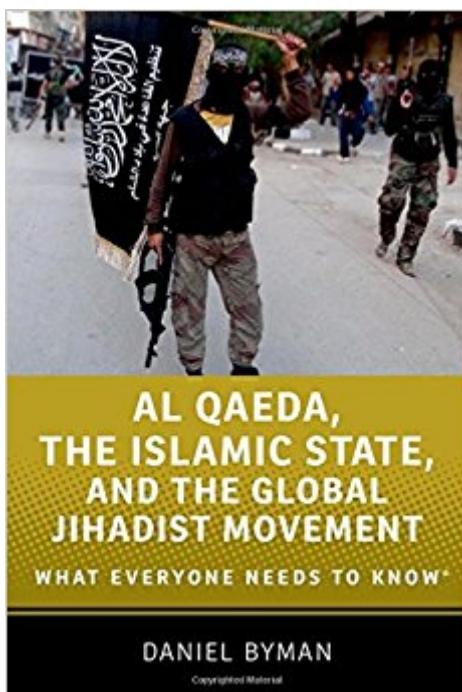


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Al Qaeda, The Islamic State, And The Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs To Know®



Synopsis

On the morning of September 11, 2001, the entire world was introduced to Al Qaeda and its enigmatic leader, Osama bin Laden. But the organization that changed the face of terrorism forever and unleashed a whirlwind of counterterrorism activity and two major wars had been on the scene long before that eventful morning. In *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Daniel L. Byman, an eminent scholar of Middle East terrorism and international security who served on the 9/11 Commission, provides a sharp and concise overview of Al Qaeda, from its humble origins in the mountains of Afghanistan to the present, explaining its perseverance and adaptation since 9/11 and the limits of U.S. and allied counterterrorism efforts. The organization that would come to be known as Al Qaeda traces its roots to the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Founded as the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, Al Qaeda achieved a degree of international notoriety with a series of spectacular attacks in the 1990s; however, it was the dramatic assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11 that truly launched Al Qaeda onto the global stage. The attacks endowed the organization with world-historical importance and provoked an overwhelming counterattack by the United States and other western countries. Within a year of 9/11, the core of Al Qaeda had been chased out of Afghanistan and into a variety of refuges across the Muslim world. Splinter groups and franchised offshoots were active in the 2000s in countries like Pakistan, Iraq, and Yemen, but by early 2011, after more than a decade of relentless counterterrorism efforts by the United States and other Western military and intelligence services, most felt that Al Qaeda's moment had passed. With the death of Osama bin Laden in May of that year, many predicted that Al Qaeda was in its death throes. Shockingly, Al Qaeda has staged a remarkable comeback in the last few years. In almost every conflict in the Muslim world, from portions of the Xanjiang region in northwest China to the African subcontinent, Al Qaeda franchises or like-minded groups have played a role. Al Qaeda's extreme Salafist ideology continues to appeal to radicalized Sunni Muslims throughout the world, and it has successfully altered its organizational structure so that it can both weather America's enduring full-spectrum assault and tailor its message to specific audiences. Authoritative and highly readable, Byman's account offers readers insightful and penetrating answers to the fundamental questions about Al Qaeda: who they are, where they came from, where they're going-and, perhaps most critically-what we can do about it. *What Everyone Needs to Know*® is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Again five stars for a good book, but "I love it" seems inappropriate given the serious nature of what is covered. This is another in the series "What everyone needs to know." The format is question and answer, and if you read all the way through, you'll find some repetition. One thing the book does well is ground these things in context. All have in common the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan, doubly targets for being invaders and for official atheism. The Soviets lost 15,000 soldiers killed and 50,000 wounded and a million Afghans died with 5 million more becoming refugees. In that chaos a lot of future chaos was born, with the additional fact that then, we Americans supplied the jihadis with weapons and support, much of it channeled through Pakistan. Byman does say that CIA funding for bin Laden is a myth. The Muslim world is badly split. Some fervent believers call other fervent believers godless pagans and the insult is rather important. Muslim regions have historically seen periodic episodes of militant fundamentalists trying to recreate the supposed golden days of the early Islamic community. This context is important; however violent and media-savvy the Islamic State may be, it is a variation on an old theme. Also worth noting is that as serious as jihadist terrorism has been for the US and other countries, the main victims are other Muslims. The 1990s war in Algeria between the government and fundamentalists saw 200,000 deaths. There's also some worldly activity going on. The Islamic State is actually running cities, as well as killing unbelievers. Al Qaeda members get 1 month vacation per year, plus 15 sick days. These people are businesslike as they push terrorism as a tactic.

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