

WORKING PAPER 26

DECEMBER 2013

*Al-Qaeda, the regional upheaval and Israel –
from someone else's problem to a different kind of problem*

Col. G.

The Working Paper received the runner up prize in the 2013 Eyal Ragunis Memorial Competition



International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)

Additional ICT resources are available on ICT's website: www.ict.org.il

About the Author:

This paper of **Col. G.** received the runner up prize in the 2013 Eyal Ragonis Memorial Competition.

The Ragonis Foundation Scholarship of The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at The Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya promotes research in counter-terrorism and homeland security among IDF Soldiers and IDC Students.

Preface:

The phenomenon of Global Jihad, Al-Qaeda being its most prominent player, has been present in the Middle East for more than two decades; however, to a great extent, it was and still remains an enigma. The number of opinions as to the gravity of this threat today equals the number of researchers. Opinions range from total dismissal and a conclusive determination that this is a marginal phenomenon and an organization that has become a thing of the past, to viewing it as a material and undefeated threat, which could undermine the very foundations of the Western world's existence.

In the first decade of its existence, Al-Qaeda was characterized by being a centralized organization, aggressively operated by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. However, when the more the threats against it intensified in Afghanistan, particularly after the September 11th 2001 terror attacks, the need (and on occasion the opportunity) to operate in a number of theaters simultaneously arose. Following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the organization started gradually moving from a centralized structure to a decentralized organization.¹ However, it should be noted, that the first signs of the decentralization policy were also present during the centralized period – the reliance on strong allies (initially on countries such as Saudi Arabia and Sudan, and later on organizations such as the Taliban and presently, on allies on the tribal level) and delegating operative responsibilities to the entities perpetrating the attacks (the leadership determined the target of the terror attack and the operatives in the field determined the characteristics of its actual execution).

¹ In this matter, one can note the American campaign to occupy Iraq which commenced in 2003 as the turning point when Al-Qaeda first applied the decentralized model.

Al-Qaeda, the regional upheaval and Israel – from someone else's problem to a different kind of problem

Col. G. (Won the 2nd place in the Ragonis Foundation Scholarship)

Al-Qaeda as a decentralized organization – an advantage or a weakness

Decentralization is the main and most prominent characteristic of the Al-Qaeda organization today. In the meantime, alongside the leadership, official branches of the organization operate with considerable success in four Jihadi theaters in the Middle East – Iraq, Yemen, the Maghreb and recently also in Somalia.

It would therefore seem that the organizational focus has been diverted from the leadership to the end organizations (the “affiliates”), so that its ability to continue to develop and, to a large extent to exist, largely depends on its ability to operate and even establish “affiliates” in additional places in the Middle East. I would like to contend, that by means of the “affiliates” model, Al-Qaeda has obtained means of survival and survival capability, which make it far more dangerous in the reality developing within the “regional upheaval”.

This paper will focus on the characterization of the main conditions through which the organization's affiliates succeeded in establishing themselves and in developing into new operational theaters. The present threat against Israel will be examined through the likelihood of the realization of these conditions.

The “Six Conditions” model for the establishment of Al-Qaeda “affiliates”

From a comprehensive analysis of the circumstances which enabled the establishment of Al-Qaeda “affiliates” in the various countries, it became apparent that it was possible to establish a “branch”, only with the existence of a series of “strict” conditions:

- a. The ability to raise measures (personnel and weapons) – due to the fact that in the period of “decentralization”, it is no longer the responsibility of the leadership to supply weapons or operatives. These organizations or local entities wishing to become “affiliates” of the organization, were required to



- recruit themselves trained men and weapons in sufficient quantities, which would create a critical mass, needed for a show of presence and for carrying out attacks, both in that particular arena, as well as worldwide. The ability of the Al-Qaeda “affiliates” to reinforce the party they support with advanced weaponry is a significant factor in their favor in creating the support/dependency of the local entities therein.
- b. Establishing alliances with elements of power to create a safe and protected operational area – Al-Qaeda “affiliates” in the various arenas, were mostly established on the foundation of small local Islamic organizations that did not number more than a few hundred operatives. Such scope did not enable them to gain control over a significant area. A safe operational area was obtainable only when a local power element, sufficiently established, even on the tribal level, decided to enter into a cooperation agreement with Al-Qaeda, which would then sponsor the organization’s branch. It should be pointed out that in most cases, the cooperation began on a utilitarian basis and complementing interests – Al-Qaeda needed a patron to provide patronage and the local entity needed Al-Qaeda's organizational assistance, particularly its fighting capabilities, in order to improve its chances in the local conflicts it was involved in. In most cases, in the more advanced stages, the cooperation developed to an almost total dependency of the tribe on Al-Qaeda, as detailed later on in this paper.
- c. The commitment and empathy of the local entities with Global Jihad ideology – the establishment of an Al-Qaeda infrastructure in a certain area, became possible when the local forces not only agreed to protect the organization's operatives, but were also willing to identify with the Global Jihadi viewpoint. This is, in fact, the adoption of a complete worldview, with far-reaching ramifications in the religious, social and security aspects. This is a deterring level of commitment as by doing so, these local entities, mostly tribes, that originally only sought military and material aid from Al-Qaeda, found themselves

involved in a far wider conflict, and occasionally also at the center of regional and global attention.

- d. The formulation of the local Jihadi leadership – it became clear that in cases where a small group of men (headed by a prominent and charismatic operative) was formed,² that is a sufficiently strong source of authority to unite and centralize all the operatives of the Jihadi entities in that arena (usually under a central “Shura” leadership), the conditions for Al-Qaeda to agree to advance with the process of recognizing these entities as an official Al-Qaeda branch were created.
- e. Independent financing capabilities – In the absence of the leadership's ability to finance all the organization's activities, as in the past, the sub-organizations are expected to have independent financial capabilities. It should be noted that these are extremely large budgets of tens of millions of dollars per annum required for salaries, social activities and terror operations.
- f. Proven operational capabilities – in order for Al-Qaeda to agree to “issue” a franchise for activity in its name, the organizations in that same area were required to prove their loyalty, seriousness and especially dedication. The earning of a reputation in the arena itself and with the leadership was usually carried out by displaying operational capability through attacks against local forces and against Western targets.

² For example Abu Musab al Zarqawi in Iraq.

The expression of the necessity of these parameters in the development of Al-Qaeda affiliates can be seen in the following table:

Name of affiliate	Means (personnel, weapons)	Ideological obligation	Area of operation	Leadership	Financing	Operational capabilities
Al-Qaeda in Iraq	The Al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq was founded on the basis of a wide infrastructure of Islamic factors, reinforced by foreign operatives and a large amount of weapons, mostly spoils taken from the warehouses of the defeated Iraqi Army.	Inspired by the opposition to the continued American presence in the country, local organizations have adopted the Al-Qaeda ideology.	Terrorist organizations took advantage of the fact that Iraq, after the fall of Saddam, had difficulty in preventing infiltration from the borders and controlling all of its territory in practice. However, the organization began losing power after the Sunni tribes were deterred by the extensive violence turning against it, thus depriving it for some time from the ability to ensure a safe area of	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as an authoritative figure accepted by Al-Qaeda's leadership, succeeded in uniting the Islamic forces in Iraq. Even after his death in 2006 the organization provided worthy replacements.	Outside support from donors and the organization's involvement in local criminal activity.	The organization has a proven track record of thousands of acts of terrorism in the Iraqi theater and of involvement in attacks against Western targets outside Iraq.

			operation.			
Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	The organization was established on the basis of Islamic terrorist organizations operating against the Algerian government. The organization exploits the multiple illegal weapons held by non-government forces in the Sahara region and weapons seized from the Libyan theater.	The struggle against the secular Algerian government and the Western presence in North Africa constituted the basis for the adoption of the Jihad ideology.	The tribes operating across vast desert expanses provided patronage to the organization, and failed, corrupt and impoverished states in North/West Africa (especially Mali) allowed the creation of protected bases of operations.	Prominent activists such as Abd Malik Droukdel recognized by Al-Qaeda.	The organization is involved in extensive criminal and security activities with an emphasis on kidnapping foreigners for ransom.	The organization carried out dozens of deadly terror attacks in North Africa.
Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen)	The organization was established on the basis of Islamic organizations active in Yemen and Saudi Arabia and recruits operatives in the Yemeni and Saudi theater as well as foreign recruits, including westerners and Africans. The supply of weapons is made possible by the large quantities of illegal	The struggle against the Yemen secular government and against the Saudi royal family and the foreign presence in Yemen and Saudi Arabia constitute the ideological support base.	The tribal region in southern Yemen constitutes a protected area of operation. Despite extensive American counterterrorism activities, the weakness of the Yemeni forces guarantees its strength.	The organization was founded by dozens of senior Yemeni and Saudi operatives from whence came a leadership that was recognized and respected in Islamic circles.	The organization enjoys donations and benefits from its involvement in the business/criminal activities of the tribes in southern Yemen.	The organization carried out a long series of attacks and terrorist attacks against the Yemeni government and against Western targets in the Arabian Peninsula and in the United States itself.

	weapons found in the Yemen theater.					
Al-Qaeda in the Horn of Africa ("AL SHABAAB" in Somalia)	In Somalia, a prolonged civil war is taking place, turning the failed state into one where large amounts of weapons and fighting men can be found.	The "Shabaab" organization agreed in 2012 to adopt the ideology of global Jihad.	The "Shabaab" organization controls large areas in Somalia, which constitute a protected area for its activities and therefore for the activities of Al-Qaeda.	Based on the "Shabaab" leadership.	The "Shabaab" organization finances its activity from donations and criminal activity.	The "Shabaab" organization has displayed impressive operational capabilities both in Somalia and in the neighboring countries (such as Uganda).

Although all the six conditions are necessary, the question arises: are some conditions more important than others. Assuming that the security situation is deteriorating and that the frontiers in the Middle East are expanding, the scope and number of local conflicts will increase. It seems, therefore, that the matter of attainment of the “material” conditions (finance, personnel and resources and ability to act) would be easier and more accessible.³ This leaves the “soft” conditions such as: worthy leadership, the ability to “create” a safe area of operating and especially the willingness of local entities to embrace the Jihad ideology, making them more crucial and important. Meaning, these three conditions will tip the scales, and will largely dictate the future of Al-Qaeda's expansion to other arenas in the Middle East.

Moreover, since Al-Qaeda is currently based on cooperation, especially with local, mostly tribal, elements, its ability to cross the hurdle of the “soft” conditions and in particular the ideological identification with its teachings, will be the primary touchstone. It is respect one should note that Al-Qaeda adopted a number of methods to reach coexistence with partners on tribal level.

Evidence that these parameters are indeed the core of Al-Qaeda's ability to expand is found in the instances where Al-Qaeda was unable to establish a significant presence, including in Lebanon and Gaza. Although in both of these arenas there are organizations with a clear connection to the ideas of global Jihad that have easy access to fighting manpower and weapons, the appropriate conditions for establishing an Al-Qaeda infrastructure did not develop. This is mainly due to the absence of a safe area and a significant ally that will take it under its wing.

Al-Qaeda and the tribal system – another kind of treaty

As mentioned, one of the main strengths of Al-Qaeda in its ability to deal with the reality today is the diverse ways it developed for connecting with the tribal system, especially when the tribes have become real landlords in growing frontier areas in the Middle East. The fabric of the relations is based mainly on the creation of tribal dependence on the organization. Alongside the military knowledge and skilled manpower Al-Qaeda provides the tribe, the organization reinforces its connection with all the echelons that make up the tribal entity. The organization promises its recruits a generous salary, the organization ensures it connects not only in the military aspect and creates interfaces to the social and religious aspects as well: Al-Qaeda

³ It seems that one of the main theaters that can be exploited in this respect is Libya, including the attainment of advanced weapons such as anti-aircraft missiles.

operatives marry girls from the tribe, Al-Qaeda provides welfare institutions similar to the Hamas' Da'awa array and establishes a Sharia based court system, that sets strict standards of behavior and religious commitment. It also seems that the organization runs a sophisticated system of "divide and conquer" while creating inter-tribal conflicts and dependencies.⁴

The implications of the "regional upheaval" for Al-Qaeda – from surprise to strategic opportunity

Seemingly, for an organization advocating an ideology of overthrowing "heretic" Arab regimes, the regional upheaval events that began in 2011 are a significant opportunity in achieving the goal. Moreover, the reality, that will probably last a long time, of frontier areas and an absence of governance and anarchy – is one in which the organization operates and develops well. However, the balance is not all positive. The organization is faced with quite a few challenges and difficulties, both ideological and practical. Al-Qaeda's main concern is to be perceived as trying to deflect the course of events to directions that were not those intended by the entities who brought the about. This means that Jihad entities in general and Al-Qaeda in particular are obligated to careful conduct, at least in some of the theaters. Meanwhile, one can point at this time to two areas, prominent in this respect – Sinai and Syria.

Sinai

The unique characteristics of the theater in the Sinai Peninsula, especially the North Sinai, are compatible with most of the aspects required by the comparative model and set this area as one of the most prominent areas for the establishment of a new Al-Qaeda infrastructure: the obvious support found in radical Islamic views including in Salafi ideas as expressed in the 2011 – 2012 elections in Egypt;⁵ the alienation of the Bedouin tribes from the central government;⁶ their earning a livelihood from criminal activity and support of terrorist organizations can be a fertile

⁴ See for example the series of reports by Christopher Swift. For example: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-21/to-defeat-al-qaeda-win-in-yemen.html>

⁵ In 2012 parliamentary elections in Egypt, the Islamic parties received almost 60% of the votes in the North Sinai province (including about 27% to the Salafi "Al-Nur" party). In the South Sinai the Islamic parties consisted "only" about 43% when the most prominent is the Muslim Brotherhood's "Freedom and Justice" party.

⁶ Ehud Yaari notes in his review of the situation in the Sinai, that the Bedouin in the Sinai were among the first to consent to the call to overthrow the regime by attacking police stations. Ehud Yaari (2012), **Sinai: A New Front**, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Notes no. 9 January.

grounds for the creation of a protected area of operations. A number of terrorist groups with an Islamic Salafi vision and with a clear ideological affinity to Al-Qaeda operate in this region. The most outstanding is the “Ansar Al Jihad” and the "Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis" organizations⁷. Incidentally, after one of the attacks on the gas pipeline in July 2011, a message was published by an unknown factor on the establishment of “The Sinai Peninsula Emirate”. It may be the first evidence on the establishment of the “Ansar Al Jihad” organization, especially when soon thereafter Ayman Al Zawahiri, leader of the organization, issued a statement in support of the perpetrators of the terror attacks against the gas pipeline in Sinai.⁸ Significant development was recorded when the attack perpetrated by global Jihad groups along the border with Israel in June 2012, under the name of “The Mujahideen Shura Council”, had prominent Al-Qaeda characteristics.

The bottom line is that the Sinai Peninsula appears to be one of the most likely areas to have a significant development of Al-Qaeda infrastructure. At this point it seems that the main obstacle to this is a resolution in this spirit made by the local tribes and their willingness to unite under one leadership. In view of the deteriorating economic situation in the Sinai (partly due to the decline in tourism), and in the spirit of Salafi ideas flourishing in this region, it is quite possible that the tribes would consider doing so in the near future, thus establishing for the first time, a significant Al-Qaeda infrastructure near the Israel border. In any case it is likely that the tribes will continue to support smuggling and assist the terrorist organizations in carrying out terror attacks against Israel from the Sinai.



⁷ The number of Jihadi groups in the Sinai area is unclear. For example see <https://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2013-1e35/november-2013-1d99/sinai-cbc6>

⁸ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/08/21/al-qaeda-s-newest-front-in-sinai-could-deepen-arab-israeli-conflict.html>

The Sinai as a possible arena for the establishment of an Al-Qaeda infrastructure – a comparative analysis

	Means (personnel, weapons)	Ideological obligation	Area of operation	Local leadership	Financing	Operational capabilities
Possibility of founding an Al-Qaeda infrastructure in Sinai	In Sinai there is a large amount of high-quality available weapons	The combination of the relatively widespread support of Jihadi/Salafi ideas and the establishment of a number of organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda indicates that there is a basis for creating an ideological committed to Al-Qaeda.	Al-Qaeda's ability to establish a presence in the Sinai depends on the decision of the tribes operating in the area to extend their patronage.	The efforts to unite the ranks and the establishment of Jihad organizations constitute a basis for the establishment of local leadership that will be able to lead a move for the establishment of an infrastructure.	The terrorist entities in the Sinai Peninsula have independent funding sources from smuggling, extortion and kidnappings.	The terrorist entities in the Sinai have the potential for terror. If they integrate into Al-Qaeda they can exploit their entire potential including pose a significant threat to Israel.
Summary	Optimal conditions for the establishment of an Al-Qaeda infrastructure are developing (sympathy for the ideas of Jihad, local organizations, the proliferation of weapons, a convenient area of operation and financial capability). However, that decision rests with the local tribes, who control the field in practice. At this stage they are reluctant to take upon themselves such a commitment however they show increased willingness to become involved in terrorism, also in the name of Islamic ideas.					

Syria

Syria too is a significant theater of operation in Al-Qaeda's eyes and in particular in the current reality. Until the beginning of the uprising in Syria in 2011 and for a long time, Al-Qaeda had a presence in this country, apparently with the consent and connivance of Syrian authorities. The organization's activities focused mainly on the logistical aspects of the passage of operatives to the Iraqi and Lebanon theaters, while refraining from initiating terrorist activities inside Syria, apparently for fear of harming its surreptitious understanding at that time with Assad's regime.⁹

The civil war in Syria constitutes for Al-Qaeda's leadership an opportunity to change the destiny of the Syrian theater on the way to in the establishment of a permanent presence. Against this background one can explain the unusual statement made by Ayman al Zawahiri when he called¹⁰ at the beginning of 2012, to the Arabs from across the Middle East to assist in the struggle to bring down Assad's regime, and especially the Arabs from countries neighboring Syria (Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan). It will be noted that this is an exception that contradicts the policy hitherto characterizing Al-Qaeda's careful conduct in respect of the regional turmoil – vigorous activity but with a low profile in the media – for fear of attracting unwanted attention. And indeed, Zawahiri's call led to strong reactions from all parties, including from the Syrian opposition that feared that Al-Qaeda is trying to “hijack” the revolution.¹¹

Despite the escalating chaos in Syria, with it the weapons' inventory and extensive fighting manpower available, and the obvious presence of global Jihad elements in this arena¹² headed by

⁹ An example of the organization's activities in Syria is apparently the connivance of the Syrian authorities to Abu-Gadia's activity – a senior Al-Qaeda logistics operative who was killed by U.S. forces on Syrian soil. Some believe that at its peak, under the protection of the logistics network in Syria, every month over a hundred operatives passed through to Iraq. See, for example Sela Yohai (2008), Syria: the U.S. killed Abu-Gadia, The Mideast Forum and http://www.mideast.co.il/p-2_a-225/

⁹ http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/10/syrian_strike_aimed.php

¹⁰ His call was published on the “Ansar Al-Mujahideen” forum on February 12th 2012 under the heading “Go forward the Lions of Al-Sham”.

¹¹ Thus, for example the declaration made by Al Julani, Al-Nusra's leader, on April 2013 on the loyalty of Al Qaeda and its leader, that was condemned by the opposition in Syria <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/04/2013410114851988704.html>.

¹² For interesting research indicating the infiltration of foreign fighters to help the opposition and the global jihad organizations, see the analysis performed based on the analysis of the messages given by the casualties in the battles. The study presented evidence that at least 85 of the casualties came from various countries including Arab and Western countries.

¹² <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Zelin20130220-CTCSentinel.pdf>

the “Al-Nusra Front” and other groups¹³ receiving extensive aid from the Al-Qaeda infrastructure in Iraq,¹⁴ it does not mean that there are confirmed conditions for the development of a stable Al-Qaeda infrastructure.

The main difficulty the organization will have to face is the ability to establish in Syria a protected area or areas of operation for its operatives and to succeed in forging alliances with local powerbrokers, strong enough to be ready to provide it their patronage. Al-Qaeda's ability to moderate its “foreignness” in the Syrian arena, will mainly be affected by the ability to become relevant for the opposition in Syria, and not to be viewed as an opponent in the shaping of Syria in the future. Moreover, as organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda, such as the “Al-Nusra Front” and others gain strength, and the extent of the outside influence exerted on them becomes evident, they may be viewed as a threat to the opposition, attempting to build the new Syria.¹⁵

In sum, although the active presence of global Jihad in Syria will probably be maintained in any scenario for the conclusion of the civil war, it does not mean for certain that a strong and permanent Al-Qaeda presence will be established; particularly if the new forces that lead the rehabilitation of the state will recognize such presence as a threat and danger and take action to restrain it. This statement must be scrutinized in the reality in Syria, and could turn out to be wrong if for example some of the local powerbrokers in Syria decide not to side with the uniting forces in Syria and act to preserve autonomous independence. Then, the Jihad organizations, on behalf of Al-Qaeda, may view them as allies and take advantage of the opportunity to establish in their territory an area of protection.

¹³ The organization has officially been declared a terrorist organization by the U.S. administration on December 2012 that has accused the organization in its statement of performing nearly 600 terrorist attacks in Syria.

¹³ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/12/201759.htm>

¹⁴ The U.S. State Department associates the Al-Nusra Front as an extension of “Al-Qaeda in Iraq” and as an expression of Al-Qaeda’s attempt to take over the revolution in Syria. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/12/201759.htm>

¹⁵ See for example an article in the New York Times:

¹⁵ http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/opinion/al-qaeda-in-syria.html?_r=0. An expression of the tension between the jihad elements in Syria and the opposition is the accusation made against Al-Qaeda and its affiliates in respect of the elimination of one of the senior officers of the “Free Syria Army” in July 2013:

¹⁵ <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/new-front-opens-in-syria-as-al-qaeda-assassinates-rebel-leader/article13188459/>.

Syrian as a possible arena for the establishment of an Al-Qaeda infrastructure – a comparative analysis

	Means (personnel, weapons)	Ideological obligation	Area of operation	Local leadership	Financing	Operational capabilities
Possibility of establishing an Al-Qaeda infrastructure in Syria	In Syria there is a large amount of good quality available weapons and the ability to recruit extensive manpower from amongst terror operatives. The leadership/the affiliate in Iraq has the capability to dispatch there additional operatives to establish an operational infrastructure.	In Syria, the support for the ideas of Islamic law grows, inter alia, in defiance of the Alawi regime. Global Jihad organizations, display an increased affiliation with Al-Qaeda.	Al-Qaeda's ability to establish in Syria will depend largely on the strength of the relationship with various opposition organizations.	The more Jihad elements and the influx of trained terror operatives increases, a sufficiently strong local leadership may develop.	Islamic terror elements in Syria will depend on outside support (donors, leadership, and other organizations) if they seek to expand.	The terror elements in Syria have extensive operational capabilities, particularly with the inspiration of the events of the uprising against the regime and they may exploit it for action against Israel is well.
Bottom line	Syria has significant potential for the establishment of an Al-Qaeda infrastructure, in light of the conditions of instability and the consolidation of Jihad organizations taking a material part in the fighting against Assad's regime. However the ability to establish a strong Al-Qaeda foundation will depend first and foremost on the quality of its relationships with various opposition groups since these may identify Jihad activity as a threat to the rest of Syria in the era following Bashar. If an infrastructure is established in Syria it is likely to directly threaten Israel.					

In conclusion

The current period marks a convergence of two trends that herald a source of concern for Israel – the fact that Al-Qaeda aims to continue expanding its presence in the Middle East by establishing additional sub-groups, and that the barriers which prevented it from doing so prior to the upheaval in close proximity to Israel are being eroded. The regional upheaval, which Al-Qaeda was not amongst its initiators, creates a reality of disarray and increasing frontiers and of a lack of governance where it thrives. Therefore, it is not inconceivable that in the near future, Al-Qaeda that was the major terrorist threat against Western countries become a direct threat to Israel. Moreover, not only it will become “our” problem, it will also be a different kind of problem as it represents a terrorist threat unlike anything we knew – both in terms of the overall considerations guiding it, and in terms of the manner in which an organization such as Al-Qaeda operates in the arena and the type of alliances it enters into, especially its ability to use the tribal system, so common in the border areas adjacent to Israel.