



War on Terror: Key Terms

Al Andalus - those parts of the Iberian Peninsula in southwest Europe (Portugal and most of today's Spain) that were governed by Muslims, or **Moors**, at various times between 711 and 1492.

asymmetric war – the strategies and tactics employed by a smaller and weaker force facing large militaries.

caliphate – a pan-Islamic state led by a ruler (caliph) who combines political and religious authority. The last caliphate (Ottoman) was abolished in March 1924.

dar al Islam (Abode of Islam) – all of the lands that at one point or another were under Islamic rule, generally understood to reach from the Iberian Peninsula to Malaysia.

fatwa – Islamic declaration on aspects of religious law issued by respected clerics.

Jihad – In Islam, a struggle for religious reasons both personal, alternatively defined as nonviolent, personal striving as well as religious war

Osama bin Laden (b. 1957) - a wealthy Saudi Arabian-born militant Islamist; founder of Al Qaeda and now in hiding. He declared war against the U.S. in a 1996 fatwa entitled "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" (a reference to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia). Also see his 1998 fatwa urging all Muslims to kill American civilian and military personnel (and those of America's allies).

leverage – the application of limited resources through a tactic intended to create magnified consequences.

madrassa – “school” in Arabic; in modern usage, generally refers to Islamic religious schools.

Abu Hamza al-Masri – leading Islamist cleric in the United Kingdom, currently in prison.

mujahideen – holy warrior engaged in jihad

Muslim Brotherhood – founded in 1928, a multi-national Sunni Islamist movement and the world's largest, most influential Islamist group.

Mullah Omar – head of the Taliban in Afghanistan until 2001; thought to be hiding in Pakistan.

Al Qaeda (the Base) - international alliance of militant Sunni jihadist organizations that emerged in 1994 after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan (1989). Affiliates include Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (North Africa), Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia (Iraq), and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia), etc. Responsible for the 9/11 attacks on America and many other attacks in Spain, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Pakistan, among others.

Abu Qatada (real name Omar Mahmoud Othman) – Palestinian cleric, allegedly the spiritual leader of Al Qaeda in Europe, author of Al Qaeda fatwas. Now in British custody facing extradition to Jordan.

Sayyid Qutb (1906-66) - an Egyptian author, Islamist, and the leading intellectual of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 60s; hanged for subversion. Intellectual inspiration for bin Laden and others

Salafis – adherents to a Sunni Islamic school of thought who view the first three generations of Muslims, Mohammed's companions, and the two succeeding generations after them as examples of how Islam should be practiced.

Sunnis - the largest denomination of Islam (about 80% of Muslims); **Shiites** are the most important minority group.

tactic – the application of available resources (personnel, know-how, materiel, and capital) to carry out an action intended to achieve a particular objective.

takfir - the practice of declaring that an individual or a group previously considered Muslims are in fact kafir(s) (non-believers in God).

Taliban - a fundamentalist Sunni Muslim movement that ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001. Some smaller groups of the Taliban continue to practice guerrilla warfare and terrorism against allied NATO forces and the current government of Afghanistan. The Taliban institute sharia, or Islamic law, in Afghanistan.

Terrorism – The use of violence by a person or group against people or property in order to intimidate or coerce societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons.

umma – the world community of Muslims

Abu Musad Al Zarqawi - a Jordanian who ran a militant training camp in Afghanistan and is thought responsible for numerous bombings. Leader and founder of Al Qaeda in Iraq; killed there in 2006.

Ayman al Zawahiri (b. 1951) – the main Al Qaeda ideologue and bin Laden's personal physician.