

AQ's Comm: Strategies, Capabilities and Results

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Media in AQ's Strategy

- Goal of mass mobilization
 - Overcome defeatism
 - Vocalize common grievances
- Importance of propaganda
- Strength of US tied to media
- Value in western-style media campaigns

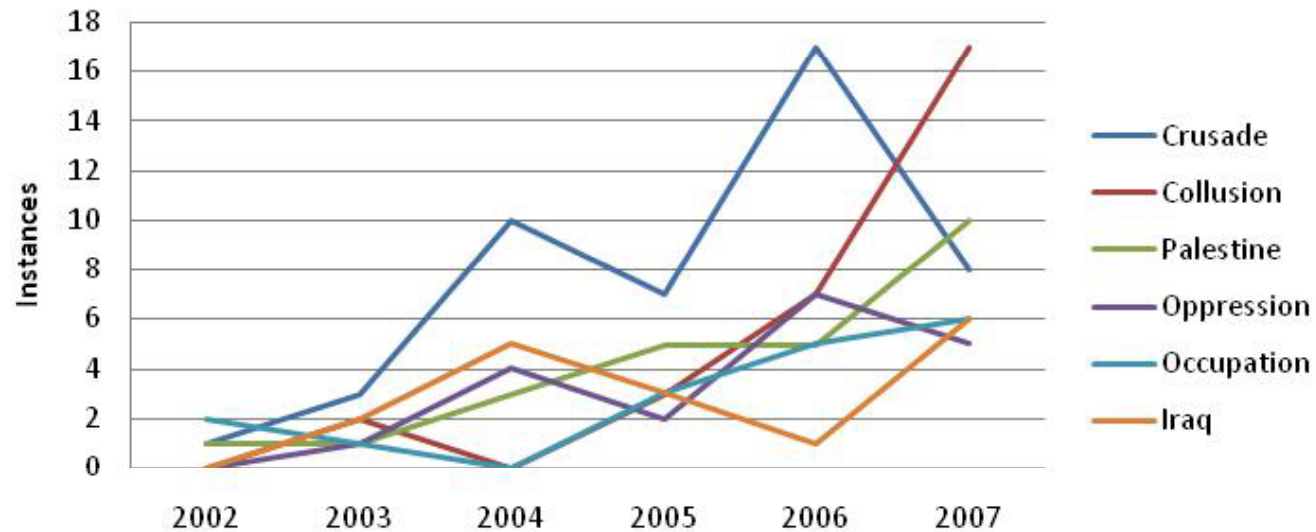
- No single/unified media strategy

Super-Narrative: Ideology and Message

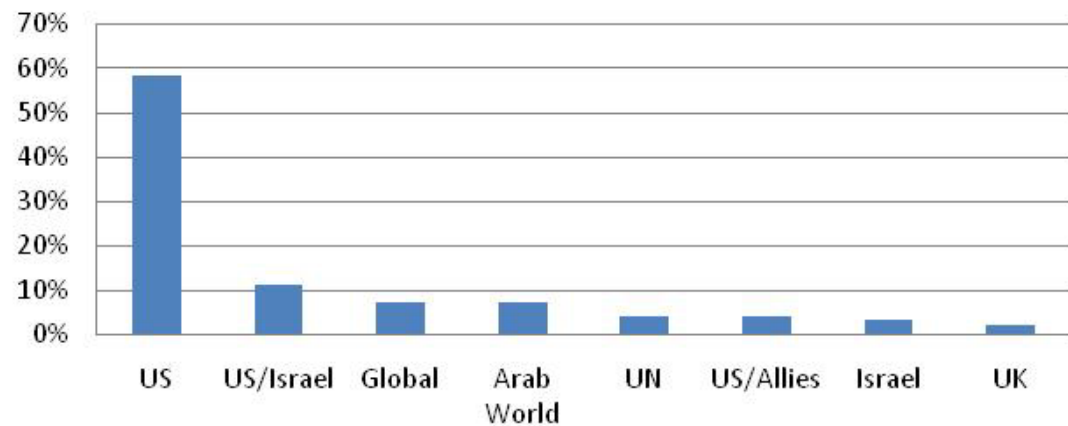
- AQ's message has excessive influence on mainstream discourse
- Three-tier approach
 - Legitimizing: religious and social mechanisms used to justify violence and position among Muslims
 - Propagating: distribution of specific and tailored media products
 - Disinformation operations: The propagation of rumors reinforce community view of US and CF, even if lack any basis of fact

Strategic Messaging

Zawahiri's Top Greivances



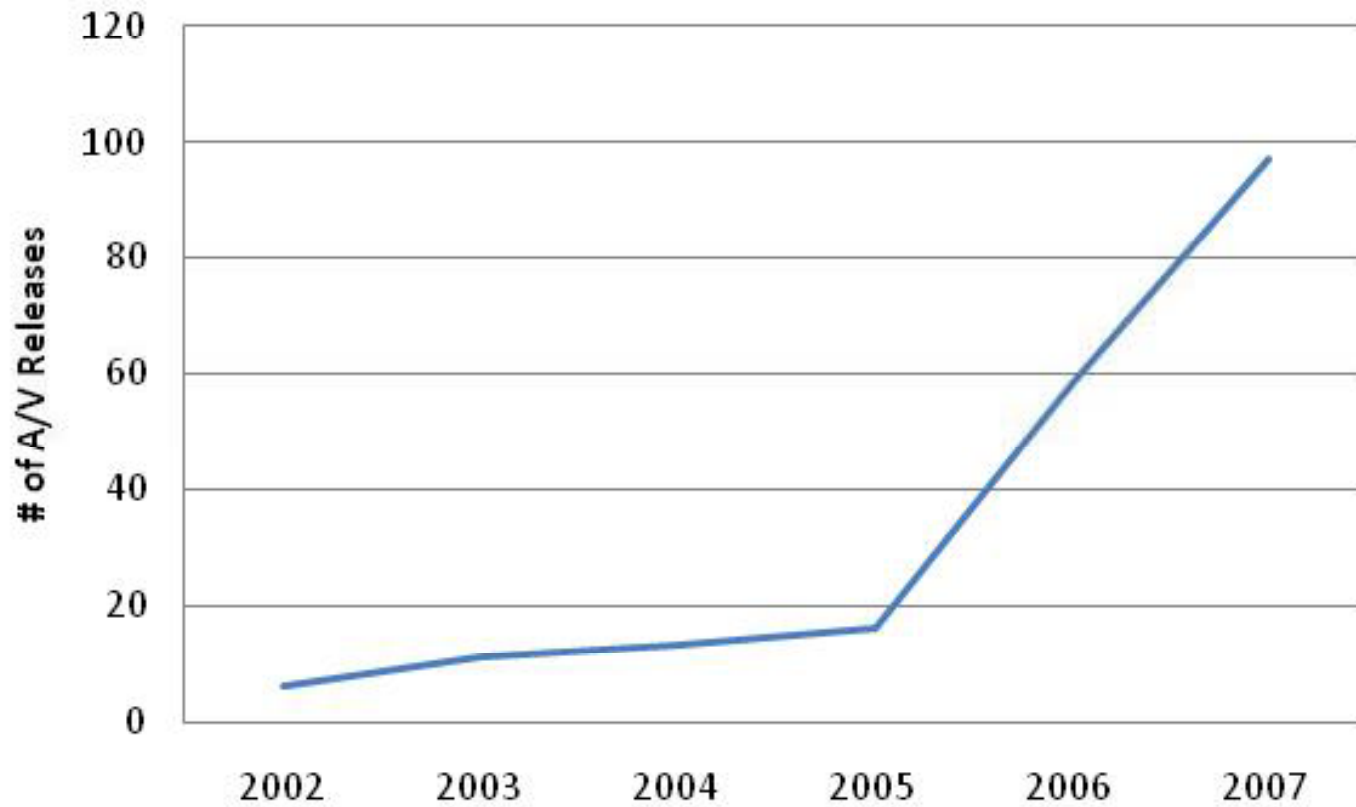
Regional Grievances



AQ's Communications Capabilities

- Audio/video production
 - Al-Jazeera for distribution until 2005
 - Internet for distribution since 2005
 - Multi-track distribution in 2008
- Written media and the internet
 - Regular document releases
 - Around 20 main websites/forums
 - 20-40 smaller sites
 - ~5,000 small sites with ~800 new per year

As-Sahab: A/V Capabilities



Source: IntelCenter.

As-Sahab: Video Quality, Graphics, Translations and Multiple File Formats

Stealing Al-Qa'ida's Playbook.

By Jarret M. Brachman & William F. Mccants, pp. 20-21



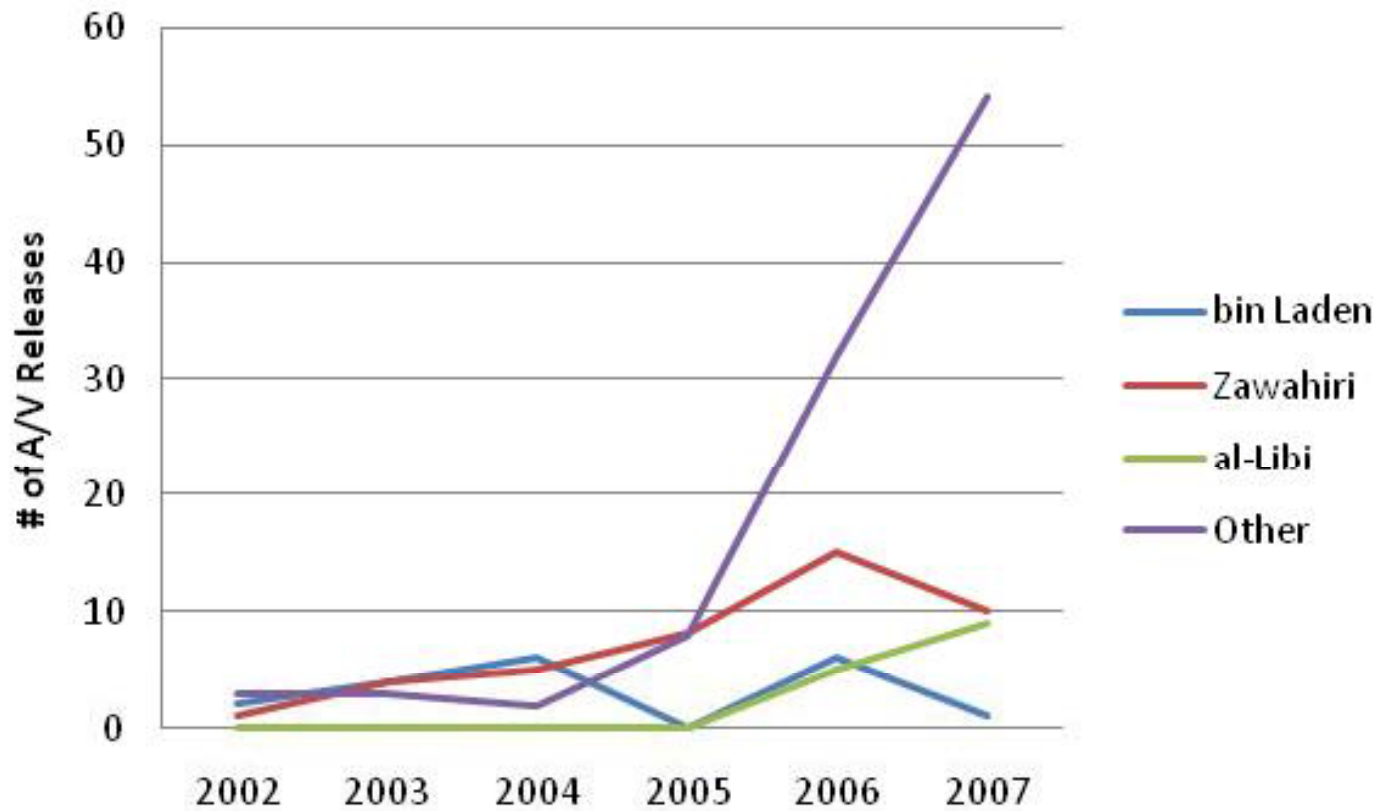
The U.S. could also fund non Salafis, but it currently lacks the expertise necessary to determine who is truly influential. Perhaps a better strategy in the near term would be to pressure Middle Eastern governments to allow greater political

Combating Terrorism Center-
United States Military Academy,
February 2006.



As-Sahab

As-Sahab: Directional Change



Source: IntelCenter.

“By Any Means Necessary”



Written Media and the Internet

- Written documentation still plays a vital role
 - Key recruitment platform
- Constant flow of new material
 - Debates over AQ's support of Hamas
 - The Impact of President Obama on jihad
 - Debates over Shia
 - US shifting troops from Iraq to Afghanistan
- Opening of al-Hisbah website
 - Al-Hisbah University

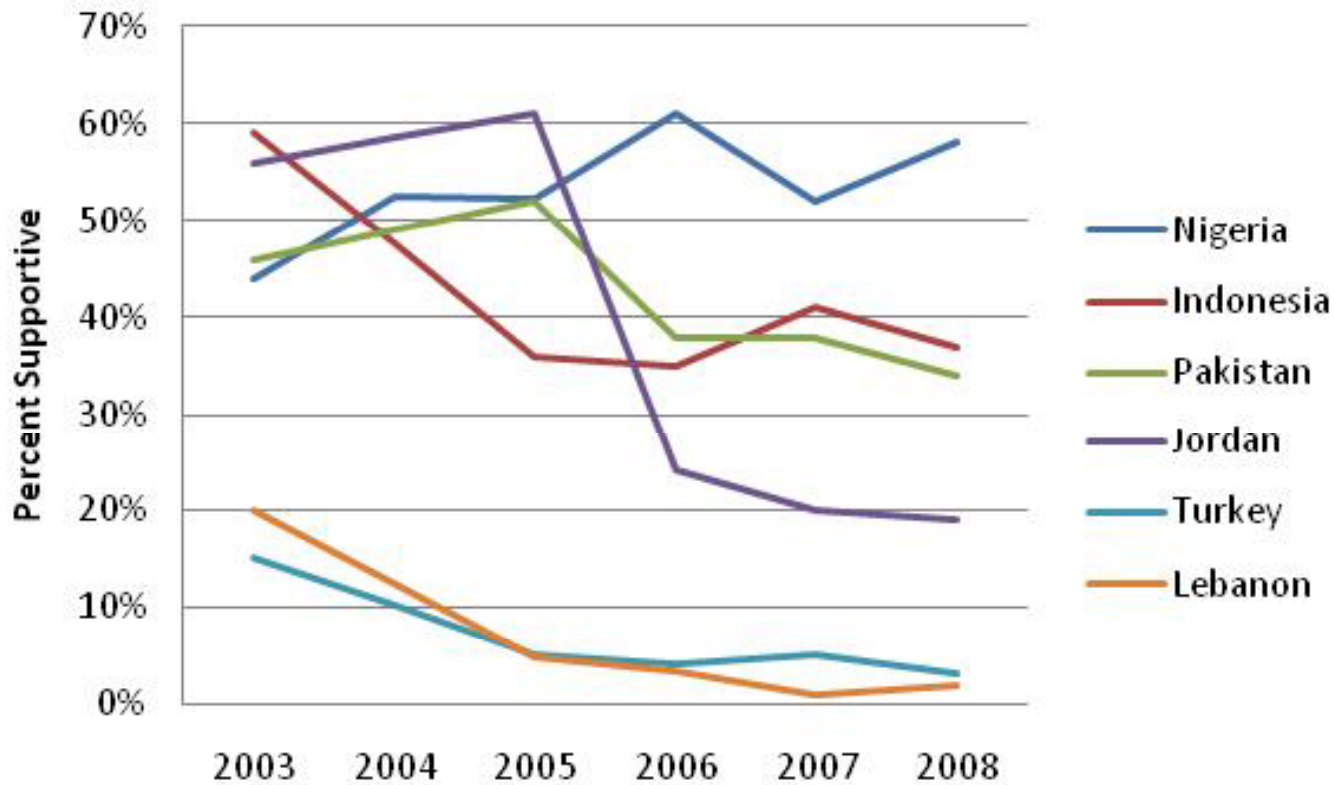
Sophisticated Online Presence



Segmentation and Targeting

- Active AQ members
 - AQ supporters
 - Non-supporting Muslims
 - West
-
- Geographic/issue based targeting

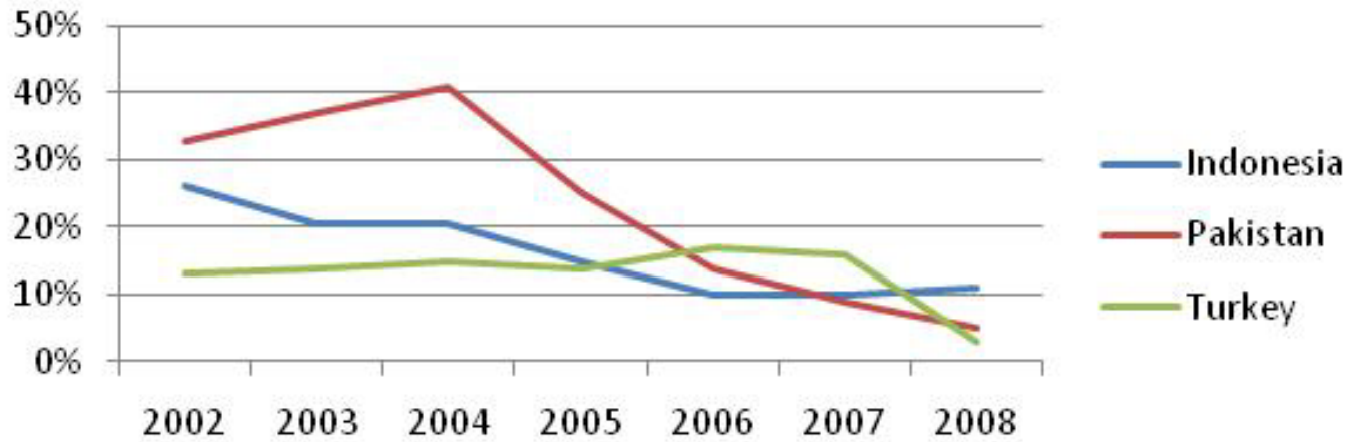
Success or Failure? Confidence in bin Laden



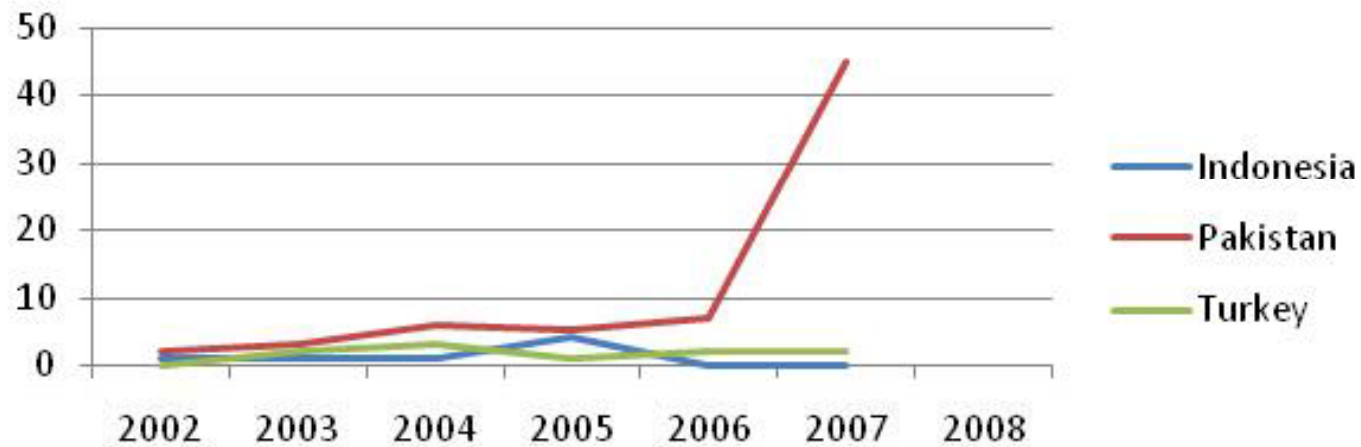
Source: Pew Research.

Success or Failure?

Suicide Attack Anecdotal Evidence



Source: Pew Research.



Source: Assaf Moghadam, CTC.

Conclusions

- Mass mobilization crucial to AQ endgame
- Use of different media
- Media and recruitment
- Segmentation and targeting
- Increasing share of a decreasing market
- Not contesting battle field of the mind