi’s face appeared this year.
2007: 250, 90 As-Sahab produced. Most Al-Libi media statements.
2008: 66, 33 As-Sahab produced
2009: 87-116

***Propaganda of the Deed**

2002: 13
2003: 14
2004: 62
2005: 168
2006: 9
2007: 30-55
2008: 29
2009: 18

Politics

2002: 11
2003: 16
2004: 9
2005: 14
2006: 17
2007: 27
2008: 10
2009: 17

***Levels of Violence**

2002: 456 civilians (10 Americans, 3 Israelis, 2 U.S. Marines. Mostly non-Western)
2003: 377 (10 Americans, 9 Iraqis, 17 military, 100 Western)
2004: 721 civilians (over 400 non-Western)
2005: 1600 civilians (over 1500 non-Western)
2006: 225 civilians (almost all non-Western, 1 Pakistani military)
2007: 719 civilians (+30 Pakistani military, mostly Iraqi civilians)
2008: 305 civilians (16 Chinese military, 1 American)
2009: 89 (1 American, 6 Pakistani soldiers)

Levels of Violence (not used in charts, but useful for reference/comparison; according to npsglobal.org data). No military/civilian distinction specified.

2002: 260
2003: 170
2004: 342
2005: 207
2006: Not available
2007: 33
2008: 6
2009: Not available

***Propaganda of the Deed and Levels of Violence data supplemented with information from the CTC's "Deadly Vanguard" Report and from NCTC's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, WITS**

Religion**2002:** 18**2003:** 13**2004:** 4**2005:** 8**2006:** 18**2007:** 20**2008:** 23**2009:** 30**Acts of Charity****2005:** 1

Note: According to Ciavacco's *Contours of Al Qaeda Media Strategy*, "Bin Laden released significantly more audio than video recordings before 9/11. 2001 was a turning point. *As-Sahab* was founded in June of this year, and its technological dexterity increased. It began to publish its videos on the Internet, thereby cutting out the middleman, *Al-Jazeera* (865).

Survey Data Used in Research:

**1) Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development University of Maryland/Zogby International Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey
A Six Country Study: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia (KSA) and UAE**

**Professor Shibley Telhami, Principal Investigator
Carnegie Corporation of New York**

When you think about Al Qaeda, what aspect of the organization, if any, do you sympathize with the most?

(Percentages indicate the quantity of respondents who sympathized with *some* aspect of the organization, instead of choosing to respond "None")

2005: 77%**2006:** 65%**2008:** 65%**2009:** 60%

2) Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, Released May 2, 2011, "Osama bin Laden Largely Discredited Among Muslim Publics in Recent Years" (Based on Muslims Only). My data was calculated to provide the percentage of the population instead of the percentage of Muslims. I found the population of each country based on Historical Data Graphs per Year provided by Index Mundi, and re-calculated the percentages of Muslims provided as percentages of the overall population of Egypt,

Jordan, and Lebanon. Percentages indicate the percentage of the countries' populations that have confidence in Osama bin Laden:

2003: 44%

2005: 44%

2006: 27%

2007: 18%

2008: 19%

2009: 22%

3) World Public Opinion, "Public Opinion in the Islamic World on Terrorism, Al Qaeda, and U.S. Policies, February 25, 2009, "View of Al Qaeda" Percentages were originally divided into the number that supports AQ's attack on Americans and share its attitudes toward the U.S., the number that opposes its attacks on Americans but shares many of its attitudes, and the number that opposes its attacks on Americans and do not share its attitudes toward the U.S., as well as a "Don't Know" category. I combined the percentages that support AQ's attacks and those that only support its attitudes, and combined that to form the category of individuals who support *some* aspect of AQ. This was in contrast to those who oppose AQ attacks as well as those who do not share its attitudes. **Egypt, Morocco. Survey of the countries' overall population.**

2007: 19%

2008: 21%

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