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# Review of Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin Laden and the 9/11 by Saleem Shahzad

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***Book Review***  
**Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban: Beyond Bin  
Laden and 9/11**  
**By**  
**Saleem Shahzad**

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Peshawar University

P l u t o P r e s s , 2 8 0 p p

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Salim Shahzad's investigative journalism explores the hidden tentacles of Al-Qaeda, the book analyzes the modus operandi and future plans of its looming lethality as a massive outfit. The author reminds his readers about the intelligence and tactics of Al-Qaeda, which has outsmarted its enemies on a number of occasions and has an exceptional ability to utilize situations in their favor. The book unfolds several events that were cleverly orchestrated by Al-Qaeda. The author is confident that Al-Qaeda and Taliban cannot be defeated with the present policies adopted by US and its allies, although he does not provide any suggestions on how this information should be used to overwhelm the surge of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

**THE MUSLIM RULING ELITES**

Knowing about the mistrust and the gap that exists between the Muslim ruling elites and the people, Al-Qaeda takes full advantage of this division. Al-Qaeda plans to unite all Muslim militant outfits under the command of Al-Qaeda and to organize them into one group, in order to be more effective against the West and the Muslim ruling elites. In the post 9/11 world, the Muslim ruling elite and the West are considered partners and enemies of Al-Qaeda, and as such the recent policy of the Pakistani Janissaries (ITP) is to first target the Pakistan Armed forces and then engage with the foreign troops. The objective has been to cause the masses to become disenchanted from their ruling elite and to engage the state elements against each other. In this manner, Al-Qaeda would ease the pressure on them and they would be more focused on the global agenda.

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#### POLITICS OF WAR AND PEACE

Since 9/11, Al-Qaeda has developed a politics of war and peace. It maneuvered through peace accords in Pakistan to create an enlarged space within which to wage war. It sabotaged the peace process many times by war and this remains a never-ending process until a final victory can be announced. For that purpose they started their hunt for natural leaders and created their fieriest group of Janissaries-the Ibnul Balad (Sons of the Soil). The Pakistani Janissaries/TTP is the most effective weapon of Al-Qaeda and is used against their own governments.

#### THE NEO-TALIBAN

Al-Qaeda established the first-ever popular local and fully tribally supported 'Al-Qaeda Franchise' in the world. Thus, if in the future the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani military establishment were ever to plan reconciliation with the West, this Neo-Taliban will be there to oppose them and to remind their Afghan comrades that the Jihadi agenda does end in Afghanistan, but is set to circle around the world. In the meantime, Al-Qaeda could deploy the TTP to help break any obstructions erected by Pakistan's government. Paradoxically, the enforcement of Islamic law had never been the aim of the Neo-Taliban. The Swat showdown in 2007 was not fought because the government had refused to comply with the Taliban's demand to introduce Sharia Law, it was a bid to set up another smoke screen to eradicate the US presence in the region and discourage any thoughts of dialogue with the Taliban.

According to its new policy, Al-Qaeda doesn't want to confront its enemies directly but wishes instead to use the local people against their own governments and NATO. Al-Qaeda is now more a manipulator than a militant organization fighting its enemies. According to Al-Qaeda's plan, the Pakistani militants have challenged the local tribal authority and systematically destroyed the thousand years old customs by replacing them with Salafi and Wahabi ideology. Thus the command along tribal lines that once existed is broken. Al-Qaeda's strategy is to combine all the tribal areas into one unit against the old tribal system of the Pakistan government. It eliminated the British installed tribal system and the Pakistan Army could not do anything to prevent this.

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#### SAFE HAVEN

Al-Qaeda plans to move into Pakistani tribal areas in order to make Pakistan the new theater of war. The author argues that Al-Qaeda did not originally intend to launch Jihad in Pakistan, but when Pakistan sided with America in Afghanistan it was left with a dilemma which they resolved by considering Pakistan no less an enemy than the Western allies of the US. This policy is evident from the activities of TTP, which is continuously targeting the Pakistani state's assets and army installations.

#### ESCALATING THE WAR

To overcome the present impasse, Al Qaeda adopted a policy of expanding the war beyond Pakistan and Afghanistan. The idea was originally the brainchild of one of the fieriest neo-Taliban named Ilyas Kashmiri. Ilyas Kashmiri was supposedly killed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2011 drone attack.

#### BEHIND THE SCENES

Al-Qaeda and Taliban never held identical objectives. Ironically, the Taliban has always been used as a strategic weapon by Al-Qaeda and by Pakistan. Even before the fall of the Afghan Taliban's government in 2001, Al-Qaeda had strong influence over Mullah Omer and the Taliban Shura. Its influence grew more after the American attack. America seriously underestimated the strength of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and therefore it lost the chance to politically engage the Taliban. Therefore, Al-Qaeda never thought of reconciliation with the Taliban, which it now seems ready to pursue today. Had America dealt with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda with different tools, the resulting situation would have been more in American's favor and Al-Qaeda could have been made isolated or ousted from Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda does not want peace in the region and does not allow the Taliban to be recognized by the world. In other words, if peace comes in Afghanistan then Al-Qaeda cannot pursue its global agenda of escalating war into the whole of South and central Asia. It is believed that the real war theater will begin once the Western coalition leaves, because Al-Qaeda doesn't want to fight with the Western coalition forces. It wants to exhaust the coalition forces and to

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preserve its energies for the final blow in the Pakistan battlefield. The recent trust deficit and disengagement between America and Pakistan is surely celebrated by Al-Qaeda as a victory.

#### PAKISTAN BEARS THE BRUNT

Al-Qaeda's strategic planning is so impressive that it has survived to this day, and many believe that it has become increasingly united and threatening. Al-Qaeda appears to have already won the battle and has defeated its enemies by outwitting them. It was part of the Al-Qaeda peace and war policy to force the Pakistani government to make agreements with the Taliban (Shakai 2004 and Sarogha 2005 and 2006), and this paved the way for Al-Qaeda to penetrate into the tribal areas of Pakistan and to establish its strategic presence. As a result of the 2006 peace agreement, an unknown amount of money was transferred from the Pakistani government vault to the militants; at this time the clinical term "foreigners" was used to refer to Al-Qaeda. Time has already proved that Al-Qaeda is on the winning side. The 2006 spring offensive was Al-Qaeda's watershed, and after this time Al-Qaeda clearly dominated Pakistan in 2007 and 2008, with the expansion of operations into India in late 2008. A theater of war was then begun in Chechnya in the year 2010.

One of Al-Qaeda's members, Sheikh Essa was given the task to preach the need for a war against Pakistan. Al-Qaeda knows that it was only because of the Pakistan army that the US had been successful against the Afghan Taliban. He visited all the tribal areas and convinced the tribal groups that their suffering is because of Pakistan. He even went to the extent of saying that those who crossed the border to fight against the US in Afghanistan were deviants, and that the real battle had to be fought against Pakistan's ruling military establishment. On the other hand, America thinks of Pakistan not only as a sanctuary to Taliban, but also as a problem for the US and considers Pakistan's tribal areas the root cause of insurgency. Pakistan seems to be in great trouble from all the sides.

#### IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The global Jihadi organizations actions and activities are mostly inspired from the political philosophy of the 14<sup>th</sup> century ideologue Ibna-Taymmiyaa (1263–1328 CE) whose beliefs were

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popular for the next 1000 years. Tamiyyah was considered the model of ideological resistance in the Muslim world, and his ideas are still the direct source for Islamic revolutionaries. Tamiyyah aimed to shock deviants by declaring them non-Muslims. Al-Qaeda's ideological discourse starts with the interpretations of Tamiyyah and end with Syed Qutb; their extremist actions are further supported by the more recent work of Abdul Wahab Najadi (1703-1792 AD) Shah Wali Ullah (1703 –1762) Mawududi (1903-1979) and Syed Qutab (1906-1966). Al-Qaeda ideology is further strengthened and radicalized with the recent inclusion of "Takfiri" ideology in its paradigm. The author clarifies the internal hierarchy of Al-Qaeda's leadership and its influence on the organization. Al-Zawahiri is considered to be the strategic mind and the real ideologue of Al-Qaeda. As far as Osama was concerned his role was more of a spiritual figurehead than as a true leader of Al-Qaeda. This shows that the death of Bin-Laden does not necessarily create an internal fissure in the organization; instead, the organization may have become more lethal with the death of Bin-Laden.

#### THE INSIDERS

The author very daringly investigates the Pakistani army officers who had sympathies with the militants and close ideological links with Al-Qaeda. This cadre of officers was very critical of the Pakistan army, and many of them later left the Pakistan army and joined Al-Qaeda. The author describes a few inside stories of former army officers who joined the militants. One of the stories was of two officer-ranked brothers; Capt Khurram (killed) and Maj, Haroon who had fought in the Kargil war in 1999 and often referred to the cowardice of the Pakistani officers. He was convinced that the Pakistan army was incapable of fighting any major battle and had left the Pakistan army and joined Al-Qaeda. He was responsible for spreading several gruesome operations. The author describes the likelihood of more Al-Qaeda sympathizers currently within the Pakistan Army, and has given much detail about the so-called secret links between the Taliban and ISI.

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#### THE END GAME

Saleem Shahzad believes that the defeat of the Western coalition is imminent, but he rules out the possibility of a nuclear Al-Qaeda supported by Muslim states. Instead, he argues that Al-Qaeda's real strength is not its weaponry but its uncanny ability to exploit unfolding events by working towards the collapse of its hi-tech enemies. Shahzad ends with this stating that the current approach and strategy that has been adopted by the Western coalition to eliminate Al-Qaeda can never be successful, but does not suggest any strategy himself that could be effective against Al-Qaeda. After a span of ten years, it is much evident that America has made many miscalculations in Afghanistan, which have together led the Al-Qaeda and Taliban to victory.

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