



**Master Thesis in Political Science with a  
Focus on Security Policy**  
Swedish National Defence College  
Department of Security, Strategy and  
Leadership  
Spring 2014

# **Drone strikes and the spread of al-Qaeda**

Process tracing from Pakistan to Yemen

Lovisa Örming

Supervisor: Magnus Ranstorp

## **Abstract**

The use of Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV) or drones have in recent years become the modus operandi of US counterterrorism strategy to eliminate sought out terrorists. Since the initiation of systematic drone strikes in Pakistan 2004, their use has increased and also expanded into other countries. In 2012 Yemen experienced equal levels of strikes as Pakistan. Thirteen years have passed since the “war on terror” began and although Osama bin Laden has been killed, al-Qaeda still prevails and might be expanding. This study examines a possible spread of al-Qaeda from Pakistan to Yemen, since the initiation of drone strikes, by process tracing. Building on the literature of al-Qaeda, counterterrorism and UCAV, the aim has been to analyze drone strikes affect on terrorism by tracing al-Qaeda’s development. Findings suggest there are indications of a spread from al-Qaeda in Pakistan to Yemen, although further research is required to confirm uncertainties in the material.

*Key words: Al-Qaeda, Drones, Terrorism, Contagion, Pakistan, Yemen, Process tracing.*

*“When disaster threatens, seek  
refuge in Yemen”* — Prophet Muhammed

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### **Acronyms and abbreviations**

AQAP	al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQC	al-Qaeda central
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Maghreb
AQY	al-Qaeda in Yemen
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
GSPC	Global Salafist group for Preaching and Combat
HVT	High value targets
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
UCAV	Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States commenced the "war on terror" against al-Qaeda and its affiliates. A war increasingly characterized by targeted killings with Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV), more commonly known as drones, hitherto solemnly conducted by the US to eliminate sought out terrorists.<sup>1</sup> For an overview of developments and characteristics of drones see appendix. Targeted killings signify an intentional killing of "a specific civilian or unlawful combatant who cannot reasonably be apprehended, who is taking a direct part in hostilities, the targeting done at the direction of the state, in the context of an international or non-international armed conflict."<sup>2</sup> Since the initiation of systematic drone strikes in Pakistan 2004, their use has increased significantly and represents the preferred modus operandi of US counterterrorism strategy. Generally described as the premium option for countering international terrorism its strategic benefits have been commented by several.<sup>3</sup> US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said in 2011 "We're in reach of strategically defeating al Qaeda." A year later President Barack Obama similarly stated; "the goal that I set- to defeat al Qaeda and deny it a chance to rebuild—is now within our reach."<sup>4</sup>

The discourse regarding drone strikes mainly focus on Pakistan and little attention has been paid to their expansion into other countries. Most surprisingly is the relative absence of attention regarding US drone strikes in Yemen, which in 2012 reached equal levels to Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> Analyzing drone strikes is important ethically morally and legally, but also strategically as it embodies the essence of a more aggressive and lethal counterterrorism strategy taken on by the US. Additionally long term effects are largely unknown, both concerning civilian's reactions and supposed effects on terrorism.<sup>6</sup> Despite medias and US authority's repeated announcements of drone strikes weakening effects on terrorist networks, the question remains how they affect terrorist organizations overall operative ability over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Rineheart (2010) p 36, Rogers (2013) p 25.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Walsh (2013) p 313.

<sup>3</sup> Rineheart (2010) p 36, Williams (2010) s 872.

<sup>4</sup> Hoffman (2013) p 635.

<sup>5</sup> Jordán (2013) p 244-245.

<sup>6</sup> Rineheart (2010) p 33.

Despite large investments regarding counterterrorism methods in the West, there is little research evaluating their effectiveness.<sup>7</sup> One of the core difficulties related to that is understanding the strategic choices of terrorists. One way to enhance such understanding is by studying their strategic actions. Monitoring how drone strikes affect their behavior offer a possibility to foresee long term effects of strategic value.

In an earlier paper I noted how a pattern of declining terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda, as well as diminishing drone strikes in Pakistan emerged.<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously there were increasing reports of drone strikes in Yemen targeting a group called al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), former al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY), perceived as the greatest threat to US security 2014.<sup>9</sup> In the US National Strategy for Counterterrorism 2011 the top national security priority is described to be: disrupting, dismantling, and eventually defeating al-Qaeda and its affiliates.<sup>10</sup> Thirteen years have passed since the terror attacks of 9/11 and although Osama bin Laden has been killed, al-Qaeda still prevails and is possibly even spreading through local al-Qaeda organizations.<sup>11</sup> The contradiction between declarations of a weakened al-Qaeda and advancement of al-Qaeda offshoots in several countries, generate many questions. How successful is the US in disrupting al-Qaeda? What connections are there between al-Qaeda in Pakistan and AQAP in Yemen and why have drone strikes been centered there? Is it possible that instead of defeating al-Qaeda, drone strikes are actually generating a more fragmented organization that spreads out? The importance of this paper is due to: 1) The ongoing use of drones as a counterterrorism strategy, commonly portrayed as successful, but mainly analyzed through short term strategic gains instead of long term effects. 2) The limited amount of research regarding how drones affect terrorist organizations strategically.

## 1.2 Thesis question

Since the start of drone strikes in Pakistan 2004, has there been a spread of al-Qaeda ideology, resources and strategy, specifically from Pakistan to Yemen?

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<sup>7</sup> Arce M & Sandler (2005), p 184.

<sup>8</sup> Örming 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Jones The Terrorist Threat from Pakistan (2011) p 69, Hoffman (2013) p 94, Zimmerman (2014) p 10.

<sup>10</sup> US National Strategy for Counterterrorism (2011) p 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 150, Hoffman (2013) p 636, Jones (2013) p 1, Celso (2012) p 31.

### 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to analyze effects of drone strikes on terrorism by tracing causal mechanisms indicating a plausible contagion of ideology, resources and strategy of al-Qaeda from Pakistan to Yemen. A possible spread of al-Qaeda from Pakistan to Yemen will be examined during 2004-2013.

### 1.4 Limitations

The referenced drone strike in Yemen 2002 is an isolated incident; separate from the systematic drone strikes initiated in Pakistan 2004 and is to be considered as background. I am aware of the many implications regarding the use of drones such as financial, psychological, legal and moral affecting opponents and civilians. And the important discussions connected to *jus in bello*, and *jus ad bellum*, but these are not connected to my purpose and have already been thoroughly studied by others. Further I will only discuss drone strikes which target and affect al-Qaeda and individuals linked to the development and movements of al-Qaeda. There is an ongoing discussion regarding what constitutes high value targets (HVT) and Obama's expansion to so called signature strikes, encompassing individuals based on a "pattern of life" analysis.<sup>12</sup> No such division regarding targets has been made in my paper due to uncertainties of classification.

The descriptive parts of Pakistan and Yemen will only describe events and developments related to the progression of drone strikes and/or al-Qaeda in order to remain focused. Therefore only significant events of tribal unrest and the Arab Spring, have been included. For clarity only drone strikes and terror attacks on a larger scale or of specific importance, have been included. Ambiguous cases where the origin and/or perpetrators of drone strikes and terror attacks are unknown have been excluded. Focus has been on attacks performed by AQAP or AQC or which affect them significantly. Although mentioning significant individuals by name occasionally, the focus is on broad developments not the death of certain individuals. The question of accountability of drone strikes is paramount, but there is great uncertainty within the literature aside from their common nature as covert operations. Therefore the accountability of drone strikes will be generalized as US operations. For the analysis, contagion of ideological character includes inspiration and beliefs which set goals and actions. Contagion of resources includes money, individuals and material and contagion

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<sup>12</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law p 12.

of strategic character includes targets attacked, the methods used and the general strategic behavior

## 1.5 Disposition

In chapter two, previous research will be described followed by method in chapter three and theory in chapter four. In chapter five results of observable manifestations in Pakistan and Yemen are described leading up to chapter six where an analysis of the empirics is conducted. In chapter seven the paper is summoned up with a discussion, conclusion and proposed further research.

## 2 Previous research

Research on terrorism incorporates many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, criminology and international law. Terrorism studies can overall be divided in two; first, studies of the individual analyzing their rationality<sup>13</sup> or way of thinking<sup>14</sup> including strategic choices,<sup>15</sup> and the development of homegrown terrorism<sup>16</sup>. These studies tend to focus on individuals already involved in terrorism or their choice to join groups and perform attacks. Second; studies of social structure analyzing terrorism producing aspects such as poverty,<sup>17</sup> safe havens<sup>18</sup> and failed states<sup>19</sup>. These tend to focus on aspects relevant prior to the development of terrorism.

Counterterrorism research mainly relates to the two aspects described above, but few evaluate the actual usability. Most studies focus on policy aspects<sup>20</sup> others discuss strategies on an abstract level<sup>21</sup>. The ones analyzing the implementation of counterterrorism tools generally describe them without systematic evaluation from actual cases.<sup>22</sup> Moving somewhat closer to the specific subject of my study, targeted killings studies generally describe the moral, legal and policy aspects of its use,<sup>23</sup> although some evaluate their strategic use.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> van Um (2010), Lake (2002).

<sup>14</sup> Miller (2006), Pittel, Rübhelke (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Kydd, Walter (2006).

<sup>16</sup> Mullins (2011), Brooks (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Meierrieks (2012), Zaidi (2010), Helfstein (2014).

<sup>18</sup> Kittner (2007), Takeyh, Gvosdev (2002).

<sup>19</sup> Howard (2010), Mantzikos (2011).

<sup>20</sup> de Graaf, de Graaff (2010), Dugan, Chenoweth (2012).

<sup>21</sup> Wilner (2011), Rineheart (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Pape (2004), Anderson (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Solis (2007), Hunter (2009), Carvin (2012).

In studies of international conflict, contagion has generally been used to analyze the spread of civil war<sup>25</sup> in the form of a spillover effect on neighboring areas or countries or through a learning or imitation process that nearby groups adopt<sup>26</sup>. Most studies have a quantitative approach.<sup>27</sup> As for terrorism the use of contagion is so far unusual, especially when the metaphorical use of the expression is excluded. Of the studies found, two focused on the spread of terrorism motivated by media coverage<sup>28</sup> and two has a strict quantitative approach of contagion regarding terrorism<sup>29</sup>. Cliff and Firsts analysis differentiates from this study by focusing on outcomes of terrorism by mapping the spread of terrorist attacks. Their study is also conducted on state dyads of bordering countries and in that sense similar to studies of how civil war spread across borders.<sup>30</sup> Cherif, Yoshioka, Ni and Bose work comes closest to the aim of my study, although methodologically different, by analyzing the spread of radical ideologies interpreted as the base for fanaticism, recruitment and terrorist acts. In their study contagion is viewed as a process and studied through the development of a mathematical formula which captures the radicalization mechanism.<sup>31</sup>

After 9/11 many studies focused on understanding the structure of al-Qaeda.<sup>32</sup> There has also been an increase of studies focusing on the connection of al-Qaeda and its affiliates<sup>33</sup> and finding its center of gravity<sup>34</sup>. Related are studies analyzing the importance and position of AQY and AQAP, although they tend to only describe evolvments in Yemen.<sup>35</sup> Closest to my study is Cronins review of al-Qaeda's evolution and the counterterrorism which consequently evolved.<sup>36</sup> In regards to drones, studies tend to focus on the legal and moral issues<sup>37</sup> or the US politico strategic aspects.<sup>38</sup> As public knowledge of drone strikes have increased there have

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<sup>24</sup> Byman (2006), Wilner (2009).

<sup>25</sup> Buhaug, Gleditsch 2008, Harpviken 2010, Kathman 2010, Fox 2004, Beardsley 2011, Black 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Bloom (2005) p 122.

<sup>27</sup> Forsberg (2009) p 16.

<sup>28</sup> Nacos 2009 and Holden 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Cliff, First 2013 and Cherif et al. 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Cliff, First 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Cherif et al. 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010), Helfstein, Wright (2011), Zimmerman (Sep 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Celso (2012), Kagan (2014).

<sup>34</sup> Neumann et al. (2011).

<sup>35</sup> Hellmich (2012), Harris (2011), Zimmerman (Sep 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Cronin 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Dorsey, Paulussen (2013), Aslam (2011), Enemark (2011), Anderson (2010), Farley (2012).

<sup>38</sup> Ahmad (2014), Ofek (2010), Boyle (2013), Anderson (2013).

also been heightened concerns regarding their effects on civilians<sup>39</sup> and potential contradictory effects of increased instability and recruits for al-Qaeda<sup>40</sup> There is an apparent lack of studies regarding drones which systematically collects and evaluates drone strikes, especially in relation to their supposed effects on terrorists. Bergen and Tiedemann analyses drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and 2010 mapping the strikes as well as civilian casualties.<sup>41</sup> Williams systematically and more detailed describes the evolution of drone strikes in Pakistan with a focus on the secrecy concerning covert operations.<sup>42</sup> Jordán conducts a similar study of drone strikes in Yemen, as well as a recent study analyzing how drone strikes affect al-Qaeda central through a theoretical model which focuses on al-Qaeda's ability to attack the West.<sup>43</sup>

My study attempts to fill this described research gap by systematically collecting and compiling drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen. The most substantial contributors of such information are the think-tank The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, independent project The Long War Journal and nonprofit think-tank New American Foundation. In my study I also analyze this in relation to their effect on al-Qaeda, which separately for Pakistan and Yemen is poorly researched. No studies were found interconnecting drones and al-Qaeda with Pakistan and Yemen. Further, there were no studies found which analyzes al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Yemen through process tracing. My choice of theory has, to my knowing, never been applied to either al-Qaeda or drone strikes.

### **3 Method**

#### **3.1 Case studies**

My general research questions can be systematized as sections of what, where, who, why and how? Questions concerning what are normally used in a broad explanatory sense aiming at developing hypotheses or propositions related to strategies of experiment, survey research or case study. For questions of where, who and what related to measurements of some sort, a better strategy would be a survey or a study of sources. For the most explanatory set of questions like why and how, experiments, historical study or case study is usually the

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<sup>39</sup> Deri (2012), Plaw et al. (2011), Stanford Law School NYU School of Law (2012).

<sup>40</sup> Boyle (2013), Hudson et al. (2012), Deri (2012).

<sup>41</sup> Bergen, Tiedemann (2010).

<sup>42</sup> Williams (2010).

<sup>43</sup> Jordán (2013) Jordán (2014).

preferred method, as they allow considerations regarding correlations and causality and permit studies in depth and over time.<sup>44</sup> As my aim is to illustrate the effects of US drone strikes on terrorists, by tracing a possible spread of al-Qaeda ideology, resources and strategy from Pakistan to Yemen, it classifies as a case study to solve how and why question. Experiments are preferably used for laboratory studies, where focus is on the manipulation of behavior. The main difference between case studies and historical studies is the time aspect and possibility of direct observations. Although case studies to some degree might study past time situations, the overarching focus is on current events.<sup>45</sup> Gerring describes a case study as “a spatially delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over some period of time”.<sup>46</sup>

Case studies can have different designs, Lijphart differentiates between; atheoretical, interpretative, hypotheses-generating, theory confirming, theory infirming and deviant cases. Despite its widespread usage there is no consensus of a proper definition of a case study.<sup>47</sup> My study covers Pakistan and Yemen, classified as one continuous case. As these two countries constitute the only areas where extensive drone strikes have occurred, they have been chosen, drone strikes in Somalia are of a much smaller scale. My study is a so called within case study, meaning an in-depth exploration of a single case over time. Within case analysis can be conducted by pattern matching, causal narrative, causal process observations and congruence method. The most basic means of conducting within case analysis and of particular interest in recent years is process tracing. This strategy usually focuses on exploring causal relationships regarding multiple features of individual cases.

### **3.1.1 Process tracing**

Process tracing aspires to identify intervening causal chains and mechanisms which link an independent variable or variables to the outcome of a dependent variable. In that way the method differs from methods of covariance such as regression-based analysis and qualitative comparison across cases. The objective of process tracing is to narrow the potential causes by carefully tracing the processes of cause effect that might connect independent variables to a dependant variable. In contrast to studies analyzing multiple cases of  $X_1 \rightarrow Y$ , process

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<sup>44</sup> Yin, (2006) p 20-23.

<sup>45</sup> Yin, (2006) p 24-26.

<sup>46</sup> Gerring (2009) p 19.

<sup>47</sup> Levy (2008) p 2-3, 7, Collier (1993) p 106.

tracing can be illustrated as the continuous examination of  $X_1 \rightarrow X_2 \rightarrow X_3 \rightarrow X_4 \rightarrow Y$ .<sup>48</sup> The term narrowing is of importance, as an elimination of all but one mechanism is reasonably beyond probability when studying complex phenomena which involve constant interactions. Especially involving human agents as they may deliberately attempt to conceal their thoughts and actions.<sup>49</sup> The analogy of detective work is commonly used to enhance understanding of the strategy. The advantage of the technique regarding the exploration of causal processes is particularly suitable for understanding complex political phenomena, to distinguish specific events and procedures. It might generate a greater understanding by placing social and political subjects within a wider context. The detailed descriptions produced by process tracing can also benefit from complementary quantitative data as in multi method studies.<sup>50</sup>

Guided by either a research question or a hypothesis, systematic examinations of analytical information is selected and studied with the aim of understanding pieces that cumulatively are a part of a temporal sequence. A key aspect is to study the phenomenon over time, as the method focuses on the unfolding of events progressively. My study therefore consist of careful descriptions of the subject of interest as the final analysis will be erroneous if the incidents observed at each step of the trajectory are not properly described. The contribution to science from this method lies in identifying political and social phenomenon, systematically describing them, evaluate hypothesis, generating new ones, reviewing new casual claims, generate insight into casual processes and offering alternative means of actions. Finally, give a more accurate analysis of tipping points within cases. The descriptive part entails observing series of critical moments, key steps that are essential to properly describe and understand the process as a whole.<sup>51</sup>

Studies may be conducted both inductively and deductively where an inductive approach can reveal potential causal processes not theorized a priori. While deductive designs directed by theoretical assumptions contribute by either verifying/invalidating or adjusting hypothesis.<sup>52</sup> As part of within case analysis, process tracing is always conducted as a single case but has

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<sup>48</sup> Gerring (2009) p 173.

<sup>49</sup> George, Bennett (2005) p 206-207, Beach, Pedersen (2011) p 4.

<sup>50</sup> Tansey (2007) p 1-2, 21, Collier (2011) p 825.

<sup>51</sup> Levy (2008) p 11-12, Collier (2011) p 823-824, Tansey (2007) p 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> Bennett, Elman (2007) p 183.

no limits to how broad the scope of that case may be. Qualitative and quantitative data may be incorporated and there is no limit to the amount of observations a study may contain.

Observations are more or less integrated together, without clear beginnings and ends.<sup>53</sup>

A tricky part of applying process tracing is choosing a version that fits with the nature of the subject being investigated.<sup>54</sup> George and Bennett describe four versions of process tracing; 1) Detailed narrative which focuses on chronological and detailed descriptions, but without explicit use of theory. 2) Hypothesis guided, which has a more analytical focus and at least some parts connected to causal hypotheses, but still without employing theoretical variables. 3) Analytical explanation with a clear theoretical frame which transforms a historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation. 4) General explanation with focus on broad enlightenment rather than detailed tracing can be conducted with or without theoretical connection.<sup>55</sup>

Beach and Pedersen describe three variants; 1) Theory testing which deductively tests a hypothesized causal mechanism from a theory within a specific case. 2) Theory building which constructs theoretical explanations by analyzing empirical evidence and inferring that the 'facts' constructs a general causal mechanism. There are no clear guidelines for how this type of process tracing should be conducted. 3) Explaining outcome signify case-centric focus, building sufficient explanations of an outcome by a wide-ranging combination of theoretical mechanism and/or non- case specific mechanisms. The aim in such studies is not to test a theory or build an explanation from a theory, but to construct sufficient explanations of a case and the analysis is often non-systematic.<sup>56</sup>

### **3.1.2 Theory building process tracing**

Underspecified theories lack outlined causal processes describing how independent variables connect the theory to variances in the dependant variable. Unable to predict outcome or generate hypotheses, process tracing may contribute to research in such cases by developing theories. Through identifying causality within a case, the core anticipation of the theory can be explained.<sup>57</sup> As the theoretical framework used for this study does not clearly state

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<sup>53</sup> Gerring (2009) p 178-179.

<sup>54</sup> George, Bennett (2005) p 208-209, 213.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p 210-211.

<sup>56</sup> Beach, Pedersen (2011) p 2-3, 6-8.

<sup>57</sup> George, Bennett (2005) p 209.

outcomes in the sense that might be used to create hypotheses of specific cases, theory building process tracing will be used. This technique begins by analyzing the empirical material to induce a plausible hypothetical causal mechanism. No specific instructions regarding the conduct of such inductive process tracing exist in the literature. The main difference between a theory testing and theory building type of process tracing is the deductive and inductive approaches. In theory building process tracing understandings from gathered empirical evidence are used to build a theoretical explanation in order to illustrate underlying causal mechanisms from the ‘facts’ of the case. Put differently, the method is focused on tracing hypothetical causal mechanisms by observing empirical manifestations.<sup>58</sup> The method does not intend to declare detected causality as a sufficient explanation of outcome, rather the mere detection of a causal relationship of mechanisms is the goal. The basic framework for a theory building process tracing is illustrated in figure 1. The theory can be thought of as a “grid” that help guide the researcher find systematic patterns in the collected empirics consequently permitting inferences of observable mechanisms to be made.<sup>59</sup>

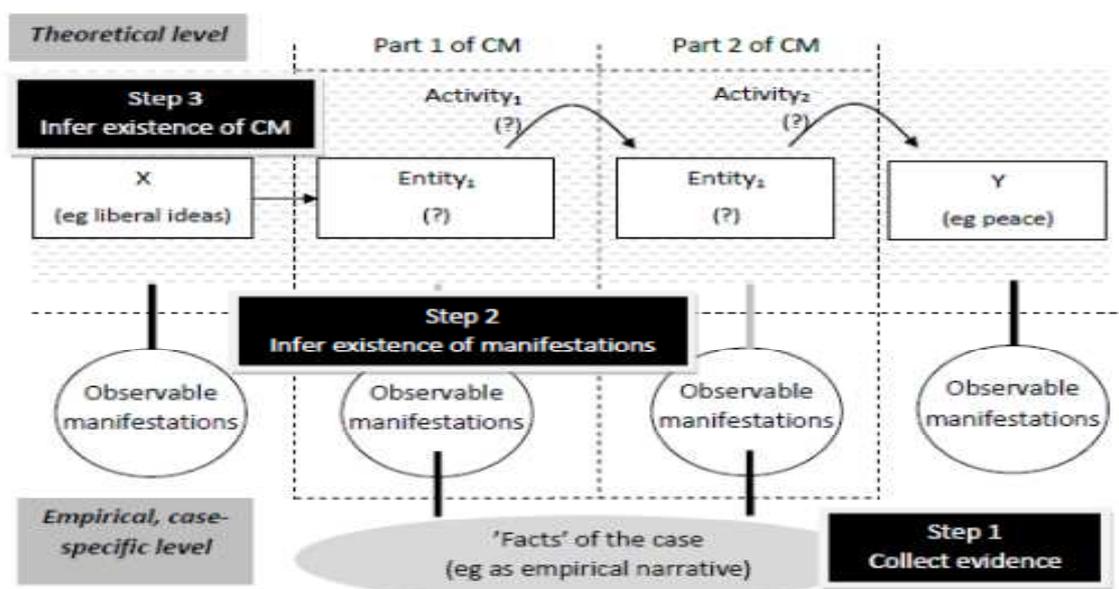


Figure 1: Theory building process tracing, bold lines = primary inferences, shaded lines = secondary inferences.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Beach, Pedersen (2011) p 2-3, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid p 17-19.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid p 18.

First the key theoretical concepts are conceptualized which involves stating the independent and dependent variable (X and Y), thereafter the researcher investigates the empirics of the case, which is step one in figure 1. From the studied empirical material the researcher then use evidence as signs of an underlying causality between the variables. Step two involves understanding and detecting observable symptoms that reflect plausible underlying causality from the gathered empirical material regarding the case. The method then contains a deductive element where inspirations from theoretical work help guide what to look for. The function of a theory is thereby as a framework in order to detect patterns in the empirics. In the third step the observed clues are connected and understood in regards to causality. In sum the researcher systematically investigates hunches of what to look for that are guided by a theoretical framework and empirics. The results may constitute as a foundation for further research.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.1.3 Weaknesses of theory building process tracing**

The greatest weakness of case studies derives from the deficiency of external validity, hence the representativeness of the outcome and the possibility of alternative explanations. Researchers focusing on investigating the plausible causality of interest may overlook evidence pointing towards other explanations so called confirmation bias.<sup>62</sup> With theory building process tracing this becomes even more relevant as the precise identification of mechanisms that determine the outcome is solemnly placed with the researcher. The information of the empirical material is thus of great importance and careful evaluation of sources should be conducted. Another difficulty concerns operational re-productivity. That is, any researcher conducting the same study with the same material should arrive at the same conclusion. To strengthen operational re-productivity historical events must be narrated explicitly, without additional meanings or structure of events being imposed by the researchers. When writing, awareness regarding the responsibility of how language affects clarity, structure and meaning of narratives is advised.<sup>63</sup> The credibility of process tracing centers around the way the mechanisms in the causal chain are formalized, which may be diagrammed or described in prose. And that each mechanism is well referenced e.g. “proved”. The inevitable discrete “steps”, where the researcher infers existence of causal mechanism onto observations is always a matter of judgment. As long as each step of the process is

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<sup>61</sup> Beach, Pedersen (2011) p 17-19.

<sup>62</sup> George, Bennett (2005) p 217-218.

<sup>63</sup> Ruback (2010) p 478.

clearly documented, an outside verification of a process tracing study is very achievable.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.1.4 Operationalization

Drone strikes in Pakistan will be perceived as the independent variable and al-Qaeda’s development in Yemen as the dependant. The spread of al-Qaeda should not be perceived as a move of the “network” but rather as contagion of ideology, resources and strategy. The inductive approach of theory building process tracing means that I will start by analyzing the empirics in order to induce plausible causal mechanisms of al-Qaeda’s spread as a reaction to US drone strikes. This requires collection of large amounts of data, from a wide range of sources to detect potential observable indications of underlying causal mechanisms. Thereafter inferences are made from the empirics, regarding indications reflecting underlying causal mechanisms or not. In order to string together the observable mechanisms with outcome, theory building process tracing does include a deductive element, where inspiration sought from the theoretical framework is combined with the findings of the second inference.<sup>65</sup> Theory building applied to my study is outlined in figure 2.

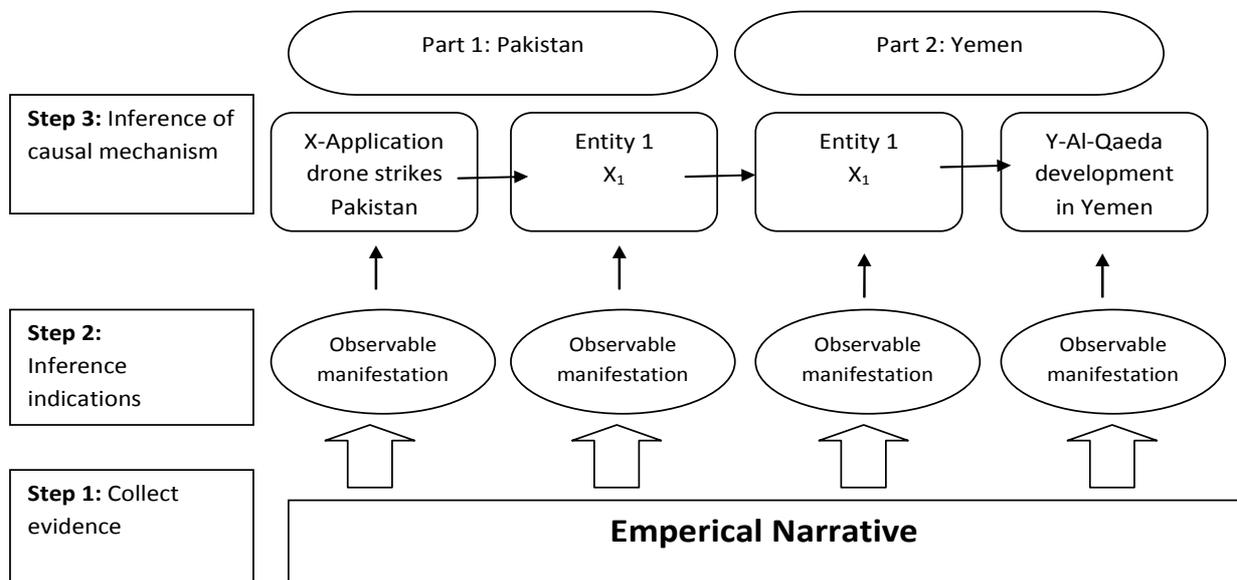


Figure 2: Theory building process tracing of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen.

### 3.2 Collection of data

Official documents regarding the subjects analyzed in this paper are at large unavailable, due

<sup>64</sup> Gerring (2009) p 181, 185.

<sup>65</sup> Beach, Pedersen (2011) p 18-20.

to classification, therefore the bulk of data comes from open sources. Internationally recognized databases have been used to collect almost all articles used namely; EBSCO, Taylor and Francis online and Sage journals as well as Google scholar. Books have been downloaded using EBSCO eBook Academic Subscription. For additional information regarding drone strikes The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has been consulted. This data has limits as it is based on media reports of drone strikes. I have chosen to use only data from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism as each of their reported drone strikes were put together by varying media sources, allowing me to evaluate the sources. For a further discussion of the three collections see Stanford Law School and NYU School of Law 2012. Trusted newspaper articles from New York Times and The Guardian have also been used alongside online information from CNN. As international interactions are in constant motion, recent works have generally been preferred.

### **3.3 Validity**

When conducting qualitative research validity is of greater concern than reliability unless the qualitative research entails measurement of some sort. Validity basically indicates how well the research measures what it sets out to measure or describes the object it sets out to describe. Hence, do the observations depicted by the researcher accurately portray the observed occurrences? Three typical errors that may affect the level of validity is; observing a relation where there is none, deny a relation that actually is observable and finally misleading and faulty constructed research questions. The challenge is thus to accurately describe the observed occurrence.<sup>66</sup> Validity can also be described as to how well the theoretical and operational definitions correspond.<sup>67</sup> For this study the main challenge lay in the ability; to as accurately as possible, without judgment, describe the narrative of drone strikes that lay the base for the analysis. Factors of internal validity are of little importance as the paper has a predominately inductive approach. The factors of external validity are of more concern, as the major source of information regarding drone strikes comes from media.<sup>68</sup> The numbers both in terms of drone strikes, casualties and depicted situation in this study should thereby be considered with some caution. As the study does not test any hypotheses or theories, the preciseness of these incidents are of less importance. The purpose is to gather empirical data in order to build a theoretical explanation with emphasis on illustrating underlying causal

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<sup>66</sup> Flick (2009) p 387.

<sup>67</sup> Bjereld et al. (2009) p 113.

<sup>68</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law p 37.

mechanisms from the ‘facts’ of the case. Focus is therefore on broad enlightenment. Due to the lack of existing research regarding the specific occurrences of interest in this thesis, I consider the findings of value within its context and a contribution to filling a research gap.

## **4 Theory**

### **4.1 Contagion**

The concept of contagion is generally associated with the infectious spread of disease within the field of epidemiology, but has in recent years advanced within the social sciences.<sup>69</sup>

Although mostly used metaphorically, studies where a process of contagion is applied to social events exist. In such cases the qualities transmitted may be both positive and negative and of varying nature, for instance mental, moral or physical.<sup>70</sup>

As the purpose in this study is to trace the transmission of ideology, resources and strategy from one entity to another, contagion as a concept appeared fruitful, but several alternatives were considered. Social movement theory is one alternative approach, Bayat for example applies it to the movements of Islamism<sup>71</sup>. The core of the theory is the idea that the paths chosen by actors are formed, at least to some degree, by external factors and changes in the environment which cause “movements”.<sup>72</sup> The first hinder of the theory is its implication of movement of an entity from one point to another. This is not the case with al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Yemen, as al-Qaeda in Pakistan is intact and the affiliate in Yemen emerged locally i.e. not as a consequent “move” from Pakistan. Movements are also described as deliberate strategic choices, which differ from the spread of ideology, resources and strategy in this study. In other words, the focus on strategic intention and actual movements of actors instead of consequential transmission dismiss social movement theory as useful for this study. Alternatively one could have chosen patron client relationship analysis to describe a plausible link between al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Yemen. The implication lies in the theory’s focus on competition and power disparity between a stronger and weaker actor within a relationship.<sup>73</sup> Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Yemen are parts of the same network, share the same ultimate goal and therefore are not competitors. Patron-client analysis also pertains to an asymmetric

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<sup>69</sup> Ugander et al. (2012) p 5962, Steinbruner (2000) p 139.

<sup>70</sup> Mishra et al. (2009) p 868.

<sup>71</sup> Bayat (2006).

<sup>72</sup> Vladislavljevic (2002) p 780, Lerner (2010) p 563.

<sup>73</sup> Soherwordi (2011) p 57.

conscious exchange where the weaker part gains support by providing the stronger part with demanded items<sup>74</sup>. As discussed above the intentional strategic aspect does not fit the purpose of this study. Finally, social network theory was also considered which studies social relations between entities, by mapping connections between nodes and identifying their varying importance<sup>75</sup>. Although to some extent useful, the main problem of network analysis of terrorism is the tendency to place too much weight on theoretical aspects, hence mapping nodes and how they are interconnected without giving insight of what they consist of, or if the connections remain when examining empirics.<sup>76</sup> Social network theory was therefore disregarded, as it does not correspond with the purpose of tracing causal mechanisms between two entities regardless of their importance within a larger network. Process tracing offers the beneficial possibility of tracing theoretical links of contagion, while illuminating causal mechanisms.

#### **4.2 Social Contagion**

Social phenomenon have long been depicted and metaphorically described as contagious or epidemic, transcending a variety of subjects such as emotions, religions, feelings and ideas. Today's use of contagion within social sciences goes under the common name of "social contagion".<sup>77</sup> There is no generally accepted description of what social contagion entails, and its use is broad, vague and varied. Also the methodological use of the term varies. The majority of studies found were inapplicable to my study as they referred to the term metaphorically, hence without conceptualizing the use of contagion<sup>78</sup>. Many studies were also strictly quantitative, referring to the concept in mathematical formulas<sup>79</sup>.

Fagan, Wilkinson & Davies describes social contagion as a mutual influence through interactions, which involves communication, competition and contact, consequently resulting in adaption of behaviors. As opposed to its employment within epidemiology, which focuses on statistical possibilities of spread from host to agent, the branch of social contagion refers to a mutual exchange between individuals, usually framed within a larger social network or context. Much like a process of recruitment, there is a merging of ideas, beliefs and behavior,

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<sup>74</sup> Sekeris (2011) p 238.

<sup>75</sup> Matusitz (2011) p 36.

<sup>76</sup> Helfstein, Wright (2011) p 373.

<sup>77</sup> Rütten, King (2013) p 17.

<sup>78</sup> Kathman 2010, Harpviken 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Cherif et al 2010, Black 2013.

instead of simply passing on information. Besides mutual communications as a means of transmission, imitation may also advance the social attribute.<sup>80</sup> Another application of social contagion used by Lia and Skjølberg is analyzing the appearance of terrorist attacks as they occur over time. Thereby looking at the outcome, that is terrorist attacks as a result of a contagious process by transmission of information or tactics or by imitation.<sup>81</sup>

A useful guide to how one may conduct such study is formalized by Burt who portrays social contagion as an occurrence between entities who are close in social structure, which permits a shared use of each others to deal with the uncertainty of advancements. The core moment of social contagion is the interpersonal instance of transmission. Instead of host and agent, Burt uses the terms ego and alter where alter is synonymous with host, that is the one “carrying” the ideas, tactics, ideologies etc and ego who has not yet adopted the advancements. Through structural circumstances the two are adjacent, this is not specified as to pertaining either time nor space and may therefore even include for example ideology. Their proximity should be of a character which makes egos assessment of the advancement sensitive to alters implementation. This may be perceived as a relationship of rivalry between alter and ego and indeed Burt does make the suggestion that competition may be the source of transmission, he also suggest that communication and contact may have the same effects and that the closer alter and ego become, the more likely that alters implementation generate egos and that even observations of alters adoptions may be sufficient to transform ego.<sup>82</sup>

First there is no specification of what kind of proximity that binds alter and ego to one another i.e. it can be ideologically, geographically, culturally, financially etc. Secondly the advancements or innovations are also not specified and may therefore pertain to ideas, tactics, and beliefs among many other things. The part describing how the proximity of alter and ego make egos assessment of the advancement sensitive to alters implementation is the tricky part. Sensitivity may be synonymous with negatively conditioned meanings such as nervousness and acuteness but it is also synonymous with sympathy, understanding and compassion. For my study the sensitivity should be understood as how the implementations made by AQC have an effect on al-Qaeda in Yemen that is cognizant. In other words the ideology, resources and strategy used by al-Qaeda in Pakistan is of great importance to al-Qaeda in Yemen as

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<sup>80</sup> Fagan et al (2000) p 2,16, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Lia, Skjølberg (2000) p 12.

<sup>82</sup> Burt (1987) p 1288-1289.

they are interconnected in the same network. But also al-Qaeda in Yemen's understanding of the directions taken by AQC is important to AQC, as a misunderstanding of the direction of the network by al-Qaeda in Yemen may do harm to network as a whole. Cliff and First understand social contagion as a social learning, but more importantly they emphasize that unless there is some underlying relationship or resemblance concerning group identity, ideology, policy goals between the events observed or transmitted it is unlikely that contagion will occur.<sup>83</sup> In other words alter and ego should in some way be similar in order for alter to transmit advancements to ego or for ego to want to imitate alter based on observation.

As social contagion is generally not described as a theory and there is no academic consensus regarding the structure of such theory, it classifies as an underspecified theory. As described in the method section, underspecified theories lack outlined causal processes. As contagion is a theory and social contagion an underspecified subdivision of it, the application of theory building process tracing fits well as it aims to develop theories through observations of the central anticipations of the theory.<sup>84</sup> In this case the central anticipation derives from the original contagion theory, transmission between host and agent, but is applied to a social situation. Hence the aim is to detect mechanisms of social contagion through contact or interaction that interconnects with its spread physically as well as socially and where contagion is viewed as a process.

Besides the obvious ambiguousness of social contagion, there are some other limitations. The weakness essentially derives from the validity problem that occurs when applying a medical model onto a social process. Implicitly therefore it assumes a level of causal explanation unachievable in social sciences as it aims to understand social processes as natural events. Also contagious studies within social sciences tend to inadequately argue for the outcomes.<sup>85</sup> This is especially problematic for quantitative studies which explicitly use mathematical formulas to understand a social occurrence. In my study such tendencies are dampened by the use of process tracing, as the purpose stated is to capture causal mechanisms through qualitative understanding. Hence there is no attempt to confirm a causal explanation. In my study AQC and al-Qaeda in Yemen are two entities in close social structure, facing uncertainties of varying degrees separately but also together as part of al-Qaeda. An

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<sup>83</sup>Cliff, First (2013) p 294.

<sup>84</sup> George, Bennett (2005) p 209.

<sup>85</sup> Rütten, King (2013) p 18, 42.

uncertainty of advancement unique to AQC and al-Qaeda in Yemen, as opposed to uncertainties facing all al-Qaeda affiliates, is the systematic drone strikes. AQC is alter, which carries ideas, resources and strategy and al-Qaeda in Yemen is ego which adopt these through interpersonal transmission. The proximity between alter and ego makes egos assessment of advancements sensitive to alters implementation. In other words al-Qaeda in Yemens behavior mirrors back to AQC, therefore decisions from AQC must be carefully considered as they are to some extent also implemented by al-Qaeda in Yemen.<sup>86</sup> For precision henceforth only contagion will be used to express occurrences of social contagion.

## 5 Al-Qaeda

The global jihad movement originates in the Salafiya-Jihadia, an extremist branch of Salafi ideology, essentially an interpretation of the Koran and the Hadith<sup>87</sup>. Salafi ideology calls for a total reimplementation of Sharia<sup>88</sup> and the way of life from Islam's beginning. Developed at the end of the 1920 it is recognized by its followers as the only possibility to overthrowing West's superiority.<sup>89</sup> The extremist branch Salafiya-Jihadia differentiates mainly in terms of method and involves all-embracing activism, jihad meaning Holy War thus permitting violence. Targets include anyone not sharing the ideology and incorporate all religions, even Muslims who are not Salafies. The operational unit of Salafiya-Jihadia called the global jihad movement, emanated in Afghanistan around 1980. After participating in the Jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri set up al-Qaeda<sup>90</sup> in Peshawar, Pakistan.<sup>91</sup> When the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan ended 1992 many international jihadist volunteers returned home and formed local radical groups to reduce secular forces and implement Islamic caliphate.<sup>92</sup> The initial task for Al-Qaeda was to support these fractions of fighters globally and constitute a center for operational actions.<sup>93</sup> After residing temporarily in Saudi Arabia and Sudan, bin Laden and his men took refuge in Afghanistan in 1996 and allied with the Taliban. There they set up large training camps, spread across the country where jihad fighters in large quantities from all over the world

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<sup>86</sup> Burt (1987) p 1288-1289.

<sup>87</sup> Statements of Mohammed.

<sup>88</sup> Islamic religious law.

<sup>89</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047, Jones (2014) p 2.

<sup>90</sup> The base.

<sup>91</sup> Rogers (2013) p 15, Hellmich (2011) p 23, Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1048, Rudner (2013) p 954.

<sup>92</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1048, Rudner (2013) p 954-955.

<sup>93</sup> Rogers (2013) p 15.

received training.<sup>94</sup> For a detailed historical review of al-Qaeda, see appendix.

Having focused exclusively on the so called internal jihad, turning secular governments into Islamic caliphates, in late 1997 bin Laden began to perceive the strategy as a dead end. Therefore al-Qaeda shifted focus towards external jihad adding terrorism to the previous strategy and aiming to push back western involvements in the Middle East, primarily the US<sup>95</sup>. The ability of extremist fractions to take over secular regimes would thereby be facilitated and in 1998 al-Qaeda proclaimed “World Islamic front for combat against the Jews and crusaders”. He also gave a statement encouraging attacks on western, mainly US, targets, calling it the highest priority. The first such external attacks were conducted six months later against American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, followed by the 2000 attack against the U.S.S. Cole in the Gulf of Aden. Then the September 11 2001 massive attack on America happened.<sup>96</sup> When the US intervention in Afghanistan commenced 2001, al-Qaeda operatives fled across the border into Pakistan to seek refuge in the remote FATA area.

Al-Qaeda still prevails in the FATA<sup>97</sup> area and is commonly referred to as al-Qaeda central (AQC).<sup>98</sup> Although AQC no longer holds the same level of control over the daily administration as in Afghanistan prior to 2001, al-Qaeda as network has to some extent preserved its hierarchical structure of clearly defined leadership, membership, local organizations and associated fractions. The local organizations have sworn bay'at<sup>99</sup> to AQC and help recruit, train and transfer activists to strategic areas to “fight”. They may also conduct attacks after approval from AQC.<sup>100</sup> The associated fractions are groups that were supported with training by bin Laden during the 1990s. After the American invasion of Afghanistan 2001 some of these fractions adjusted their policy to include Western targets into their local operations and became more formally connected to al-Qaeda as local al-Qaeda organizations.

The transformation of fractions into local al-Qaeda organizations was started by AQC after the US-led offensive in Iraq 2003. Since then it is estimated that about 10 such fractions have

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<sup>94</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1049, Rudner (2013) p 954-955.

<sup>95</sup> Jones (2013) p 4.

<sup>96</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1050, Rudner (2013) p 955.

<sup>97</sup> Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

<sup>98</sup> Rudner (2013) p 954, Hoffman, (2013), p 638, Neumann et al. (2011) p 828.

<sup>99</sup> Oath of allegiance.

<sup>100</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1050, Mendelsohn (2011) p 30, Jones (2014) p 3.

merged with al-Qaeda subsequently reinforcing their presence in around 19 countries. Some examples are the Global Salafist group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in Algeria which became Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), Tawhid Wal Jihad in Iraq turned into Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) also known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and Al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula merged under the name Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). These offshoots of al-Qaeda continue incorporating Western targets in to their local operations.<sup>101</sup> Writings by bin Laden found in his Abbottabad house after his death indicate that he operated as leader and important part of al-Qaeda's activities despite being in hiding the last years of his life. Not only did he continue to plan and instruct his close leaders within the core and also instructed al-Qaeda affiliates.<sup>102</sup>

### 5.1 Al-Qaeda today

The establishment of AQC in FATA has led to some organizational changes. First, there has been a move towards a looser and more decentralized structure that can be described as a globally spread system of systems, with an increased call for the mobilization of locally engaged activists to exercise jihad. The strategic logic behind the expansion goes beyond the obvious ability to operate in a higher level of countries. It also contributes to establish a broader public presence of the name al-Qaeda<sup>103</sup>. The name in itself ranks high amongst activists and its impact increases with the frequency of attacks as the network appear to be able to strike anywhere<sup>104</sup>. Operational functions such as fund raising, surveillance, logistics etc. are scattered over regional cells to avoid exposure. The role of AQC is mainly to provide strategic and operational guidance and management, tactical guidelines and maybe most importantly theological inspiration. This decentralization is continuously evolving and there are, despite the great array of operations under the al-Qaeda umbrella, signs pointing to systematic inspirational control by AQC. This follows a specific plan set out by the so called Al Qaeda Twenty-Year Strategic Plan for jihad victory by 2020, concluded by the formation of a global Caliphate see figure 3.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1051, Rudner (2013) p 956, Mendelsohn (2011) p 31.

<sup>102</sup> Schweitzer, Oreg (2014) p 51.

<sup>103</sup> Mendelsohn (2011) p 31.

<sup>104</sup> Turner (2010) p 554.

<sup>105</sup> Rudner (2013) p 956-957.

Al Qaeda twenty-year strategic plan

Stage	Strategic objective	Timeline	Tactical aim
1	“Awakening”	Sept 11	Provoke U.S. attack on Muslims, galvanize <i>Jihadism</i>
2	“Opening the Eyes”	2002–2006	Force West on defensive
3	“Arising and Standing Up”	2007–2010	Assaults on Turkey and Israel
4	“Downfall of Apostate Muslim regimes”	2010–2013	Saudi Arabia, Jordan, oil -producing countries
5	“Declaration of Caliphate”	2013–2016	Mobilization of Muslim forces
6	“Total Confrontation”	2016–2020	Total war on “non-believers”
7	“Definitive Victory”	2020	Establishment of global Caliphate

Figure 3: Al-Qaeda twenty year strategic plan.<sup>106</sup>

The strength of al-Qaeda lies in its reorganizing skills and ability to refill the loss of physical “assets”, including those in leader positions. This has permitted AQC and the network to survive while restoring and spreading its ideology.<sup>107</sup> In 2011 the image and perception of al-Qaeda was forever changed when US Navy Seals killed Osama bin Laden on May 1 in Abbottabad, Pakistan.<sup>108</sup> His long term deputy Ayaman al-Zawhiri took his place as the head of al-Qaeda and continues the global mobilization of activists.<sup>109</sup>

The objective of AQC 2014, in line with the twenty years strategic plan, is thus dual. First bring down secular regimes and take over crucial Muslim countries, usually referred to as the “near enemy”. Second repress and target the US and its allies i.e. the “far enemy”.<sup>110</sup>

Schweitzer and Oreg speculate that as AQC have reduced their conducted operations; the local organizations are likely to augment theirs.<sup>111</sup> The network can still be described as containing four separate levels: AQC, local al-Qaeda organizations, associated fractions and inspired networks.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Rudner (2013) p 959.

<sup>107</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1044.

<sup>108</sup> Mendelsohn (2011) p 29, Celso (2012) p 38.

<sup>109</sup> Minor (2012) p 8.

<sup>110</sup> Jones (2013) p 2.

<sup>111</sup> Schweitzer, Oreg (2014) p 60-61.

<sup>112</sup> Jones (2013) p 6, Helfstein, Wright (2011) p 368.

## 6 Pakistan

### 6.1 Build up

Al-Qaeda has been somewhat present in FATA since its creation in Peshawar around 1988<sup>113</sup> and after 2001 the sanctuary permitted AQC to continue attacks towards US targets in Afghanistan as well as international attacks on Western targets. Both the London bombings in 2005 and the unsuccessful liquid bomb plot in 2006 have been traced back to AQC in the FATA.<sup>114</sup> FATA has a history of independence preceding the state of Pakistan, implemented 1947, and is therefore unregulated, but ruled by local tribe leaders<sup>115</sup>. Due to the lack of government control in FATA customary counterterrorism operations are not possible and the idea to use drones arose.<sup>116</sup> From 2002-2004, drones over Pakistan were only used for reconnaissance. The successful drone strike in Yemen 2002 in retaliation for the U.S.S. Cole terrorist attack opened up the possibility to execute similar attacks towards AQC.<sup>117</sup>

### 6.2 US Drone strikes

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2004 the first known drone strike occurred in Pakistan, killing 5 and wounding 48 in FATA. The main target was Taliban commander Nek Muhammad. The attack marked the starting point of what has been referred to as the most extensive campaign of targeted killings since the war in Vietnam.<sup>118</sup> Nek Muhammad had two months previously expressed his dedication to provide a sanctuary for AQC in Pakistan and his support for the global Jihad against the US.<sup>119</sup> In 2005 AQC had successfully managed to spread out across FATA resulting in several bases,<sup>120</sup> in May 2005 the next drone strike occurred in FATA, killing an AQC weapons expert named Haitham al Yemeni. In December 2005 Abu Hamza Rabia then thought to have been number three within AQC and four operatives were killed alongside four other operatives. After these, strategically successful drone strikes against AQC members, the next was largely unsuccessful. The aim was to take out AQC's second in command al-Zawahiri. Besides missing al-Zawahiri, the strike in January 2006 killed 18 civilians amongst them five women and five children.<sup>121</sup> March 2 AQC attacked the US

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<sup>113</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1048, Rudner (2013) p 954, Edgette (2010) p 20.

<sup>114</sup> Williams (2010) p 874.

<sup>115</sup> Edgette (2010) p 16.

<sup>116</sup> Aslam (2011) p 316-317.

<sup>117</sup> Williams (2010) p 874, Enemark (2011) p 221, Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 11.

<sup>118</sup> Aslam (2011) p 317, Plaw et al. (2011) p 52.

<sup>119</sup> Plaw, Fricker (2012) p 347, Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law p 11.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas (2011) p 5.

<sup>121</sup> Williams (2010) p 875.

consulate in Karachi, possibly as revenge for the unsuccessful drone strike in January.<sup>122</sup>

October 30 a more effective drone struck a building filled with followers of Taliban leader Mullah Liaquatullah. Although not an AQC member himself, he was overtly in favor of al-Qaeda. The attack killed Liaquatullah and around 80 followers known to have vowed alliance to bin Laden.<sup>123</sup>

### **6.2.1 2007-2009**

2007 National Intelligence Estimate and 2008 Annual Threat Assessment describe FATA as a well developed safe haven for AQC, offering nearly the same advantages as previously in Afghanistan regarding ability to attack the US.<sup>124</sup> Altogether approximately five drone strikes were conducted during 2007 targeting both AQC and Taliban operatives. The Predator drone was also somewhat replaced by the more precise and efficient MQ-9 Reaper, implemented in 2007, possibly leading to the increase of strikes that followed. In 2008 the number of drone strikes substantially increased and is estimated to 36, six times the number of 2007.<sup>125</sup> In June 2008 the Danish Embassy in Pakistan was attacked by an AQC car bomb, killing at least five people. The attack is perceived as reprisal for Danish involvement in Afghanistan and the published cartoons of Prophet Mohammed.<sup>126</sup> The trend with a strengthened AQC in Pakistan continued throughout 2009 and is indicated to some extent by a series of attacks during that year. Another indicator that the center of gravity of al-Qaeda was in FATA during these years is the large number of international radicals traveling to Pakistan attempting to join terrorist networks for training and action purposes.<sup>127</sup> Similar waves of people destined to Pakistan had not been observed since just before the 11<sup>th</sup> of September attacks.<sup>128</sup> On August 5, 2009 a drone struck the house of Baitullah Mehsud, chief of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)<sup>129</sup>, responsible for several suicide bombings along the Afghan border. The attack killed him and 11 other people.<sup>130</sup> Altogether around 51 drone strikes were launched in 2009, killing about 667 people and injuring 310. Besides its purposes to kill top AQC leaders, which they might have done to some extent during 2009, the majority of casualties were low rank AQC

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<sup>122</sup> Gunaratna, Nielsen (2008) p 793.

<sup>123</sup> William (2010) p 875-876.

<sup>124</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, GAO-08-622 (2010) p 253, 257.

<sup>125</sup> Williams (2010) p 876.

<sup>126</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 3.

<sup>127</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2010) p 32.

<sup>128</sup> Thomas (2011) p 5.

<sup>129</sup> The Pakistani Talibans .

<sup>130</sup> Enemark (2011) p 218, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2010) p 6.

operatives.<sup>131</sup> The numbers of strikes in 2009, the year Obama took office, surpasses the number of strikes of the entire George W Bush administration (2001-2009) which altogether conducted 45 strikes.<sup>132</sup>

### 6.2.2 2010-2013

2010 there was an increase in the number of drone strikes and casualties. A total of 135 drone strikes are presumed to have killed 961 operatives and wounded 338.<sup>133</sup> As a likely reaction to the drone strikes towards AQC in FATA, al-Zawahiri in late 2010 ordered members to withhold activities and spread out in smaller groups across Pakistan and Afghanistan as a means of securing the organizations survival. Due to the loss of leaders from drone strikes, communication within the al-Qaeda network started to change from technological to carriers to minimize tracing. This subsequently has a slowing effect on the overall operative ability of the organization.<sup>134</sup> In a Pakistan security report 2010 it is concluded that albeit massive military operations, the use of force to suppress AQC is still to produce significant results.<sup>135</sup> In 2011 drone strikes were reduced and are estimated at around 75 strikes.<sup>136</sup> On the morning of March 17 2011, a drone fired at least two missiles into a large gathering in North Waziristan, killing around 42 people, mostly Talibans.<sup>137</sup>

Later in 2011 the US killed bin Laden and proclaimed “al-Qaeda 1.0”, as strategically incapacitated.<sup>138</sup> And after the killings of high ranked AQC operatives and leaders such as the chief of operational network, Badar Mansoor, the strategic leader Abu Laith al-Libi and Ilyas Kashmiri skilled in multilayered terrorist attacks, it was thought that AQC were substantially weakened. But the calmness derived from a period of recovery, after which they reassumed activities.<sup>139</sup> The number of drone strikes decreased to about 50 in 2012. Among the casualties were 5 senior AQC operatives among them Sheikh Khalid bin Abdul Rehman, who had just recently taken over the position of late Abu Yahya al-Libi as the operational chief of AQC.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2010) p 11.

<sup>132</sup> Bergen, Tiedemann (2010) p 1.

<sup>133</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2011) p 21.

<sup>134</sup> Jones (2011) p 6.

<sup>135</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2011) p 38.

<sup>136</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 143, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2013) p 31.

<sup>137</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 57-59, 62.

<sup>138</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 148.

<sup>139</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2013) p 10.

<sup>140</sup> Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2013) p 31, Obama 2012 Pakistan strikes (2014-05-13) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

In March 2012 al-Zawahiri, now leader of al-Qaeda released a video advocating Pakistani citizens to revolt against their government for undermining their well being by collaborating with the US.<sup>141</sup> In 2013 the strikes decreased again and a total of 27 strikes have been reported.<sup>142</sup>

### 6.2.3 Current situation

In 2014 AQC is thought to still be active and hiding in the FATA area.<sup>143</sup> Until May 2014 there have been no reported drone strikes in Pakistan. Altogether the drone campaign has resulted in the elimination of high level AQC members and the core remaining in FATA is perceived small. Some of the key leaders have been killed, some are not found, while others have simply left the FATA area.<sup>144</sup> There have been indications that some AQC leaders have moved from FATA to continue activities in other parts of Pakistan. Examples of this is bin Laden who was found in Abbottabad, Abu Zubaydah the supposed perpetrator and “brain” of 9/11 and Khaled Sheikh Muhammad were captured outside of FATA.<sup>145</sup> Bin Laden even recommended, according to writings found in Abbottabad after his death, that al-Qaeda leaders leave Waziristan and take refuge in safer areas where drone strikes would have less impact. Whereas AQC might have decreased in Pakistan, others such as TTP, have taken their place as main actor in the region.<sup>146</sup> The implementation of drone strikes in FATA has made it difficult and less attractive for foreign fighters to travel to Pakistan to join jihad, the way they previously did especially in Afghanistan in the 1990s.<sup>147</sup>

2014 AQC is assumed to mainly uphold an advisory role in the network, giving less specific orders to local al-Qaeda organizations. Although decimated by drone strikes, there still persists al Qaeda senior operatives active within Pakistan that holds the competence to lead the network.<sup>148</sup> After a decade of drone strikes over FATA and the elimination of key figures, amongst them bin Laden, the Obama administration has estimated that coordinated strikes against the US in the foreseeable future is unlikely to be operated by AQC. The observed decline of drone strikes in FATA since 2010 is not an indication of lesser use of drone strikes

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<sup>141</sup> Rudner (2013) p 960.

<sup>142</sup> Obama 2013 Pakistan strikes (2014-05-13) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>143</sup> Jones (2014 Feb) p 3.

<sup>144</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 145.

<sup>145</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 131.

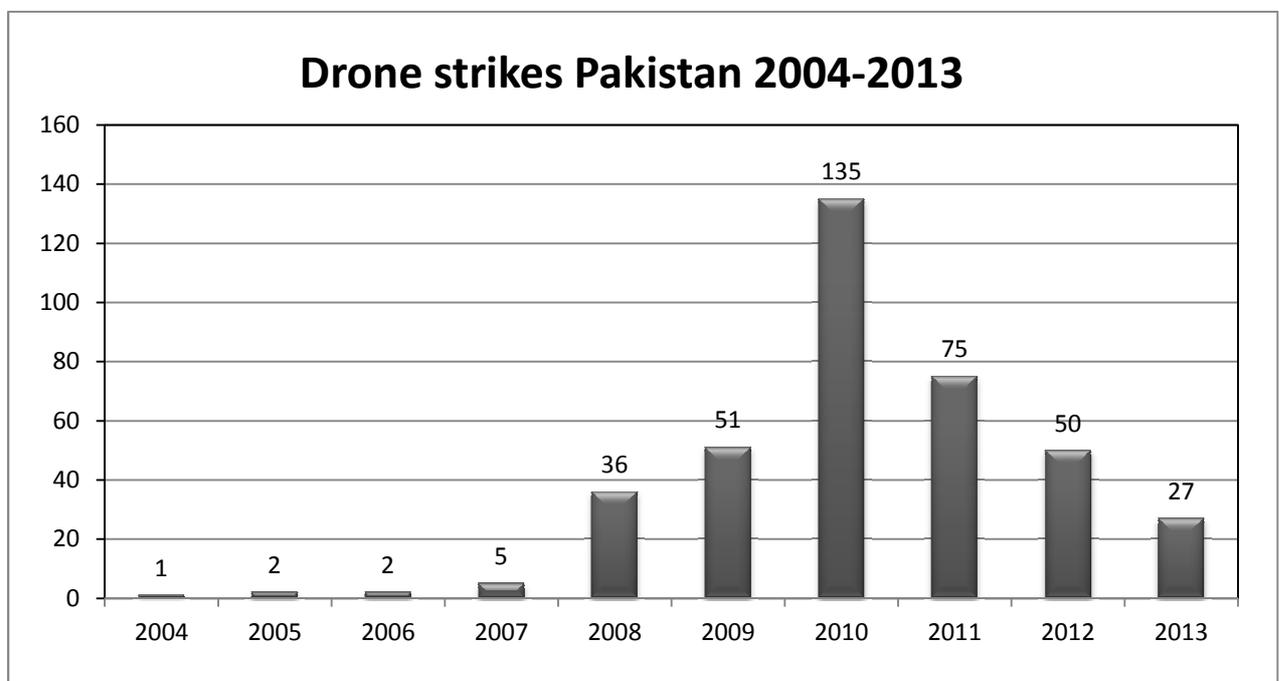
<sup>146</sup> Boyle (2013) p 10-11.

<sup>147</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 4.

<sup>148</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 5.

in the war on terror, instead force and focus has shifted to Yemen.<sup>149</sup>

Summing up: Despite uncertainty about the exact figures, the sources point to the same pattern regarding drone strikes. Starting in 2004 and increasing to reach a peak in 2010 and then decreasing. The descriptions of AQC also follow a general pattern, despite small narrative differences. After fleeing Afghanistan after the US invasion, some returned to their home countries, but many went to FATA and major terrorist attacks were traced back to AQC early on. In possible relation to the consistent elimination of AQC operatives, global terrorist attacks directly linked to AQC have been absent and the remaining group is perceived as small. AQC linked terrorist attacks within the country have also gone down.<sup>150</sup> A compilation of stated drone strikes above is demonstrated in figure 4.



Figur 4: Drone strikes Pakistan

## 7 Yemen

### 7.1 Build up

As AQC in Pakistan weakened the growth of AQAP in Yemen was described as the birth of al-Qaeda 2.0.<sup>151</sup> Like FATA, Yemen is favorable for al-Qaeda due to its social, economic,

<sup>149</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 142-143.

<sup>150</sup> Örming (2012) p 34, Global Terrorism Database search (2014-05-17).

<sup>151</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 142.

demographic situation and large tribal population.<sup>152</sup> As described earlier, militants from the invasion of Afghanistan returned to their homelands and formed local groups, which in Yemen remained loosely connected to AQC from early 1990s.<sup>153</sup> AQY became operative around 1997, occasionally organizing attacks, but not considered an institutionalized organization.<sup>154</sup> The isolated drone strike in 2002 in retaliation of the USS Cole attack killed AQY leader Abu Ali al Harithi, resulting in decreased AQY activity.<sup>155</sup> 2002-2004 drones in Yemen were only used for reconnaissance, but as AQY began to rebuild itself in 2004 the security situation changed.<sup>156</sup>

In 2004 AQY began attacking Yemen and western targets again, as reaction to the US invasion of Iraq.<sup>157</sup> But until 2006 they remained mainly focused on recruiting and distributing operatives to Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan and functioned as a transit sanctuary by bridging Asian and African. AQY also continued spreading the ideology of al-Qaeda nationally.<sup>158</sup> The group gained vigor in 2006, when 23 jihadists escaped prison in Sana'a, among them Nasir al-Wuhayshi and Qasim al Raymi who would further advance AQY.<sup>159</sup> Al-Wuhayshi had caught the attention of bin Laden in Afghanistan and became his personal secretary. He took part in the Battle for Tora Bora in 2001<sup>160</sup> and later fled into Pakistan with other al-Qaeda members. Upon returning to Yemen in 2003 he was imprisoned. His close connection to bin Laden gave him prestige amongst Yemeni jihadists in prison.<sup>161</sup> There he drew the outlines for a new local al-Qaeda organization in Yemen which would imitate the leadership, structure and values of AQC while avoiding their mistakes.<sup>162</sup>

After escaping prison, al-Wuhayshi materialized his vision within AQY, including centralized decision-making and decentralized implementation, selecting local leaders to operate countrywide and like bin Laden obligating them to perform bay'at towards him.<sup>163</sup> The new

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<sup>152</sup> Gordon (2012) p 2, Celso (2012) p 40.

<sup>153</sup> Thomas (2011) p 5.

<sup>154</sup> Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 35, Faulkner, Gray (2014) p 4.

<sup>155</sup> Mayborn (2011) p 80, Lewis (2013) p 85.

<sup>156</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 1.

<sup>157</sup> Mayborn (2011) p 80.

<sup>158</sup> International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (2010) p 10-11.

<sup>159</sup> Page et al. (2011) p 154, Hoffman (2013) p 93, Zimmerman (2013) p 2, Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 34, Lewis (2013) p 85.

<sup>160</sup> Faulkner, Gray (2014) p 4.

<sup>161</sup> Hoffman (2013) p 91-92, Page et al. (2011) p 154, Schweitzer, Oreg (2014) p 42.

<sup>162</sup> Hoffman (2013) p 93.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid p 93.

AQY led by al-Wuhayshis and al-Raymi strengthened ties with AQC and began construction training camps.<sup>164</sup> In 2007 al-Wuhayshi was elected head of AQY, security official Ali Mahmud Qasaylah was assassinated in March and in July an AQY suicide bomb killed eight Spanish tourists and two Yemenis and.<sup>165</sup> Simultaneous AQYs involvement, wealthy and experienced key operatives of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia escaped to Yemen and contacted AQY.<sup>166</sup> Among them were former Guantanamo inmates Said al Shihri and Mohamed al Awfi. In January 2008 two Belgians and their Yemeni guide were killed and four Belgians wounded by AQY near Sana'a.<sup>167</sup> In March 2008 AQY targeted the US Embassy with mortars but missed and struck a school injuring several.<sup>168</sup> In September they attack the US Embassy again, killing 16.<sup>169</sup>

To facilitate the spread of the al-Qaeda ideology AQY founded a media institute named Al-Malahem<sup>170</sup> and the online journal Sada Al-Malahem<sup>171</sup> in 2008.<sup>172</sup> In late 2008 AQYs growing ability was publicly mentioned by al-Zawahiri.<sup>173</sup> In January 2009 Saudi al-Qaeda branch, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and AQY merged and became the new al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), based in Yemen.<sup>174</sup> Escaped Yemeni prisoners Nasir al Wahayshi, Qasim al Raymi and former Guantanamo prisoners and Saudi nationals Said al Shihri and Mohamed al Awfi were declared leaders.<sup>175</sup> A common denominator in AQAP is that most senior leaders have been part of al-Qaeda prior to the 9/11 attacks and refugees to Yemen, therefore many of them have ties to AQC. Some such as Qasim al Raymi and Ibrahim Suleiman al Rubaish were part of the group around bin Laden, known as the original core al-Qaeda.<sup>176</sup> In March 2009 four South Korean tourists were killed by an AQAP suicide attack.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (2010) p 11.

<sup>165</sup> Page et al. (2011) p 154, Sharp in Dumont (2010) p 12, Hoffman (2013) p 93.

<sup>166</sup> Terrill (2013) p 26.

<sup>167</sup> Sharp in Dumont (2010) p 12.

<sup>168</sup> Updated Country Information Sheet for Yemen (2014-05-14), US Embassy Yemen .

<sup>169</sup> 10 Are Killed in Bombings at Embassy in Yemen, (2014-05-15), New York Times, U.S. Government Accountability Office GAO-12-432R (2012) p 1, Page et al. (2011) p 154.

<sup>170</sup> The Battles.

<sup>171</sup> Echo of the Battles.

<sup>172</sup> International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (2010) p 12, Page et al. (2011) p 151.

<sup>173</sup> Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 51.

<sup>174</sup> Page et al. (2011) p 154, Hoffman (2013) p 93.

<sup>175</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 1, Mendelsohn (2011) p 33, Thomas (2011) p 6.

<sup>176</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 37, Zimmerman (2013) p 2.

<sup>177</sup> Page et al. (2011) p 154.

As a sign of the relationship between AQAP and AQC, two statements dedicated for AQAP were released in 2009 by Abu Yahya al-Libi, a high ranked AQC member. In 2009 AQAP was thriving and a contributing factor was the weak governmental control and neglected counterterrorism efforts by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. AQAP continued small scale attacks towards the near enemy which signified AQY, but also targeting the far enemy as AQC.<sup>178</sup>

## 7.2 US Drone strikes

In December 2009 the US initiated tougher actions against AQAP by cruise missile strikes from the Navy's Fifth Fleet.<sup>179</sup> December 17 a strike was launched at an AQAP training camp killing 58, including 34 AQAP operatives and leader Saleh al-Qazimi.<sup>180</sup> AQAP officially became a local al-Qaeda organization in 2009 when al-Wahayshi swore bay'at to bin Laden.<sup>181</sup> An airstrike struck the home of AQAP senior leader and American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki on December 24, missing al-Awlaki but killing 30 combatants.<sup>182</sup> On 25 December 2009, AQAP became the first al-Qaeda affiliate to attempt an attack on US homeland when Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab "the underwear bomber" tried to detonate a bomb hidden in his underwear on a Detroit-bound airplane. The unsuccessful attack was later mentioned by bin Laden in a message to Obama.<sup>183</sup> Following the "underwear bomb plot", attacks in Saudi Arabia and strikes against foreign tourists in Yemen, AQAP became increasingly interesting to the US. The "underwear bomb plot" indicated plans on a global scale and competence to strike on American soil.<sup>184</sup> In 2009 it is perceived at least three drone strikes occurred.<sup>185</sup> In July 2010 Inspire magazine was published by al-Malahem.<sup>186</sup> The magazine supposedly established by al-Awlaki is perceived as a recruitment tool towards West.<sup>187</sup> The next AQAP attempt towards the US homeland occurred in October 2010, when bombs inside toner cartridges sent to the US were discovered in Britain and Dubai.<sup>188</sup> A UK Embassy convoy in

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<sup>178</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 1-2, Loidolt (2011) p 107.

<sup>179</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 147.

<sup>180</sup> Yemen Says Strikes Against Qaeda Bases Killed 34 (2014-05-14) New York Times, Yemen: reported US covert actions 2001-2011 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>181</sup> Jones (2014) p 3, Hellmich (2012) p 619.

<sup>182</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2001-2011 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>183</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 2-3, Hoffman (2013) p 94.

<sup>184</sup> Mendelsohn (2011) p 29.

<sup>185</sup> Yemen strikes visualised (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism .

<sup>186</sup> Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 5.

<sup>187</sup> Celso (2012) p 37.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas (2011) p 6, Phillips (2011) p 95, U.S. Government Accountability Office GAO-12-432R (2012) p 1.

Sana'a was struck in October 2010 by grenades.<sup>189</sup>

During 2010 AQAP mainly focused on opposing President Saleh's rule, which had increased counterterrorism efforts following US and international pressure. AQAP also developed relations with al-Shabaab in Somalia.<sup>190</sup> Movements of al-Qaeda operatives from other countries to Yemen had mostly come from Saudi Arabia and Somalia, but in 2010 indications showed increasing arrivals from Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2010 AQAP's size was estimated to around 300 individuals.<sup>191</sup> In sum at least two drone strikes are thought to have taken place in 2010, alongside around 27 unconfirmed drone strikes.<sup>192</sup>

### 7.2.1 2011-2012

The first months of 2011 five drone strikes were conducted, with no confirmed elimination of HVT.<sup>193</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2011 AQAP's most deadly attack hitherto occurred in Abyan, where a raided weapons factory exploded killing 110 and wounding 45.<sup>194</sup> Letters found in Abbottabad after bin Laden's death, revealed consistent communications between AQAP and local al-Qaeda organizations such as AQAP, these involved references to centrally structured plots and instruction from the core.<sup>195</sup> The developments in Yemen 2011 indicated that the regime might fall and that AQAP would gain political power and widespread government distrust amongst the tribes supported AQAP's expansion.<sup>196</sup> On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 the first official drone strike hit a vehicle supposedly carrying al-Awlaki, but killed two low level operatives.<sup>197</sup> AQAP attacks continued to focus on the government, military and police in 2011.<sup>198</sup> In July a drone struck a police station overrun by AQAP operatives killing eight and in August supposed drone strikes killed 16 AQAP operatives including senior leader Nader Shadadi.<sup>199</sup> And in September 2011 American citizen al-Awlaki was killed by a drone strike.<sup>200</sup> The strike was strategically important to the US, as al-Awlaki was a senior AQAP

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<sup>189</sup> Yemen has US drones available for use, foreign minister says, (2014-05-14) CNN, Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 5.

<sup>190</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 2-3.

<sup>191</sup> Terill (2013) p 27-28, Mumtaz (2010) p 4.

<sup>192</sup> Yemen strikes visualised (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>193</sup> Hudson et al. (2011) p 147.

<sup>194</sup> The Institute for Economics & Peace (2012) p 18.

<sup>195</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 10.

<sup>196</sup> Phillips (2011) p 98, 105.

<sup>197</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2001-2011 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>198</sup> The Institute for Economics & Peace (2012) p 18.

<sup>199</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2001-2011 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, U.S.

Strikes in Yemen Said to Kill 8 Militants (2014-05-14) The New York Times.

<sup>200</sup> Celso (2012) p 37.

leader and known as an Internet radicalizer focusing on recruiting westerners.<sup>201</sup> He is believed to have influenced Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab (underwear bomber), Faisal Shahzad (time square car bomb attempt) as well as inspiring “homegrown” attacks of Nidal Hassan (Fort Hood shooting), failed bomb plot by a British Airways employee and knife attack on a British Member of Parliament. The drone strike also killed American citizen Samir Khan, editor of Inspire magazine.<sup>202</sup>

Since the death of bin Laden inflow of financial sources towards AQC in Pakistan has decreased and financial support is now mostly transferred to AQAP.<sup>203</sup> As AQAP began winning substantial territory in Yemen, following political turbulence, Ansar al Sharia was created as an insurgent subgroup.<sup>204</sup> 2011 marks a shift in the US counterterrorism strategy, as drone strikes towards AQC in Pakistan decreased while increasing towards AQAP in Yemen. In sum 16 drone strikes are thought to have occurred in 2011 and possibly an additional 22 strikes of uncertain origin.<sup>205</sup>

Spring 2012 the predicted number of AQAP operatives increased to around 700 including Ansar al-Shariah operatives.<sup>206</sup> In January 2012 a drone strike killed 9 AQAP operatives in the Abyan province,<sup>207</sup> and in another strike Abdul Mun'im Salim al Fatahani, linked to the USS Cole attack, was killed.<sup>208</sup> Several AQAP controlled areas were also re-captured by the Yemeni army.<sup>209</sup> In February 2012 protests forced President Saleh to resign, at the inauguration of his successor vice president Hadi, AQAP attacked the presidential palace killing 26 guards.<sup>210</sup> In March a minimum of 45 AQAP operatives were killed in separate drone strikes.<sup>211</sup> In May an AQAP suicide attack killed 96 soldiers close to presidential palace in Sana'a, Fahd al-Quso, senior AQAP leader involved in both the USS Cole attack and the “underwear bomb plot”, was also killed by a drone strike.<sup>212</sup> In June a suicide attack killed

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<sup>201</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 2.

<sup>202</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 146, Hellmich (2012) p 619, Jordán (2013) p 246.

<sup>203</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 4.

<sup>204</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 2.

<sup>205</sup> Yemen strikes visualised (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>206</sup> Terill (2013) p 27.

<sup>207</sup> 9 killed in suspected drone strike in Yemen (2014-05-14), CNN.

<sup>208</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 3.

<sup>209</sup> Zimmerman (2014) p 5.

<sup>210</sup> Lewis (2013) p 87, Phillips (2012) p 6.

<sup>211</sup> U.S. strikes kill 6 in Yemen, say officials (2014-05-14), CNN, Yemen: reported US covert actions 2012 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>212</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 147, Sohlman (2012) p 250.

commander Salem Ali Qatan, leader in the fight against AQAP. The continuous aim of AQAP to target the “far enemy” is exemplified by several uncovered plots in June 2012 which targeted foreign embassies, diplomats and other representatives.<sup>213</sup> In June around 30 AQAP operatives were killed by several drone strikes in the south of Yemen.<sup>214</sup>

Documents retrieved at bin Laden’s house in Abbottabad, were declassified in 2012 and described how he shortly before his death began searching for a new al-Qaeda safe haven and Yemen was among the suggestions. Yemen and AQAP were also portrayed as the best refuge for al-Qaeda members in need of protection from US counterterrorism efforts.<sup>215</sup> In sum at least 29 drone strikes occurred in 2012, with additional 54 that are uncertain.<sup>216</sup>

### 7.2.2 2013-2014

In January 2013 drone strikes killed six AQAP operatives including 3 senior leaders and AQAPs second in command, Said al Shihri.<sup>217</sup> In July US intelligence intercepted a phone call between AQC al Zawahri and AQAPs al-Wuhayshi, where al-Zawahri instructed al-Wuhayshi to carry out large scale attacks against the US which Al-Wuhayshi vowed to do. This is thought to have caused suspension of US functions in Yemen and a total of 22 US embassies and consulates were closed in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>218</sup> In a virtual meeting 2013 initiated by AQC with around 20 combatants from varying groups, al-Zawahiri officially announced al-Wahayshi as the al-Qaeda second-in command.<sup>219</sup> In July-August approximately nine drone strikes killed around 50 operatives in an attempt to disrupt the implied upcoming attack.<sup>220</sup> In September AQAP killed 56 Yemeni security employees in Shabwah,<sup>221</sup> a military headquarters in Mukalla, was also attacked killing 10 soldiers.<sup>222</sup> In December the Ministry of Defense in Sana’a was targeted and 40 people killed.<sup>223</sup> A drone strike in December targeting Shawqi Ali Ahmad al Badani, involved in the plot which closed

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<sup>213</sup> Sohlman (2012) p 250.

<sup>214</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2012 (2014-05-14) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>215</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 4.

<sup>216</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2012 (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>217</sup> Drone strike kills six suspected militants in Yemen, (2014-05-15), CNN, Sharp (2014) p 5.

<sup>218</sup> Lewis (2013) p 77, Sharp (2014) p 5.

<sup>219</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 23.

<sup>220</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2013 (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>221</sup> Jones (2014) p 4-5.

<sup>222</sup> The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (2014) p 3.

<sup>223</sup> Jones (2014) p 4-5.

Embassies in August 2013, struck a wedding party killing 15 civilians.<sup>224</sup>

The Ministry of Defense in Sana'a was again struck by a multifaceted AQAP attack in December 2013. The attack killed 57 and wounded hundreds causing public outrage as civilians had been targeted. Subsequently AQAP leader Qasim al-Raymi apologized for the indiscriminate killings of civilians in a video.<sup>225</sup> After a long period of drone strikes killing only some operatives and few civilian each time, a drone strike in December hit a wedding cortege killing 11 AQAP operatives and some civilians causing public outrage against the US.<sup>226</sup> In sum at least 17 drone strikes took place in Yemen during 2013 and additional 15 uncertain strikes.<sup>227</sup>

Since the beginning of 2014 AQAP has continued targeting government entities, while also remaining devoted to the "far enemy" and still represents the greatest threat to US security.<sup>228</sup> So far at least 5 drone strikes are perceived to have taken place in 2014, with a possibility of another ten.<sup>229</sup> As a vital part of its strategy, AQAP has rooted its organization within the tribal structure of Yemen for cover and support.<sup>230</sup> Geographically AQAP cells are spread across the country, but the south and coastal areas have dominated as AQAP harbors.<sup>231</sup> What differentiates AQAP from other al-Qaeda affiliated groups is its persistent focus on targeting the far enemy.<sup>232</sup> In that sense AQAP is more like AQC than any other al-Qaeda related group.

In sum: Drone strikes in Yemen are marked by uncertainties as there are drone strikes, cruise missile strikes and regular airstrikes conducted. There have generally been fewer drone strikes per year in Yemen than in Pakistan with strikes peaking in 2012. Yemen has also experienced civilian turmoil including the Arab Spring, possibly obstructing drone strikes. Thus far it seems the attacks have not had a weakening effect on AQAP, rather the contrary. Despite successfully eliminating key leaders, the original four leaders including al-Wahayshi are still

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<sup>224</sup> Sharp (2014) p 6.

<sup>225</sup> The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (2014) p 3.

<sup>226</sup> Drone Strike in Yemen Hits Wedding Convoy, Killing 11, (2014-05-15) New York Times.

<sup>227</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2013 (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>228</sup> Zimmerman (2014) p 10, Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 45, Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 37, Thomas (2011) p 5.

<sup>229</sup> Yemen: reported US covert actions 2014 (2014-05-15) The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.

<sup>230</sup> Celso (2012) p 37.

<sup>231</sup> Lewis (2013) p 81.

<sup>232</sup> Stokes (2014) p 7.

alive.

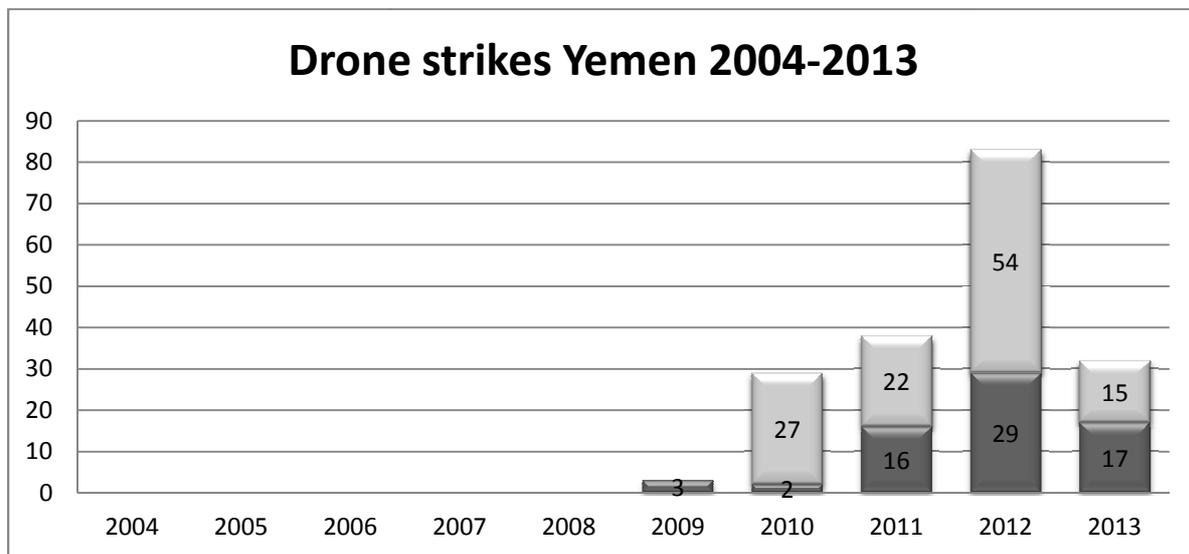


Figure 5: Drone strikes Yemen

## 8 Analysis

In 2009 al-Qaeda terrorism was declining in Pakistan and drone strikes were almost at its peak, simultaneously AQAP was created and drone strikes implemented in Yemen.<sup>233</sup> When the drone strikes in Pakistan later on decreased, they increased in Yemen, indicating a shift in US counterterrorism focus. This would not have been a surprising development if AQAP was the only al-Qaeda offshoot, but there were many other strong al-Qaeda affiliates such as AQIM and AQL. So what is special about AQAP? As AQC has weakened, AQAP has grown stronger, but this is also true for other al-Qaeda affiliates. A plausible explanation is that AQAP is the only al-Qaeda affiliate directly targeting the US. Although this may be true, it does not explain AQAP's choice of strategy. The answer might lie within the development and dynamism between AQC and AQAP. The analysis will be divided into three subsections of contagion; ideology, resources and strategy.

### 8.1 Ideology

Contagion of ideological character includes inspiration and beliefs of AQC which set goals, actions and reasons for jihad. The common ideological base of AQC and AQAP is Salafiya-Jihadia, the war for return of Sharia and the way of life at the birth of Islam.<sup>234</sup> On a lower level the most striking ideological similarity is the consistent focus to attack the far enemy,

<sup>233</sup> Örming (2012) p 34, Global Terrorism Database search (2014-05-17), Page et al. (2011) p 154, Hoffman (2013) p 93.

<sup>234</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047.

mostly US, differentiating AQAP from all other local al-Qaeda organizations. The far enemy was not a primary focus for AQY, but evolved after AQAPs creation in 2009, coinciding with high levels of drone strikes towards AQC in Pakistan.<sup>235</sup> AQAPs focus on the far enemy fluctuated and shifted towards the near enemy occasionally during the observed period, due to surrounding incidents such as heavy counterterrorism efforts and the Arab Spring. But targeting the far enemy was always part of AQAPs ideology. Its interest in attacking the far enemy is plausibly ideological spread, as AQAP has adopted the far enemy from AQC allowing them a shared use of each other to deal with uncertainties of advancement i.e. the actions of the far enemy including drone strikes. An exact instance of transmission for this adaptation is unlikely, rather it is a result of a process, evolved from the dynamism binding AQC and AQAP together by communication, directives, inspiration and observations.

AQC appears content and approving of AQAP targeting the far enemy by mentioning their progress and attacks in videos etc. This indicates what Burt described as proximity between alter and ego, of a character which makes egos assessment of the advancement sensitive to alters implementation.<sup>236</sup> Attacks by AQAP “mirrors back” on AQC and the al-Qaeda organization as a whole, therefore approval of attacks and conducts of AQAP is most likely guided by AQC or have to gain clearance from AQC. It’s possible that since AQC’s operative ability has decreased, due to drone strikes, the ideology to target the far enemy has intentionally been transmitted to AQAP. Regardless the manner in which the contagion occurred it is clear that the ideological aspiration to continuously target the far enemy most likely derives from AQC. Thus, the targeting of the far enemy is a probable case of contagion which needs to be verified by further research.

The use of internet is another similarity connecting AQC and AQAP. Bin Laden became famous for his video appearances on the internet and AQC released announcements and other inspirational material through its media branch al-Sahab.<sup>237</sup> AQY also created a media wing, al-Malahem, distributing online journals Sada Al- Malahem and under AQAPs regime, Inspire.<sup>238</sup> There are also ideological similarities in the public statements made by AQAPs al-Awlaki and bin Laden, where the former basically repeats the themes and principles of bin

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<sup>235</sup> Bergen, Tiedemann (2010) p 1, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (2010) p 11.

<sup>236</sup> Burt (1987) p 1288-1289.

<sup>237</sup> Smith, Walsh 2013 p 315.

<sup>238</sup> International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (2010) p 12, Page et al. (2011) p 151.

Laden focusing on global jihad and condemnation of US foreign policy.<sup>239</sup> AQAP furthered the ideological spread and became important to AQC for its outreach and recruitment, especially towards the West. This is indicated by al-Zawahiri statements for example portraying Yemen as “base for the Zionist-Crusader campaign.”<sup>240</sup> Whether this indicates contagion from AQC to AQAP is somewhat unclear as the inspiration for al-Malahem could also have come from other terrorist groups. Most likely al-Malahem is the result of al-Wuhayshi's strive to form an AQC replica.

This is complicated by the fact that al-Wuhayshi arrived in Yemen before the drone strikes began in Pakistan, already with his vision of a new al-Qaeda. Hence his vision is not a case of contagion since drone strikes began. But al-Malahem was constructed in 2008 i.e. after the drone strikes were implemented and media releases from AQC were strained. Timewise this also coincides with an official announcement of the growing ability of AQY from al-Zawahiri in late 2008.<sup>241</sup> This recognition indicates that the two groups were in correspondence as AQC was aware of the progress of AQY and officially announcing the progress indicates approval. Two statements dedicated for AQAP were also released by Abu Yahya al-Libi, a senior AQC member, in 2009.<sup>242</sup> Reoccurring official announcements signal close communication, but is most likely the tip of the iceberg of AQC's involvement in AQAP. This suggests a probable AQC involvement in the development and direction of al-Malahem. Possibly AQC ordered its implementation to conduct what was no longer possible in Pakistan, due to drone strikes. Ideological outreach through media indicates plausible contagion, but the instances of transmission are unverified.

A key figure regarding the ideological contagion between AQC and AQAP is al-Wuhayshi. As a close associate to bin Laden he was apparently very inspired by AQC's ideology. Al-Wuhayshi fled Pakistan before drone strikes began which disqualifies his movement as contagion. Whether his vision of an al-Qaeda replica in Yemen is a case of contagion is complex. The initial transmission took place in Afghanistan, when he was first affected by AQC's ideology, but the initiating implementation occurs in Yemen 2006, hence after drone strikes in Pakistan began.<sup>243</sup> So the question is, when did contagion of this vision occur? At

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<sup>239</sup> Hellmich (2012) p 621.

<sup>240</sup> Loidolt (2011) p 105.

<sup>241</sup> Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 51.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid p 51.

<sup>243</sup> Page et al. (2011) p 154, Hoffman (2013) p 93, Zimmerman (2013) p 2, Koehler-Derrick (2011) p 34, Lewis

the instance of transmission (Afghanistan prior to drone strikes in Pakistan) or at the implementation of it (Yemen post drone strikes in Pakistan). The same goes for many AQAP leaders. Part of the original core al-Qaeda surrounding bin Laden in Afghanistan, fled to Yemen after the US invasion in 2001.<sup>244</sup> Burt states that the core of social contagion is the interpersonal instance of transmission, but he also emphasizes the transformation of the receiving ego describing adoption as a vital point.<sup>245</sup> Fagan et al. also highlight interactions as the means of contagion while simultaneously stating that the result is adaption of behaviors.<sup>246</sup> Hence the theory does not clarify the correlation in time and space between transmission and implementation, except that successful contagion results in adaptation. In other words until the result of contagion is implemented or materialized, the contagion is cognitive and unverifiable.

In the case of al-Wuhayshi this ambiguity is clarified by the fact that he was active in AQY for several years without fully implementing his replica of al-Qaeda. Although AQYs hierarchical structure imitated AQC, ideological resemblances such as focusing on the far enemy and media use for ideological outreach were not implemented until around the creation of AQAP in 2008/2009, hence after the drone strikes began in Pakistan. This change in course could have been the result of joining Saudi leaders Said al Shihri and Mohamed al Awfi, or their financial contributions that helped to implement al-Wuhayshis vision. What contradicts this, is the continuous indicated AQC knowledge of AQAP and communication from AQC to AQAP signifying that the ideological similarities has less to do with the mindset of AQAP leaders and more to do with centralized directives and decisions from AQC. Possibly AQAP was not allowed to take over some of the ideological related tasks of AQC until they were seriously weakened by drone strikes and in need of an apprentice. Conclusively it appears AQAP still require the permission of AQC to pursue its ideological course. This is emphasized by al- Zawahiri explicitly stated permission to al-Wahayshi to perform an attack on the far enemy at the large virtual meeting of al-Qaeda operatives in 2013.<sup>247</sup>

The initial contagion of ideology is perceived as a quasi case, where transmission occurred in

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(2013) p 85.

<sup>244</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 37.

<sup>245</sup> Burt (1987) p 1288-1289.

<sup>246</sup> Fagan et al. (2000) p 2,16, 18.

<sup>247</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 23.

mostly Afghanistan, pre drone strikes in Pakistan, but the adoption took place in Yemen post drone strikes in Pakistan. The continuous directives, inspirations and required permissions are signs of clear contagion i.e. direct interpersonal transmission from alter to ego, pertaining to a spread from AQC in Pakistan to AQAP in Yemen since 2009, thus after drone strikes in Pakistan commenced. The ideological contagion from AQC to AQAP is possibly a coinciding combination of al-Wuhayshi will of an AQC replica combined with AQC regular control over its affiliates. But it may also be part of transforming AQAP to take over some of AQC's core functions, which it is unable to perform or preparing AQAP to become a new safe haven, following systematic drone strikes in Pakistan. An indication of the ideological value of AQAP is al-Zawahiri's official announcement of al-Wahayshi as al-Qaeda's second-in command.<sup>248</sup> Signaling that AQAP has gained AQC's trust as an ideological ambassador, as al-Zawahiri could have announced any of the remaining AQC members as successor but didn't. This again indicates that there probably has been an evolving ideological contagion behind the forming of AQAP, resulting in the announcement of al-Wahayshi as al-Qaeda's second-in command.

In Sum: The initial ideological contagion is divided in its transmission, pre drone strikes in Pakistan and its materialization, post drone strikes in Pakistan and is classified as semi contagion. Clear contagion, direct interpersonal transmission from alter to ego, is indicated continuously since AQAP's creation by official announcements and signs of communication. The close contact, directives given from AQC and the need of AQAP to anchor decisions with AQC conclusively indicates that AQAP is at large ideologically steered by AQC. The lack of data regarding the nature and extent of contagion requires further verification.

## 8.2 Resources

Contagion of resources includes money, individuals and material. Since the death of bin Laden there has been a shift of financial resources from a previous support of AQC to AQAP, including donations from "main" donors.<sup>249</sup> This can be a sign of weakening trust for AQC, perceived as operatively "dead" therefore fruitless to invest in. But possibly it indicates the tendency described above, where AQC is gradually shifting over core tasks to AQAP, thus requiring a greater portion of al-Qaeda financial resources. Lack of data hinders detailed

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<sup>248</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 23.

<sup>249</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 4.

information regarding sources and from where those financial resources are distributed where, a financial stream from AQC would indicate a clear contagion i.e. direct interpersonal transmission from alter to ego. Individual donations to AQAP may be the result of surrounding circumstances such as increased media attention and ideological outreach, but the shift of “main” donors implies an underlying centralized decision. Indirect contagion, interpersonal transmission from alter to ego through a third party, is possible if AQC have instructed donors to support AQAP. Distribution of financial resources is therefore considered plausible contagion but weak data make it hard to confirm.

Numbers and more detailed data of individuals who have fled from Pakistan to Yemen is unclear and it seems to have occurred in waves. After the implementation of drone strikes in Pakistan in 2004, AQAP grew in size by incorporating fleeing combatants from countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>250</sup> Vague descriptions of how drone strikes appear to have fragmented al-Qaeda in Pakistan and forcing members to seek refuge in safer countries such as Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen is repeated in the literature.<sup>251</sup> After a period of AQAP recruits coming from mainly Saudi Arabia and Somalia, there were signs of increased arrivals from Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2010 and indications that some operations were also moved to Yemen following heavy counterterrorism operations.<sup>252</sup> A letter from The Committee on foreign relations to the US senate in 2010 estimates the number of fleeing al-Qaeda operative from Pakistan to other locations as around the hundreds, but possibly even thousands.<sup>253</sup> Specification of total quantities and of HVT recruits fleeing from Pakistan to Yemen is unavailable due to lack of information. But al-Qaeda operatives moving from Pakistan to Yemen due to drone strikes signify clear contagion i.e. direct transmission from alter to ego. This would not differ from regular flows of refugees following violent conflicts, if it didn't coincide with AQAPs increased operative ability and high status within the al-Qaeda network since the implementation of drone strikes.

This spread of operatives may be the result of individual choices following drone strikes, but they may also be the result of directives from AQC. According to documents found after bin Ladens death, he recommended al-Qaeda leaders to leave FATA and seek refuge in areas

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<sup>250</sup> Mumtaz (2010) p 4.

<sup>251</sup> Boyle (2013) p 11.

<sup>252</sup> Terill (2013) p 28, Kerry in Dumont (2010) p 69-70.

<sup>253</sup> Kerry in Dumont (2010) p 63.

where drone strikes would have less impact on the organization.<sup>254</sup> Following the line of reasoning presented above, the possibility of transferring AQC to Yemen, bin Ladens recommendation may have been a first step in such a “move”. This is slightly contradicted by the fact that a small core still remains in Pakistan, but that may be the result of increased difficulty for AQC members to flee to Yemen due to counterterrorism efforts in surrounding countries. Following the decline of AQC in Pakistan training of new operatives has to some extent been taken over by affiliates. AQAP takes further responsibility by also training operatives of other al-Qaeda affiliates and sharing resources similar to the conduct of AQC in the 1990s.<sup>255</sup>

In sum: The redistribution of financial resources indicates a possible indirect contagion, interpersonal transmission through a third party, that is unconfirmed due to lack of information. There is clear contagion, direct transmission from alter to ego, in terms of operatives going from Pakistan to Yemen since the implementation of drone strikes. Whether this has occurred voluntarily or following directives from AQC is unconfirmed. Regardless, the mere spread of operatives from Pakistan to Yemen is sufficient to classify as contagion. If the spread is ordered by AQC, it would simply increase the indications of a centralized decision to move, at least parts of AQC operations to Yemen.

### 8.3 Strategy

Contagion of strategic character includes targets attacked, the methods used and the general strategic behavior. Documents found in Abbottabad indicate that bin Laden operated as leader and important part of al-Qaeda and affiliate’s activities. He is thought to have affected AQAPs policies regarding attacks, media and general activities.<sup>256</sup> AQC in general is also indicated as continuously engaged in an advisory relationship with AQAP.<sup>257</sup> This signifies clear contagion, direct transmission from alter to ego, by affecting the strategic choices of AQAP, despite the uncertainty of the exact instances of transmission or specific content, due to classification. As the operational ability of AQC has decreased it is likely that this strategic “guidance” has increased. The most distinguished characteristic of strategic contagion is AQAPs adoption to target the far enemy. If AQC has an overreaching control regarding the conducts of its affiliates why have only AQAP focused on the far enemy? As described above

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<sup>254</sup> Boyle (2013) p 10.

<sup>255</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 3.

<sup>256</sup> Schweitzer, Oreg (2014) p 51.

<sup>257</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 3.

this may derive from ideological contagion. But it might also be a strictly strategic one as AQC is in need of an adept to do its “dirty work” following operative inability. Al-Wahayshis vision of an AQC replica in Yemen could have offered a strategic opportunity. Schweitzer, and Oreg argue that AQAPs policy of targeting the far enemy is strongly affected by personal relationships incorporating AQAPs leaders, AQC and operatives in Pakistan. In other words transmission occurs through interpersonal relationships. The lack of such personal relationships is perceived to differentiate other affiliates from the conducts of AQAP.<sup>258</sup> Hence underlying personal relationships permit contagion of strategic direction, and indicate heightened trust. Bin Laden mentioning of the “underwear bomber” in a message to Barack Obama without taking credit for it signals approval.<sup>259</sup> As Burts descriptions of contagion states, the proximity of the relationships between alter and ego should be of a character which makes egos assessment of the advancement sensitive to alters implementation.<sup>260</sup> AQC knows its conducts will be assessed and reproduced by AQAP, thus requiring close communication regarding strategic choices. The strategic importance and particularity of AQAP is demonstrated by the fact that AQAP is the first al-Qaeda fraction to be given higher security threat status than AQC by the US.<sup>261</sup>

Permission to attack the far enemy is perceived as given by AQC, but this does not necessarily signal contagion. Al-Wuhayshi might have asked permission to attack the far enemy which was granted by AQC, indicating ideological contagion but not a strategic one. The only way AQAPs policy of attacking the far enemy is due to strategic contagion is if AQC ordered it in some way and transmitted expertise and directives of how to operate. Despite a general lack of data verifying instances of transmission, the July 2013 intercepted phone call between AQC al-Zawahri and AQAPs al-Wuhayshi signifies clear contagion i.e. direct transmission from alter to ego. Al-Zawahri instructs Wuhayshi to carry out large scale attacks against the US which he vowed to do, by telling Zawahri he would perform an act which would change the face of history.<sup>262</sup> This is the clearest indication of contagion found in my study. It involves the two actors engaging in the core moment of contagion, the interpersonal instance of transmission between alter and ego and the finalizing adoption by

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<sup>258</sup> Schweitzer, Oreg (2014) p 42.

<sup>259</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 3.

<sup>260</sup> Burt (1987) p 1288-1289.

<sup>261</sup> Jones The Terrorist Threat from Pakistan (2011) p.

<sup>262</sup> Sharp (2014) p 5.

ego. The contagion is symbolized by al-Zawahri direct instructions to attack the US, which al-Wuhayshi adopts by complying. Although this is only one instance of clear and confirmed contagion, it symbolizes and verifies a systematization of such instances. AQC's continuous control over AQAPs is further symbolized by the virtual meeting in 2013, with 20 al-Qaeda linked groups, where al-Zawahri approved AQAP plans to attack the US and Western targets in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>263</sup> AQAPs unique choice of strategy, in comparison to other affiliates, is therefore deemed as caused by contagion. In March 2012 a video showed al-Zawahiri advocating Pakistanis to revolt against their government for misconduct and collaboration with the US.<sup>264</sup> Similar uprisings were encouraged by AQAP during the Arab Spring as they wished to overthrow President Saleh following extensive counterterrorism. This exemplifies shared strategic choices possibly deriving from contagion by advisory contact. AQAP might even have held a role as mediator by forwarding such messages to other affiliates. In letters between al-Wahayshi and AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel al-Wahayshi states that he has information for Droukdel from AQC.<sup>265</sup> This indicates AQAP as a strategic node between AQC and other affiliates, again emphasizing AQAPs prominent position in regards to strategic matters. Another strategic similarity of AQC and AQAP is the ongoing attempt from AQAP to blend with the tribal communities. By moving away from a specific group of hard core militants into a movement dispersed into the tribal structure, usually by marriage between operatives and tribal women, they become a mass movement. AQC used the method to blend in and hide in the FATA area after the implementation of drone strikes.<sup>266</sup> These described similarities may be the result of contagion through mimicking or strategic directives from AQC, but remains unconfirmed due to weak information.

In sum: There are indications of clear strategic contagion regarding directives and instructions transmitted from AQC to AQAP. Unfortunately due to unclear information the specifics of such transmission are unknown. The strategic directives appear to be adopted by AQAP which is demonstrated by their continuous strikes against the far enemy. The phone call between al-Wuhayshi and al-Zawahiri clearly demonstrates how the strategic contagion is conducted. There are also strategic similarities in using locals to stir up turmoil, as well as the

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<sup>263</sup> Zimmerman (Sep 2013) p 23.

<sup>264</sup> Rudner (2013) p 960.

<sup>265</sup> Zimmerman (2013) p 4.

<sup>266</sup> Sharp in Dumont (2010) p 14-15.

strategy to blend with the tribal community for cover and increased support. These indicate probable contagion by mimicking or instructions but are so far unverified.

A possible transformation of AQAP into a safe haven for AQC is indicated by al-Zawahiri announcing a wish for Yemen to become a “citadel for jihad and mujahidin and a fortress for Islam and Muslims.”<sup>267</sup> And documents written by bin Laden found in Abbottabad describe how he shortly before his death in 2011 had begun searching for a new AQC safe haven, due to persistent counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and he mentions Yemen as a possibility. Yemen was also described as the best refuge, out of all affiliates, for al-Qaeda members in need of protection from US counterterrorism efforts.<sup>268</sup> This signals a strong relationship and sense of confidence between AQC and AQAP both strategically, ideologically and in terms of resources.

## **9 Concluding remarks**

The conducted process tracing of al-Qaeda indicate that there has been a spread of ideology, resources and strategy from AQC in Pakistan to mainly AQAP in Yemen following the initiation of drone strikes in Pakistan 2004 which meet the criteria of contagion. Clear indications of contagion i.e. direct interpersonal transmission from alter to ego have been found in all three areas investigated. In ideology clear cases of contagion are indicated by continuous official announcements and signs of communication between AQC and AQAP. The close contact, directives given and need for AQAP decisions to be approved from AQC indicates that AQAP is at large ideologically steered by AQC. In resources clear contagion pertain to the indication of operatives moving from AQC in Pakistan to AQAP in Yemen since the implementation of drone strikes regardless if it is the result of directives from AQC. In strategy there are indications of clear contagion regarding directives and instructions transmitted from AQC and adopted by AQAP, mostly regarding attacks towards the far enemy, alongside other strategic mimicking. The phone call between al-Wuhayshi and al-Zawahiri demonstrates the most clear indication of contagion found. Despite a general difficulty in regards to information and reliable sources, the findings in my paper show that contagion has occurred.

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<sup>267</sup> Loidolt (2011) p 105.

<sup>268</sup> Watts, Cilluffo (2012) p 4.

This development could be the result of three underlying causes; 1) Coincidental, where the development is due to al-Wuhayshi personal wish to create an AQC replica, which coincided well with AQC need to place certain functions outside of Pakistan, therefore without connection to a predetermined AQC strategy. 2) AQC intended to make Yemen its new safe haven and operational base, but was interrupted by US drone strikes in combination with counterterrorism efforts in surrounding countries, thus disrupting the completion of the move. 3) AQC is gradually shifting over operations to Yemen, focusing on simply staying alive and wait for the drone campaign in Pakistan to pass. As the US focuses on Yemen for a while, civil outrage also give AQC material useful for propaganda purposes as they can now claim that the US has “invaded” and are killing innocent people in yet another country.

Although drone strikes seem to have had a weakening effect on AQC in Pakistan, they have not weakened al-Qaeda as a whole and are most likely a contributing factor for the spread described in this paper. As a reaction to the uprising of AQAP in Yemen, the US began implementing drone strikes there as well. These have been of a smaller scale, possibly obstructed by the Arab Spring, and have thus far not had a weakening effect on AQAP. Increasing drone strikes coupled with a closer connection between AQAP, al Shabaab and AQIM and possibly even Boko Haram might push forward yet another spread, advancing the possibility of an al-Qaeda 3.0 in the Horn of Africa<sup>269</sup>. Another possibility is that AQC will revive in Afghanistan after the US troops withdrawal in end of 2014.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Hudson et al. (2012) p 150

<sup>270</sup> Rogers (2013) p 25

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## Appendix

### Drones

Drones are defined as an “aircraft or balloon that does not carry a human operator and is capable of flight under remote control or autonomous programming” by the US Department of Defense. Although the US is relying increasingly on drones in both counterterrorism and military operations, they are not a new phenomenon, thought to have been first used as far back as World War I and for reconnaissance in the Gulf and Balkan wars of the 1990s.<sup>271</sup> In 2000 unarmed MQ-1 Predator drones were deployed from Uzbekistan to search for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. The suggestion to arm drones were put forward in late 2000 by Cofer Black, the head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center and Richard Clarke, the Chief Counter Terrorism Advisor for the National Security Council subsequently prototypes with laser turrets in the nose and Hellfire AGM-114 laser-guided missiles on the wings were constructed. But their implementation was postponed due to uncertainties regarding accountability and moral consequences. After the 9/11 the armed Predator was quickly discharge, supposedly its first strike took place in Afghanistan in 2001 during the US intervention.<sup>272</sup> The CIA is perceived to have conducted a strike in Afghanistan in February 2002 on a target thought to have been bin Laden.<sup>273</sup> In 2007 a new armed drone MQ-9 Reaper was implemented.<sup>274</sup> It is faster, larger and more precise and besides Hellfire missiles it carries laser- and GPS-guided bombs, both models are currently used by the US.<sup>275</sup> They can also spend 24 hours in the air on heights of approximately 8 000 meters.<sup>276</sup> The strategic value of drones lies in their assumed effectiveness in eliminating individual terrorists to cripple their organizations ability to operate, while being cost-effective and keeping US soldier out of harm’s way. Supporters often point to the method as invaluable in the struggle to defeat al-Qaeda.<sup>277</sup> The first drone strike performed outside an official war zone was conducted in Yemen November 2002, two years before the launching of drone strikes in Pakistan. The retaliation strike, deployed from a base in Djibouti, hit a remote area of Yemen and killed 18 including six believed al-Qaeda members one of them Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harhi. He was one of the planners of the attack on American warship USS Cole in 2000 in

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<sup>271</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 8, Enemark (2011) p 220

<sup>272</sup> Williams (2010) p 872-873, Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 8

<sup>273</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 10

<sup>274</sup> Williams (2010) p 876

<sup>275</sup> Enemark (2011) p 221, Jordan(2014) p 12, Deri (2012) p 4

<sup>276</sup> Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 9

<sup>277</sup> Smith, Walsh (2013) p 311

the coast of Aden, which killed 17 Americans.<sup>278</sup> In 2002 the US Department of Defense arsenal consisted of 167 drones in 2012 that number is 7 000 and as of 2009 the number of trained drone pilots per year outnumber traditional fighter pilots.<sup>279</sup>

### **Al-Qaeda Background**

The global jihad movement originates in the Salafiya-Jihadia, an extremist branch of Salafi ideology, which essentially is an interpretation of the Koran and the Hadith<sup>280</sup>. Salafi ideology calls for a total reimplementation of Sharia<sup>281</sup> and the way of life from Islam's beginning, so called "pure" Islam, initially in the Muslim world but eventually worldwide. Developed with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt at the end of the 1920 it is recognized by its followers as the only possibility to overthrowing West's superiority.<sup>282</sup> And the method for implementation is through support and acceptance from the people. Despite sever prosecution in the Muslim world by secular establishments Salafi groups managed to multiply and extend via the Muslim Diaspora to Europe, North America, and Australia. The extremist branch Salafiya-Jihadia differentiates mainly in terms of method and involves all-embracing activism, jihad meaning Holy War thus permitting violence. Targets include anyone not sharing the ideology and incorporate all religions, even Muslims who are not Salafies. Since its birth in Egypt around 1960 by Egyptian lecturer Sai'd Al-Qutb, Salafiya-Jihadia support is considered variably global.<sup>283</sup>

The operational unit of Salafiya-Jihadia called the global jihad movement, emanated in Afghanistan around 1980. Following the Soviet Union's invasion in 1979 the internal power disputes between communists and Islamists turned into a regional war. With the support of external actors, United States being the biggest contributor, a rebellion against the occupation developed<sup>284</sup>. Perceived as jihad by the greater Muslim world, the war attracted Muslim volunteers from mainly Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Yemen<sup>285</sup>. Foreign Islamic religious leaders on site organized flows of volunteers into Mujahidin<sup>286</sup> groups.<sup>287</sup> A Palestinian scholar and member of the Muslim Brotherhood, named Dr. Abdullah Azzam, was one of the

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<sup>278</sup> Enemark (2011) p 221, Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 11

<sup>279</sup> Deri (2012) p 2, Stanford Law School, NYU School of Law (2012) p 8

<sup>280</sup> Statements of Mohammed

<sup>281</sup> Islamic religious law

<sup>282</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047, Jones (2014) p 2

<sup>283</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047

<sup>284</sup> Rogers (2013) p 14-15

<sup>285</sup> Rudner (2013) p 954

<sup>286</sup> Those active in jihad or holy warriors

<sup>287</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047, Hellmich (2011) p 22-23

first organizers.<sup>288</sup> In 1984 he opened Maktab Al-Khidamat (MaK)<sup>289</sup> in Peshawar on the Pakistan–Afghan border to administer volunteers.<sup>290</sup> Amongst the volunteers were Osama bin Laden, heir to an affluent Saudi, and his Egyptian associate, a surgeon named Ayman al-Zawahiri, inspired to join the jihad by Sai’d Al-Qutb<sup>291</sup>. Bin Laden took part in the fighting as soldier and commander while simultaneously collaborating with Azzam and financing MaK. After disagreement concerning the direction of MaK, bin Laden left 1988 and set up al-Qaeda<sup>292</sup> in Peshawar, Pakistan combining his wealth and request for jihad with the theological popularity of his associate Ayman al Zawahiri. Despite an earlier ideological creation of Al Qaeda al Sulbah<sup>293</sup> by Azzam, bin Laden is perceived as the founder of al-Qaeda, when Azzam was murdered in 1989 MaK merged with Al-Qaeda.<sup>294</sup>

When the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan ended and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan collapsed in 1992 many international jihadist volunteers returned home. Excited by their experiences many formed local radical groups to reduce secular forces and implement Islamic caliphate, leading to waves of terrorist attacks in Muslim countries.<sup>295</sup> The initial task for Al-Qaeda was to support these fractions of fighters globally and constitute a center for operational actions. Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia in early 1990s making al-Qaeda famous by frequently opposing the Saudi government’s acceptance towards US and other international forces in the country<sup>296</sup>. His vision of a “base” materialized when, coinciding with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, he was invited by the Islamist Sudanese regime to bring Al-Qaeda to Sudan. There they set up headquarter and large training camps to educate and train jihad fighters, who afterwards returned home to fight, as part of forming a growing “Islamic army”. In 1996 al-Qaeda was banished from Sudan after international pressure on the Sudanese regime following a al-Qaeda connected assassination attempt on Husni Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. Bin Laden and his men took refuge in Afghanistan and allied with the Taliban who had taken control of the country the same year. Once again Al-Qaeda set up training camps, and this time they were larger, many more and spread across the country. Jihad fighters in large quantities from all corners of the world received various trainings in the

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<sup>288</sup> Rudner (2013) p 954, Turner (2010) p 550

<sup>289</sup> The service bureau

<sup>290</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1047, Hellmich (2011) p 25

<sup>291</sup> Rogers (2013) p 15, Hellmich (2011) p 23

<sup>292</sup> The base

<sup>293</sup> The Solid Base

<sup>294</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1048, Rudner (2013) p 954

<sup>295</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1048, Rudner (2013) p 954-955

<sup>296</sup> Rogers (2013) p 15

camps in Afghanistan and later also in Pakistan.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Gunaratna, Oreg (2010) p 1049, Rudner (2013) p 954-955