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The post-9/11 Al Qaida. The Vanguard of Islamic Terrorism at the Onset of the 21st Century

The attack of September 11, 2001 marks a turning point in Al Qaida's terrorist activity. Its extent and global repercussions are testimony to operational effectiveness of the terror network on the one hand and the nature of the threat it embodies on the other. The attack was just one of a sequence of steps taken with a view to undermining the world's only superpower to the extent that it would be incapable of taking retaliatory measures.¹ This long-standing strategy that Al Qaida has basically been pursuing since its inception has not lost its relevance under the resultant so-called *war on terror*. The scheme corresponds with the fact that Al Qaida's founders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri consider their terrorist organization to be the vanguard of Islamic movement aimed at freeing the holy lands of Islam of outside influence.

Over the past years Al Qaida has undergone a fairly long and complex evolution with regard to its organizational structure and operational tactics.² The kind of threat it poses today bears absolutely no comparison with the menace of the 1990s for instance. Richard H. Schulz and Ruth Margolies Beitler, among others, go as far as to claim that the very emergence of Al Qaida stirred up a revolution in the history of terrorism and resulted in the advancement of next generation warfare involving warring nations on the one hand and non-state, armed, network organizations on the other.³ Ironically, undermining Al Qaida's operations through the detention or neutralization of some of its prominent figures – Muhammed Atef, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad⁴ and Abu Musab

¹ Chris Heffelfinger cites a "bleed-to-bankruptcy" scheme devised by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, cf.: *Al Qaeda's Evolving Strategy Five Years after September 11*, "Terrorism Focus" 2006, vol. III, issue 35, p. 4.

² See more: R. A. Pape, *Al Qaeda's Strategy*, "International Herald Tribune," 12 July 2005.

³ This is the fourth kind of war following classical (Napoleonic) wars with states fighting each other, wars of exhaustion with the widespread use of conventional weapons and wars with the use of mechanized equipment (cf.: R. H. Schulz, R. M. Beitler, *Tactical Deception and Strategic Surprise in Al-Qai'da's Operations*, "Middle East Review of International Affairs" 2004, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 57).

⁴ He is credited with responsibility for the plot to carry out the 9/11 attack on America.

al-Zarqawi – has actually helped the organization grow stronger and richer than ever before.⁵ Therefore, it is wrong to presume that no repeat performance of the attack of the 9/11 extent means that Al Qaida has already been crushed⁶ as the events of 2004 and 2005 indicate otherwise.⁷ What is the new Al Qaida and why is it the vanguard of present-day Islamic terrorism?

Those using the well-established name with reference to an entity that came to be through the merger between bin Laden's Al Qaida and Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad inevitably get thrown into confusion⁸ as we are presently dealing with the World Islamic Front of Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders. The term *Al Qaida* primarily used to connote *the base*, though Jason Burke argues that *the foundation* or *the law* would be the more accurate renderings. Abdullah Azzam, the now dead co-founder of Al Qaida, is perhaps most precise in demonstrating the nature of the term. He described it as *al-qaeda al-sulbah* (a vanguard of the strong), which denoted a man – a role model teaching Muslims of the ummah how to fight outside influence.⁹ Updating the term was not only meant to emphasize the institutional evolution of this terrorist organization, but also, first and foremost, to take up the *modus operandi* of Egyptian terrorists invoking the accomplishments of The Muslim Brotherhood. The measure has aimed at winning acclaim for bin Laden's cause beyond the Middle East and shifting the burden of struggle into enemy territory. The newly-formed, transnational hybrid is often referred to as the next generation Al Qaida (or simply Al Qaida 2.0).¹⁰ In terms of its impact upon society, religion or politics, Al Qaida 2.0 still remains a vague phenomenon.¹¹ What is bin Laden's position within the new superorganization and what are its objectives?

Even though bin Laden is the principal founder of Al Qaida, he does not wield absolute power within the organization. He is a kind of mentor, a spiritual leader, or rather a deputy chairman of the new structure. Last but not least, he considers himself a precursor to the worldwide Islamic revolution. Referring to bin Laden's capacity Michael Scheuer cites his statement released by radical Islamic websites shortly after the September 11 attack: "I must say that my duty is just to awaken the Muslims, to tell them as to what is good for

⁵ One should note that at least seven out of almost thirty members of Al Qaida's head committees were killed whereas another seven terrorists were captured and incarcerated.

⁶ Cf.: S. Gorka, *Al Qaida's Next Generation*, in: *Unmasking Terror. A Global Review of Terrorist Activities*, J. Sirrs, M. Abedin, Ch. Heffelfinger (ed.), The Jamestown Foundation, Washington 2004, p. 49.

⁷ Cf.: J. Risen, *Evolving Nature of Al Qaeda Is Misunderstood, Critic Says*, "The New York Times," 8 November 2004.

⁸ To retain an orderly narrative author will also stick to this term with reference to the most recent period.

⁹ J. Burke, *Al Qaeda, "Foreign Policy"* 2004, issue 142, p. 18.

¹⁰ Cf.: B. Węglarczyk, *Co szkuję al Kaida 2.0*, "Gazeta Wyborcza," 1 July 2004.

¹¹ See more: B. Hoffman, *Al Qaeda, Trends in Terrorism and Future Potentialities: An Assessment*, RAND, 2003, p. 3, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P8078/P8078.pdf>.

them.¹² Subsequent statements by bin Laden shed more light on Al Qaida's mission, e.g. in 2003 (in his Al-Jazeera speech the day before another anniversary of the attack on America) he announced that Al Qaida was "... the vanguard of the Muslim nation that has decided to fight you [the United States] to last breath."¹³ Bin Laden would often figuratively stress that the fundamentalist groups of today make up a bomb detonator for the worldwide Islamic revolution. Resorting to it at the right time may foment a revolution that will fulfill a common Muslim dream of breaking free from the yoke of imperial captivity.

Al Qaida's ideology, which has been developed ever since its inception, is of a very shallow and archaic nature as it invokes simple truths and offers simple solutions. The terrorists operating under the banner of this organization have been pursuing the goal of uniting all Muslims, including those living in the West, which would facilitate establishment of the caliph rule. The unification will only be possible after the anti-Islamic regimes have been overthrown and the effort will eventually result in setting up a universal Islamic state in which specific governments will have been replaced with a uniform system based on the rule of Islamic government, law and tradition.¹⁴ The intention is therefore both anti-imperial and utopian as it is about liberating Muslims from Western influence rather than conquering the West itself. However, it is difficult to picture a historically and ethnically divided Caliphate extending its authority from the Balkan regions to the Middle East to the Far East.

Bin Laden does not consent to any disputes concerning the advancement of Al Qaida's doctrine. Michael Scheuer argues that this stance has to do with two simple operational presumptions. The first one makes an enemy of the United States as to Muslims America is an embodiment of all sorts of evil and decadence. Furthermore, it is a Zionist ally and an imperial superpower that reigns supreme over the contemporary world. Bin Laden was clear about that objective in an Al-Jazeera statement of November 1, 2004: "All we have to do is to send two mujahideen to the furthest point east to rise a piece of cloth on which is written al-Qaeda, in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic and political losses without achieving anything..."¹⁵ The other presumption, in turn, postpones engaging in any theological, ethnic and political debates until the main enemy has been defeated.¹⁶ To attain that objective would not be feasible if Al Qaida – a principal driving force propelling the worldwide Islamic revolution – was smashed, hence bin Laden's pains

¹² M. Scheuer, *Coalition Warfare: How al-Qaeda Uses the World Islamic Front Against Crusaders and Jews*, in: *Unmasking Terror. A Global Review of Terrorist Activities. Volume II*, Ch. Heffelfinger (ed.), The Jamestown Foundation, Washington 2005, p. 3.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 4.

¹⁴ Y. Alexander, M. S. Swetnam, *Siewcy śmierci. Osama bin Laden i inni szefowie Al-Qaidy*, Warszawa 2001, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ch. Heffelfinger, *Al Qaida's*, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

to remodel its profile and organizational structure as well as to extend its operational range over virtually all inhabited continents. Therefore, stirring up Islamic revolution in Iraq in 2003 and assuming a vanguard role by Al Qaida's Iraqi faction headed by the now dead Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (*Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* was later renamed as The Al Qaida Jihad Organization in The Land of The Two Rivers¹⁷) are clear follow-up steps. The years following 2001 saw a number of statements made by Ayman al-Zawahiri, among others, that either defined tactical objectives or evaluated the recently taken terror action worldwide. At this point one comes up against a frequently voiced proposition of groups supporting Al Qaida's agenda and independent terrorist cells being tied to bin Laden and al-Zawahiri. It seems that the perpetrators of the Madrid and London bombings were neither organizationally nor operationally connected with Al Qaida's structure. Nonetheless, they were very articulate about their endorsement of the terror network's objectives and operations, which implies a whole new course of action in the present decade since Al Qaida previously remained largely inactive both in Europe and in Asia. The reasons for the quietness on the European front seems obvious, i.e. Americans have had committed allies there whose very presence in the Middle East warranted the US aggression in the region. To weaken allies is to adversely affect American interests, which has already resulted in the deligitimization of the US intervention in Iraq.

The 1990s were dominated by Al Qaida's old generation militants whose connection to bin Laden dates back to the conflict in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Sebastian Gorka defined them as a caste of 50- and 60-year-olds enjoying an aura of triumph over a godless, Soviet regime.¹⁸ Back then, Al Qaida was a united and unitarian organization whose mode of operation was determined by the personal loyalty to its founder. The militants were engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an unofficial faction of Afghan Arabs. The 9/11 attack marks the dawn of the 20- and 30-year-olds' domination. This generation of terrorists is chiefly bound up by their shared commitment to extremist Islamic sentiments and also by the knowledge acquired at Islamic universities and Koran schools scattered all across the Middle East. S. Gorka is quite right in pointing out that they make up a close-knit social group encompassing the old generation through family ties for instance.¹⁹ They do not share, however, a corresponding track record, i.e. the younger generation has no war experience. They also differ in social and ethnic background (Al Qaida 2.0 is not 100% Arab), but they do share a total commitment to the terror network's cause.

¹⁷ See more details in: *The Iraqi Al-Qa'ida Organization: A Self-Portrait*, The Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch Series 2005, no. 884.

¹⁸ S. Gorka, *Al Qaida's*, op. cit., p. 50.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

Contrary to some theories, Al Qaida has never been a virtual entity as it has enjoyed a solid footing from its inception – a well-developed structure characteristic of terrorist groups (it takes looking no further than ETA, die RAF as well as radical anarchists and communists). On the one hand the structure has been made up of *sui generis* head committees. On the other hand it has comprised independent cells being scattered all over the world since early 1990s. The old generation Al Qaida strengthened during the Afghan Civil War (1996–2001) as it won strong support from the Taliban regime. This is when recruitment proceedings started with new members receiving training at terrorist bases in Afghanistan, but becoming active only in the present decade. In the aftermath of September 11 and, particularly, after an offensive by the Northern Alliance resulting in the fall of the Taliban and the loss of terror training bases, Al Qaida entered into a more of a disordered operational period.²⁰

Even though Al Qaida is no virtual entity, it nonetheless has much to do with virtual reality. The world of today is a global village with the Internet as its blood circulation. In the present decade the terror network's militants have been faced with the challenge to disseminate Jihad online. Social engineering tricks performed by Al Qaida's leaders were reinforced by means of cyberspace and so became more effective. If raising awareness among the masses is regarded as terrorism's constituent objective, this channel of communication should then be considered absolutely essential. Stephen Ulph rightly points to an online abundance of materials connected with Al Qaida's terrorist activity and also offers interesting examples to this effect²¹ such as official statements by the group's leaders and various monographs about the technical aspects of Al Qaida's activity as well as religion and doctrine. That these publications are usually released in Arabic results in them being known in the West only superficially as is the case with the recognition of the impact of the Internet on the general culture of Jihad.

The thing that sets apart the pre- and post-9/11 periods is the focus of the latter one on mass audience, which visibly intensified in the aftermath of the 2002 Bali bombing (with Al Qaida wrongly credited with the blast). Publications by the group's members available on *Sawt al-Jihad* (The Voice of Jihad) and *Mu'askar al-Battar* (al-Battar Training Camp) websites enjoy a fair degree of popularity and many articles written by the now dead terrorists (sheik Yusuf al Ayyri was killed in June 2003 and Abd al-Aziz al-Muqrin – in June 2004) are concerned with military tactics and guerilla warfare. Since 2003 Al Qaida's militants in Iraq have taken great care to address the following issues: capability to conduct special operations in cities, communication security, intelligence activ-

²⁰ Al Qaeda Today and Real Roots of Terrorism, "Terrorism Monitor" 2004, vol. I, issue 11, p. 2.

²¹ S. Ulph, *A Guide to Jihad on the Web*, in: *Unmasking Terror. A Global Review of Terrorist Activities. Volume II*, op. cit., p. 20.

ity techniques, collection of information, camouflage, taking cover, propaganda dissemination techniques and stirring up discontent.²² While it is hard to estimate the number of websites offering operational materials of that type, the past few years have definitely seen its unprecedented increase and so it is fair to claim that there are thousands of such online sources now. Interestingly, one of the sites hosts a women's magazine published by a Saudi Al Qaida member Abd al-Aziz al Muqrin who reportedly set up the Al Qa'id'a Arabian Peninsula Women's Information Bureau²³ – owner of the URL. The publications provide guidelines for Islamic extremists' wives about the ways to support their husbands engaged in *the holy war* and to raise their children in a spirit of Jihad. As a writer puts it – [the children whose remains must be our sacrifice].²⁴

Al Qaida's members and supporters do not abstain from using modern online services for their terrorist activity, e.g. anonymous inboxes. Muhammad Siddique Khan – one of the terrorists incriminated in the London bombings of July 7, 2005 – previously used much the same service at Yahoo! and Hotmail websites, which helped him get in touch with the Al Qaida members in Pakistan.²⁵ The information was not sent to a recipient's inbox to prevent keyword interception. Rather, the recipient logged in the owner's inbox to access the information he needed, which hindered any legitimate attempts at tracking the suspects by intelligence services of foreign countries. Those sanctioning such operations would actually end up facing another problem, i.e. terrorists encrypt their messages and to crack the code poses a serious challenge. Even though we have seen the arrests of people bearing special "code books," e.g. French IT professional Kamel Daoudi in October 2001, unfortunately the knowledge gained this way has time constraints with regard to its relevance and operational value. According to Pakistani intelligence sources, though, both bin Laden and al-Zawahiri use that mode to indirectly issue their directives to the Al Qaida members.²⁶

Terrorist attacks – the Madrid bombings in particular – clearly indicate that terror action has now found use for high-end technology such as cell phones that set off the remotely-controlled bombs. Interestingly, the timing of the bombings was no coincidence. The attack was of great significance for Al Qaida's strategy in Europe as Spanish parliamentary election was just three days away. Jose Luis Zapatero (who later became Prime Minister) turned out to be an unwitting supporter of the terrorists as he announced a U-turn in Spain's

²² For more, go to.: *ibidem*, p. 21.

²³ For more, go to.: *Al-Qa'ida Women's Magazine: Women Must Participate in Jihad*, The Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch Series 2004, no. 779.

²⁴ *Dżihad dla kobiet*, "Gazeta Wyborcza," 31 August 2004.

²⁵ A. Debat, *Al Qaeda's Web of Terror*, ABC News, 10 March 2006.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

foreign policy by pulling the country's troops out of Iraq.²⁷ That example is symptomatic of an extremely cynical approach by bin Laden's group to internal affairs of a foreign state that is designed to help Al Qaida achieve its tactical objectives. Interestingly enough, the intent had been elaborated on as early as three months before the bombings in a document released anonymously by fundamentalist Islamic websites. According to Thomas Hegghammer of the research institute at Norwegian defense ministry, that 42-page document clearly demonstrates "the domino tactics" whereby forcing a country to withdraw its troops from Iraq will make others follow suit or otherwise face the threat of terrorist attacks.²⁸ In retrospect, the strategy proved to be a failure as the only withdrawn forces were those of the countries that had intended to do so anyway with the bombings only pushing them to make that move sooner rather than later.

A number of analysts also overrate the threat of another kind that trade publications have defined as megaterrorism or superterrorism. In that case it refers to a possible employment of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by the Al Qaida members.²⁹ In the wake of 9/11, many Americans feared that Al Qaida used anthrax in order to further aggravate the effects of its terror action. The supposition has remained inconclusive, though. While, in theory, the group may have come into possession of chemical or biological weapons rather than radiological weapons, a nuke terror action seems unreal. The aforementioned premise is strongly buttressed by Al Qaida's leaders having every intention of obtaining unconventional weapons.³⁰ The website of The Encyclopaedia of Jihad (with Al Qaida's members credited with its authorship) illustrates the ways to assemble chemical and bio weapons.³¹ The post-9/11 years have seen the WMD being detected a number of times in locations previously used by the Al Qaida terrorists. That was the case in Afghanistan for instance with traces of castor oil and anthrax being discovered in at least six camps during the war against the Taliban.³² After the collapse of the Taliban regime, a number of terrorists made its way to Georgia harboring the so-called "terrorist academy" teaching how to produce castor oil and other poisons.³³ The news hinting that

²⁷ For more, go to: B. Wildstein, *Tragedia hiszpańska, klęska Europy*, "Rzeczpospolita," 17 March 2004.

²⁸ Cf.: B. Węglarczyk, *Wybory al Kaidy*, "Gazeta Wyborcza," 17 March 2004.

²⁹ See more details in: T. Tarvainen, *Al Qaida and WMD: A Primer*, "Terrorism Monitor" 2005, vol. III, issue 11, pp. 8-10.

³⁰ J. Spyer, *The Al-Qa'ida Network and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, "Middle East Review of International Affairs" 2004, vol. 8, no. 3, p. 34.

³¹ Cf.: K. McCloud, G. A. Ackerman, J. M. Bale, *Al Qa'ida's WMD Activities*, Monterey Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 21 January 2003, http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/ot-her/sjm_cht.htm.

³² J. Spyer, *The Al-Qa'ida*, op. cit., p. 34.

³³ "Akademia terrorystyczna" *al-Qaidy*,

<http://info.onet.pl/1061849,12,1,0,120,686,item.html>, March 2005.

the terror network attempted at obtaining pathogens such as Ebola virus, salmonella and anthrax broke as early as before the turn of the century, e.g. at the 1999 trial of Al Qaida's members in Egypt. In 2001 a laboratory designed to manufacture anthrax germs was uncovered in Kandahar.³⁴ The post-9/11 arrests in Europe led investigators to detect terrorist plots to use WMD. Jonathan Spyer points to at least three relevant cases: detaining nine Moroccans in Rome at the turn of February and March 2002 and six people of North African residence in London in 2003 as well as indicting eight Al Qaida's members in London for the plot to mount an attack using radioactive materials, toxic gases, chemicals and explosives.³⁵ Despite a considerable number of clues proving Al Qaida's pursuit of WMD, a large-scale terror action involving them is still highly unlikely as, logistics-wise for instance, the group could have a hard time stockpiling the weapons and keeping intelligence services oblivious to it. The plot runs a higher risk of being exposed when terrorists seek to use radiological or nuclear bombs. Al Qaida could possibly arrange for two state sponsors, i.e. Iran and North Korea to supply it with such weapons. The Iran connection seems particularly relevant as the 9/11 Commission did find ties between Al Qaida and Tehran.³⁶ Although no evidence substantiating the claim of Iranian involvement in the attack preparation was found, supporting Al Qaida's agenda as well as turning a blind eye to the presence of the network's militants in its territory must be disturbing, with the USA obviously seeming most concerned.

In the post-9/11 years the US foreign policy has come to be associated with fighting a large-scale "war on terror." America has not been there on its own though as Great Britain and Poland have remained its two most committed European allies. During the first two years of the "war on terror" the USA was able to form a fairly broad-based, international, anti-terror coalition. The world community adopted a multifaceted approach to the objective of removing the Al Qaida threat by engaging in diplomatic and economic activity as well as intelligence and military operations. It is wrong to claim that the present decade, or the time span following the Madrid and London bombings in particular, is nothing less than World War III.³⁷ Indeed, the new century marks the dawn of "spectacular" terrorism mesmerizing worldwide audience with the all-out, mass media-hyped terrorist attacks (live TV coverage of the United Airlines Flight 175 slamming into the South Tower). The record of other terrorist organizations (die RAF, le BR) is a clear indication that there are no invincible groups

³⁴ J. Spyer, *The Al-Qa'ida*, op. cit., p. 35.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 35.

³⁶ A. Zagorin and Joe Klein, *9/11 Commission Finds Ties Between al-Qaeda and Iran*, "Time" Friday," 16 July 2004, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,664967,00.html>.

³⁷ Trzecia wojna światowa, "Rzeczpospolita," 18 March 2004, cf.: *Arab Media Reactions to the London Bombing: "A Charter in World War III"*, The Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Report 2005, no. 36.

out there and the ideology espoused by their members has actually waned very fast. Christopher C. Harmon's interesting piece³⁸ presents some major ways to destroy Al Qaida. The first one, currently employed in Afghanistan, is the military option. While the use of force has proved successful when addressing domestic terrorism, e.g. in Syria (The Muslim Brotherhood) and in Peru (Tupac Amaru), it does not seem an effective means for wrecking the Al Qaida cells (independent groups) scattered the world over. Rather, a multilateral cooperation within the framework of a common anti-terror strategy appears more reasonable as it could facilitate the dismantlement of the terror network on a local basis. The second option is for each country to take unilateral action to reduce the Al Qaida threat targeting its citizens. Last but not least, Harmon's third alternative stipulates that the organization leaders should either be captured or eliminated.³⁹ The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) is a case in point as its guerrilla activity was terminated in 1992 in the wake of Abimael Guzman's arrest. The question whether bin Laden's and al-Zawahiri's capture – the two of Al Qaida's mentors rather than leaders – will actually bring an end to this autonomously structured organization has so far remained unanswered. The claim of democracy winning over the Middle East and its resultant taking the political and ideological arm away from bin Laden's terror network ought to be considered highly speculative. The Al Qaida issue seems a lot more complex as the organization has been pursuing totally different objectives and is not remotely interested in the political setup of the West. Rather, Al Qaida has been striving for the principles of the so-called political Islam to prevail. Carl Conetta suggests that a global agenda be developed in order to combat the threat of such complexity – the list including both direct and indirect measures to be taken. The former ones (military force and intelligence services) are designed to detect and foil impending terrorist attacks as well as dismantle terror infrastructure and eliminate the terrorists themselves. Resorting to direct measures, in turn, is aimed at learning the nature of the threat as well as investigating the capability of the terrorist organization and the conditions in which it poses a critical danger.⁴⁰

As of today Al Qaida has not been able to attain any of its strategic, nor tactic objectives – a claim supported by Brian M. Jenkins of RAND Corp for instance.⁴¹ After all, the Great Satan (the USA) still has its troops deployed in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Moreover, the Little Satan (Israel) has not been wiped

³⁸ Ch. C. Harmon, *How al-Qaeda May End*, The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder #1760, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg1760.cfm>.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ C. Conetta, *Dislocating Alcyoneus: How to combat al-Qaeda an the new terrorism*, Commonwealth Institute of Cambridge, Project on Defense Alternatives, Briefing Memo #3, 25 June 2002, <http://www.comw.org/pda/0206dislocate.html>.

⁴¹ D. Murphy, *Has Al Qaeda advanced its goals since 9/11?*, "The Christian Science Monitor," 11 September 2006, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0911/p10s01-wogi.html>.

off the map and Jerusalem has not been conquered. Last but not least, Al Qaida has not managed to overthrow a single Arabic regime, nor establish the Great Caliphate. The Al Qaida leaders make no big deal out of these setbacks, though, as they have not set themselves any time frame to advance the abovementioned goals. Bin Laden's organization is first and foremost a group on a certain mission rather than a military force and that is what the American leadership cannot seem to understand.

The world has so far remained helpless against the danger of the Al Qaida terrorist attacks. Bruce Hoffman rightly argues that this state of affairs has to do with the international community having been compelled to take action *ad hoc* and even though the taken measures have been tough, they are nowhere near a well-thought-out and coherent strategy.⁴² Even if the basic points of the strategy have been defined, it seems to lack the willpower for a far-reaching cooperation between the world's major players. The US unilateralism does anything but bridge a widening chasm between Islam and the West, which only impedes proposing an Islamic alternative to a revolutionary political power – Al Qaida.

⁴² B. Hoffman, *Al Qaeda*, op. cit., p. 13.