

Al-Qaeda Now a US Ally in Syria

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Theme: [Terrorism](#)

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While we reflect on the 11th anniversary of the al Qaeda attacks on American soil, there is a blinding light that may obscure our view: this sworn enemy now fights hand in hand with the US against the Syrian regime.

The historic State of the Union address by US president George W. Bush on September 20, 2001 is loaded with morals and principles about good and evil.

The president's ultimatum was clear: either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.

In Syria, there is mounting evidence that Al Qaeda and its allies are actively deploying terror tactics and suicide bombers to overthrow the Assad regime.

Syrian citizens who prefer the secular and stable state to the prospect of an Iraqi-style sectarian state may well be turning this same question around to the US government: are you with us, or with the terrorists?

This week, head of the Salafi jihad and close ally of al Qaeda, Abu Sayyaf, pledged "deadly attacks" against Syria as "our fighters are coming to get you" because "crimes" by the regime "prompts us to jihad".

Bush referred to al Qaeda as the enemies of freedom: "the terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews". But Sheikh Muhammad al Zughbey proclaimed that "your jihad against this infidel criminal and his people is a religious duty ... Alawites are more infidel than the Jews and Christians". Because the new jihad targets Alawites rather than Jews and Christians, does this render them better bed fellows?

By his own admission, Bush stated that al Qaeda was "linked to many other organisations in different countries ... They are recruited from their own nations ... where they are trained in the tactics of terror ... They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction".

Yet this is precisely how the foreign jihadists in Syria have been described by reporters. They are funded and armed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. And they collaborate with the Free Syrian Army which is aided and abetted by the US.

Bush condemned the Taliban regime because they were "sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder". Eleven years later, the parallels produce an uncomfortable truth.

If only the Syrian uprising was as simple as the Arab Spring narrative where citizens seek

democracy and freedom. But those unarmed protests have long since been hijacked by a cocktail of agendas which have little to do with Syrian democracy, and more to do with a proxy war to create a sectarian Sunni state that weakens Shi'ite Iran's main partner in the region.

Bush was correct in claiming that al Qaeda "want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan" - who were all US-Israel allies at that time.

But his list stopped short of mentioning Syria or Iraq, the real targets of al Qaeda. Why does overthrowing Syria, using the same terror tactics, fail to attract the same degree of outrage?

Bush continues: "We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism."

This pledge appears to have fallen on its own sword, given the funding of the jihadists in Syria. The terrorists have bred and spread across borders, which is the opposite of Bush's prophecy.

The US administration must come clean about its financial aid. It cannot use one hand to sign a blank cheque to the rebels, and the other hand to cover its eyes to their immoral and illegal tactics. It cannot hide behind "the end justifies the means" as there are too many innocent lives at stake.

Bush rode off on his high horse: "We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them ... may God grant us wisdom".

If the principles and morality are to be taken seriously, then they need to be applied consistently.

The US regime should be actively and publicly distancing itself from the foreign terrorists and Salafist jihadists that are proliferating within sovereign Syria.

It should be condemning al Qaeda for its militant intervention. It should be condemning the Saudi sheikhs who issue fatwas for an Alawite holocaust.

The wisdom that we see is grief over the al Qaeda crime 11 years ago, yet covert collaboration with this sworn enemy today.

Perhaps the US is applying another principle that they may have learned from their pragmatic Arab allies - the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

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