

How al-Qaeda Survived Drones, Uprisings, and the Islamic State

by [Aaron Y. Zelin \(/experts/aaron-y-zelin\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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In-Depth Reports

Over the past eight years, al-Qaeda's fortunes have ebbed and flowed. Drones, uprisings, and a challenge from the Islamic State have forced the core al-Qaeda organization—historically based in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region—and its various branches to adapt and migrate outward.

In this new Policy Focus, Washington Institute fellow Aaron Y. Zelin compiles case studies demonstrating how each part of al-Qaeda's network has evolved and survived the various challenges it has faced roughly since the Obama administration took office. Written by eminent scholars, practitioners, and government officials from the United States and abroad, the chapters are informed by a recent workshop in which the participants gave candid, off-the-record assessments of numerous key issues, including al-Qaeda's current strategic outlook, a close examination of its branch in Syria, its branches outside of Syria (AQAP, AQIM, al-Shabab, and AQIS), and its current financial situation.

THE EDITOR

Aaron Y. Zelin (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/aaron-y-zelin>) is the Richard Borow Fellow at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Sunni Arab jihadist groups in North Africa and Syria. Zelin is the founder of the widely acclaimed and cited website Jihadology.net and its podcast JihadPod. He is also the author of several studies, most recently the January 2016 Washington Institute study *[The Islamic State's Territorial Methodology](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-territorial-methodology)* (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-territorial-methodology>). ❖

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