

2010 Report: Are We Winning?

May 25, 2011

This factsheet supplements American Security Project's 2010 report "Are We Winning?: Measuring the Progress in the Struggle Against al Qaeda and Associated Movements."

In brief:

- Despite tactical successes against al Qaeda, of which the killing of Osama Bin Laden is just the latest, the underlying trends in regards to Islamist violence are poor.
- Developments on the home front in 2010 were especially problematic—both domestic radicalization and anti-Muslim sentiment increased.
- The rise of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al Shabaab in Somalia also represents a very dangerous development.
- Osama Bin Laden may have been killed just as al Qaeda franchises developed the ability to act on their own.

The analysis in "Are We Winning?" is based upon the following metrics:

I. Islamist Violence

- The number of terrorist attacks by radical Islamist groups remains at an all-time high, and the level of violence outside of Iraq and Afghanistan continues to surge.
- 2010 saw a continuation of this trend towards increasing violence, with total attacks at 2,534 – up from 2,110 in 2009.
- Islamist suicide terrorism has increased dramatically since 9/11, with total suicide attacks numbering 141 in 2010.

II. State of al Qaeda Leadership

- U.S. drone attacks killed two successive AQ operations chiefs for Pakistan and Afghanistan. In May 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed in an American raid on his safe house in Pakistan.

- The al Qaeda military apparatus remains resilient and effective. The ability of the organization to replace losses demonstrates its durability, although it has never before faced a challenge like it faces today.

III. Al Qaeda Affiliated Movements

- After years of concern about the potential rise of effective al Qaeda affiliates, in 2010 those fears came to fruition with the increased capacity of al Qaeda affiliated groups in Somalia and Yemen.
- Al Shabaab in Somalia has become increasingly focused on transnational terrorism, executing two bombings in Kampala, Uganda, in July 2009.
- The attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253 over Detroit has been tied to AQAP, which is based in Yemen.

IV. Muslim Public Attitudes

- The “Obama Effect” has now fully dissipated, and opinion of the United States in the Muslim world is as bad as it was in 2008. Al Qaeda remains unpopular as well.
- According to a 2010 poll of six Arab countries, only 12% of Arabs held “favorable” or “somewhat favorable” views of the United States. This is down from 18% in 2009 and 15% in 2008.

V. The Home Front

- Trends within the United States took a dramatic turn for the worse with the rise of highly visible anti-Muslim sentiments as well as an increase in domestic radicalization cases.
- The percentage of Americans who have a favorable opinion of Islam declined from 41% in July 2005 to 30% in August 2010. Unfavorable views of Islam in that time period increased from 36% to 38%, respectively.
- There were 46 publicly reported cases of domestic radicalization between September 11, 2001, and the end of 2009; 13 of those cases occurred in 2009.

VI. Terrorist Financing

- Although reliable information remains sporadic, there is increasing evidence to suggest that while radical Islamist groups continue to have access to significant funds, al Qaeda in particular may be undergoing a profound funding crisis.

VII. Ungoverned Spaces

- Ungoverned spaces continue to provide safe havens for terrorist groups, and weak governance remains a major factor in spawning and sustaining radical insurgent movements.

VIII. International Cooperation against Terrorism

- While many countries still need to fully implement United Nations counterterrorism measures, regional initiatives continue to build state capacity and data sharing.

IX. State Sponsorship of Terrorism

- Active state sponsorship remains at historically low levels; however, the large number of states that tolerate some level of presence by known terrorist groups complicates counterterrorism efforts.

X. Economic Prosperity and Political Freedom

- Although poverty and political oppression persist at high levels throughout the Muslim world, trends in both sets of indicators continue to improve. The Muslim world also weathered the international financial crisis noticeably better than many.

Q&A

What is “Are We Winning?”

“Are We Winning?” (AWW) is an annual report released by the American Security Project to assess U.S. progress in the “war on terror.”

AWW provides empirical data as the foundation of reasoned discussion and principled debate.

ASP has developed ten criteria to measure progress – or lack of progress – in the struggle against anti-American Islamist terror groups such as al Qaeda.

How was “Are We Winning?” compiled?

AWW was compiled using data, tracked by ASP staff and fellows, from the National Counterterrorism Center and other government and non-governmental sources.

Why is “Are We Winning?” unique?

AWW was the first metric-driven assessment of progress in the fight against al Qaeda. It tracks progress in ten discreet areas against historic norms.

The purpose of the report is to provide a resource that is fact, not opinion based, transparent, repeatable and comprehensive.

This differs from most other assessments of al Qaeda in that it does not rely on subjective opinion.

When was “Are We Winning?” started?

The first AWW report was released in 2007. ASP has released one report each year since, along with mid-year updates in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

This factsheet supplements American Security Project’s 2010 report “Are We Winning?: Measuring the Progress in the Struggle Against al Qaeda and Associated Movements. You can download the report here: <http://americansecurityproject.org/resources/AWW2010Final.pdf>

Previous “Are We Winning?” reports and further details of our work on the issues contained in these reports can be found at: <http://americansecurityproject.org/issues/terrorism/>

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Building a New American Arsenal

The American Security Project (ASP) is a bipartisan initiative to educate the American public about the changing nature of national security in the 21st century.

Gone are the days when a nation's strength could be measured by bombers and battleships. Security in this new era requires a New American Arsenal harnessing all of America's strengths: the force of our diplomacy; the might of our military; the vigor of our economy; and the power of our ideals.

We believe that America must lead other nations in the pursuit of our common goals and shared security. We must confront international challenges with all the tools at our disposal. We must address emerging problems before they become security crises. And to do this, we must forge a new bipartisan consensus at home.

ASP brings together prominent American leaders, current and former members of Congress, retired military officers, and former government officials. Staff direct research on a broad range of issues and engages and empowers the American public by taking its findings directly to them.

We live in a time when the threats to our security are as complex and diverse as terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, failed and failing states, disease, and pandemics. The same-old solutions and partisan bickering won't do. America needs an honest dialogue about security that is as robust as it is realistic.

ASP exists to promote that dialogue, to forge consensus, and to spur constructive action so that America meets the challenges to its security while seizing the opportunities the new century offers.



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