COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER

at West Point

Self-Inflicted Wounds

Debates and Divisions within al-Qa'ida and its Periphery

HARMONY PROJECT

Editors:
Assaf Moghadam
Brian Fishman

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--A.M., B.F.

Contributors

Dr. Assaf Moghadam is Director of Terrorism Studies at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and Assistant Professor at the United States Military Academy's Department of Social Sciences. Dr. Moghadam is the author of *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008) and *The Roots of Terrorism* (Chelsea House, 2006). He is also editor of the forthcoming volume *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism: Trends and Patterns* (Routledge, 2011). Dr. Moghadam earned a Ph.D. in International Relations from The Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Brian Fishman is Counterterrorism Research Fellow at the New America Foundation. He is an Adjunct Professor at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and is a Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, where he served previously as the Director of Research. Fishman is the author of numerous reports and journal articles, including "Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside al-Qa`ida in Iraq" (CTC at West Point, 2009) and "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict Across the FATA and NWFP" (New America Foundation, 2010).

Steven Brooke is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Government at The University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on Islamic social movements, the effects of repression in authoritarian systems, and political violence and extremism in the Middle East.

Vahid Brown is a Harmony Fellow and FBI instructor at the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (CTC). He is the author of "Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa'ida, 1989-2006"(West Point, NY: CTC, 2007), among other CTC reports, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

Dr. Mohammed Hafez is an associate professor of national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where he specializes in Middle East politics, Islamism, and violent radicalization. He is the author, most recently, of *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (2007).

Dr. Bernard Haykel is Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University where he also is Director of The Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. Professor Haykel's primary research interests center on the history and politics of Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Islamism.

Dr. Brynjar Lia is a Research Professor at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI), where he currently heads FFI's research on international terrorism and radical Islamism. He is the author, among many other books, of *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri* (Hurst and Columbia University Press, 2007).

Dr. Marc Lynch is associate professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, where he is the director of the Institute for Middle East Studies. He is also a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Dr. Lynch blogs on ForeignPolicy.com, where he is also editor of the Middle East Channel.

Dr. Reuven Paz is the founder and director of the Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya. Dr. Paz holds a Ph.D. in the history of the Middle East from Haifa University. A specialist on Islam and modern Islamic thought, Dr. Paz has thirty years of research experience in Islamic culture, doctrine, and radicalism, as well as Palestinian society and politics.

Anne Stenersen is a research fellow at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI). She has an M.Phil in Asian and African Studies from the University of Oslo and is currently preparing a doctorate on the relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Executive Summary

As we approach the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks next September, the United States, its Western allies, and nearly all states in the Islamic world are facing a weakened jihadi enemy, but one still capable of inflicting, or threatening to inflict, spectacular acts of terrorist violence. The recent attempts to send package bombs on cargo planes is only the latest in a series of plots suggesting that although al-Qa'ida and its cohorts have suffered a number of setbacks, the group and its affiliates and associates continue to pose a serious challenge to the security of the United States and its allies.

Self-Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions within al-Qa'ida and its Periphery examines the internal, or endogenous, reasons that have hastened the decline of the jihadi movement. In doing so, it exposes the jihadi movement, with al-Qa'ida at its helm, as one that lacks coherence and unity, despite its claims to the contrary. The report divides the jihadis' endogenous problems into two categories: internal divisions plaguing al-Qa'ida and the jihadi movement proper; and fault lines dividing the jihadi movement from other Muslim and Islamist actors.

The internal jihadi divisions examined in this report include tactical disagreements over takfir (excommunication of Muslims) and the killing of Muslims; strategic disagreements over whether the jihadi struggle should focus on the near enemy (i.e., nominally Muslim regimes) or the far enemy (the United States and its Western allies); friction between jihadi pragmatists and jihadi doctrinarians; rifts between al-Qa'ida Central and local affiliates; as well as the sometimes tense relations between Arab and non-Arab members of the jihadi movement. The competition between the jihadis and their Muslim counterparts scrutinizes the jihadis' relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and the Shi'a community.

Three main counterintuitive findings can be gleaned from the discussion. First, while the net impact of divisions within and around the jihadis on their movement is negative, the jihadi movement is resilient to some of these divisions due to its unique structure and situational context. Even worse, and contrary to the received wisdom, intra-jihadi rifts and fault lines between jihadis and other Islamic actors may even enhance some of the jihadi movement's resilient traits.

Second, we find that although the jihadi movement's competition with its non-jihadi Islamic counterparts is mostly harmful to al-Qa'ida, such competition bestows certain advantages on the group. On the one hand, al-Qa'ida cannot possibly compete with groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, or Hizballah, who have far deeper

social bases and provide social services to their constituents. At the same time, al-Qa'ida's status as a recalcitrant underdog affords it a higher degree of credibility among more extremist members of the *umma*.

A third broad finding is that jihadi divisions matter in different ways. Quarrels over tactics and strategy tend to be more damaging to jihadis than dissent over goals and views of the enemy. Disagreements over tactics—and especially ongoing protests at al-Qa'ida's killing of Muslims—have greater potential to shove al-Qa'ida further toward the margins of the Islamic community than to split jihadi organizations. Ongoing leadership debates over strategic questions, on the other hand, can pose direct threats to the group itself, but do not necessarily marginalize al-Qa'ida further from the mainstream. In practical terms, certain tactics tend to be more controversial for jihadis than lack of consensus on broader questions as goals and objectives because tactical adaptations have direct practical consequences visible on the ground.

The report highlights a number of additional findings. First, it argues that the jihadi movement can be usefully divided into three categories—global, classical, and hybrid—with important implications for counterterrorism policy. Counter-radicalization and de-radicalization techniques that might be effective with global jihadis, for example, may not be as effective with classical or hybrid jihadis. Second, the practice of *takfir* and attacks on Muslims are the jihadis' most consequential weakness and should be actively exploited. And third, the jihadi community is increasingly divided about its leadership, especially as a younger generation of virtually-connected fighters usurps traditional sources of strategic and ideological authority.

In the final section of the report, the editors conclude with a number of recommendations for policymakers. They are designed to advance our thinking on how jihadi and Islamist fault lines can be exploited in a way that does not exacerbate the problem of jihadi violence.

Chapter 1: Debates and Divisions within and around Al-Qa'ida

Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman

Introduction

As the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches, there are ample signs that al-Qa'ida has not only failed to achieve its objectives, but is in trouble.[1] This report examines the internal reasons that have hastened the decline of the global jihadi movement. In doing so, it exposes al-Qa'ida and the jihadi movement it has come to represent as far from coherent and unified. The report highlights the internal divisions that are plaguing al-Qa'ida, and sheds light on the debates and divisions that rend the jihadi movement from other Muslim and Islamist actors. The findings in this report suggest that the weakening of the jihadi movement has been accelerated by tactical, strategic, ideological, and organizational fissures within and around al-Qa'ida—self-inflicted wounds that deserve more attention from Western counterterrorism officials and scholars. This book is an attempt to shed new light on a topic of great importance to Westerners and other communities challenged by jihadi terrorism.

More than twenty years after its creation, al-Qa'ida shows clear signs of decline. The group has lost many of its key operational leaders to arrest or assassination; a number of al-Qa'ida franchises—including in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Algeria—have been substantially weakened or defeated; and a host of ideological challenges, including recantations from prominent jihadis themselves, have compelled al-Qa'ida to spend valuable time defending its reputation and actions. These setbacks and others suggest that al-Qa'ida is not any closer to achieving its long-term goals than it was on 10 September 2001. Indeed, the opposite is true: the United States remains entrenched in the Middle East politically, economically and militarily; the Taliban-led Islamic state in Afghanistan was ousted from power; Iraq, which al-Qa`ida hoped to overthrow, was instead upended by the United States and replaced by a weakly-functioning democracy dominated by Shi'a politicians; Israel remains firmly in existence; and al-Qa'ida has been unable to inspire mass support from Muslims around the world. In short, al-Qa'ida has abjectly failed to achieve its goals.

Nonetheless, it is too early to declare al-Qa'ida, and the loose collection of like-minded jihadis and jihadi groups that have adopted its mission, moribund.[2] Despite its inability

[1] See, e.g., Kristen Chick, "CIA Director says al-Qaeda on the Run as a Leader Killed in US Drone Strike," *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 March 2010; "The Growing, and Mysterious, Irrelevance of al-Qaeda," *Economist* (22 January 2009).

[2] The global jihad is defined here as a transnational movement of like-minded militants led by al-Qa'ida. It includes affiliated and associated individuals, networks and groups. The term "affiliated" denotes

to achieve policy goals, al-Qa'ida remains operationally capable, as demonstrated by the Christmas Day 2009 bombing attempt of Northwest Flight 253; by the suicide bombing of a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan; and by the murderous rampage of U.S. Army Major Nidal Hasan at Ft. Hood, Texas, to name a few examples. Nearly a decade after the United States declared a "global war on terrorism," al-Qa'ida has operational affiliates in numerous countries, still attracts global attention and has prompted the United States and other governments to spend many hundreds of billions of dollars.

The dichotomy of al-Qa'ida's sustained (though evolving) operational capability and its inability to achieve core goals raises two interrelated questions. First, given al-Qa'ida's continued operational capability, why has it been unable to achieve its policy goals?[3] Second, given al-Qa'ida's inability to achieve its policy goals, how has it managed to maintain a movement with sustained operational capability? The answer suggested in this report is that internal divisions have an ambivalent impact on al-Qa'ida and the jihadi movement. On the one hand, these divisions generate operational resilience. Variation in definition of enemy, targets and ideology, for instance, allows for tremendous flexibility in the face of pressure or setback in a single area. On the other hand, these divisions limit the group's ability to design or implement a coherent strategy to achieve core goals.

Two issues stand out in particular. The first is that the majority of al-Qa'ida's purported operational successes since 9/11 have come at the expense of Muslims. Attacks that kill Muslims delegitimize the group in the eyes of the Umma—the global Islamic community of believers and al-Qa'ida's hoped-for constituency. The second is that jihadis have successfully resisted efforts by Western and non-Western governments to counter their ideological and political narrative, but have often done so in a haphazard

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groups that have formal ties to al-Qa'ida, and have often adopted the al-Qa'ida name for themselves, e.g., al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula. The term "associated" refers to entities with more informal ties to al-Qa'ida, i.e., those that are influenced by al-Qa'ida's guiding ideology but that have not sworn fealty to bin Ladin. The editors recognize that these divisions are not perfect, that some groups associated with al-Qa'ida have not fully adopted al-Qa'ida's ideology and that still other groups fall into a gray area between associates and affiliates. However, for descriptive purposes in this volume, that division shall suffice. For the purposes of distinguishing ideologically driven militants from nationalist or peaceful Islamists, we use the term 'jihadi' throughout this text, acknowledging certain problems associated with the term. For a discussion of the origins and evolution of al-Qa'ida and its guiding ideology, and for a description of the transition from al-Qa'ida to a global jihad movement, see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 62-151.

[3] For a recent examination of al-Qa'ida concluding that the group remains a somewhat potent threat to the United States and its allies, see Peter Bergen and Bruce Hoffman, *Assessing the Terrorist Threat* (Washington, DC: Bipartisan Policy Center, 10 September 2010).

fashion by denigrating their enemies rather than solidifying a unified narrative of the future.

Despite the inability to define them clearly, it is important to recognize that al-Qa'ida and other jihadi groups do have policy goals. Al-Qa'ida's strategy—especially the notion of bleeding the United States economically—is often misrepresented as an a priori goal, which it is not. Such efforts are conceptualized as a means to an end, and U.S. strategists should not conflate the two, if only because identification of al-Qa'ida's goals offers useful metrics by which to measure al-Qa'ida's failures. Similarly, although jihadi strategic limitations make al-Qa'ida's ultimate policy objectives delusional, it is nevertheless important to realize that jihadi operations still pose a potent threat to Western interests and to assess that threat in light of jihadi strengths and weaknesses. The global jihadi ideology espoused by al-Qa'ida, which preaches returning to 7th century religious practice, evicting western political and cultural influence from Muslim land and overthrowing existing political regimes in the Middle East, continues to motivate followers, while the Internet keeps serving as a conduit for extremist ideas. It is exactly the continuing threat posed by al-Qa'ida and jihadis that makes it so important to understand the movement's internal fissures and weaknesses.

Endogenous Explanations for Jihadi Decline

Western explanations for al-Qa'ida's weakness and shortcomings oftentimes credit the successes of U.S. and Western counterterrorism efforts in the war against al-Qa'ida and its jihadi allies. The purpose of this report, however, is to highlight the endogenous factors that have hastened the group's decline: al-Qa'ida's bad choices, ideological makeup, long-established political conditions in the Middle East and tensions with other Muslim and Islamist actors.

There is little doubt that both exogenous Western pressures and endogenous predicaments have undermined the global jihad movement. Although we do not purport to know which of the two types of pressures deserve more credit for weakening al-Qa'ida and its allies, the endogenous problems dogging the jihadi movement are certainly less explored by Western analysts than the effects of U.S. and Western counterterrorism efforts, and are the focus of this study. The reasons for the lack of systematic analyses of these endogenous pressures are plentiful, but one of the most important is that militant movements have an interest in presenting themselves as strong and unified, and analysts tend to accept that image. As terrorism scholar Bruce Hoffman explained in congressional testimony:

> [A]ll terrorist movements throughout history have presented themselves as monoliths: united and in agreement over fundamental objectives, aims,

> strategies, tactics and targets. Too often their opponents succumb to such fictions and therefore fail to seize a critical opportunity to identify and exploit opportunities: by deepening existing and creating new sources of dissension, widening emergent ideological fault-lines and driving wedges within movements based on internal disagreements. This approach of undermining terrorist groups from within has arguably been missing from the current conduct of the war on terrorism.[4]

In order to undermine al-Qa'ida from within, counterterrorism professionals must understand its divisions systematically and note different points of entry for policy.

The jihadis' endogenous problems come in two categories. The first consists of internal jihadi debates and disagreements over such issues as tactics, strategy, and power. The second category of endogenous problems pit jihadis against other Muslim actors, ranging from Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas to the Shi'a sect of Islam. Both categories are addressed at length in this report.

Nonetheless, this report does omit at least one important endogenous challenge, namely divisions over personalities. Personality clashes are as common among jihadi and Islamist groups as they are among other groups and movements. Usama bin Ladin has clashed with numerous figures, including Hassan al-Turabi, Saif al-Adel, Abu al-Walid al-Masri, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and Abu Khalid al-Suri.[5] There are other examples of interpersonal strife among jihadis, including between Zarqawi and Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir and Abu Sulayman al-'Utaybi or Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Abu Qatada. We chose to forego a discussion of personality-based divisions because we harbored doubts over whether mere descriptions of personality-based fault lines offered a genuine theoretical contribution to our effort, despite their obvious importance.

It is our hope that these limitations encourage, rather than deter, future scholars from tackling these complex issues. This report will be a success if it sparks further scholarly research into the subject of internal jihadi divisions that will provide additional perspective on the fault lines discussed here, while identifying and analyzing those that we have neglected.

This text is not the first foray into addressing the endogenous problems of jihadis. It builds on previous studies, including Fawaz Gerges' 2005 book *The Far Enemy: Why*

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[4] U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists*, testimony by Bruce Hoffman, 4 May 2006, 19.

[5] Some of these personal disagreements have been described by Fawaz Gerges. See Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107-109, 197-199.

Jihad Went Global,[6] as well as a series of reports released by our colleagues from the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.[7] Jihadi divisions have recently also attracted attention from policy analysts and journalists, who have produced a slew of articles that cannot be captured here.[8] Recantations by jihadi scholars, strategists and groups have attracted particular attention by journalists, especially (and appropriately) the renunciation of al-Qa'ida by one of its ideological progenitors, Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz, better known as Dr Fadl.[9] Very few of these analytical pieces, however, place their particular topic of discussion—be they jihadi recantations or revulsion over jihadi killing of Muslim civilians—in the larger context of self-imposed jihadi weaknesses.

Outline of the Report

This report consists of ten chapters that correspond to three broad areas of divisions—theological, internal, and external. Chapters 2-3 examine divisions of al-Qaida based essentially on theology. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2, by Mohammed Hafez, looks at the most important driver of internal jihadi dissent, namely, the question of *takfir* (excommunication) and violence directed against Muslims. Chapter 3, by Steven Brooke, proceeds to the level of internal jihadi debates over strategy, examining ongoing disagreements among jihadis over whether to prioritize the near enemy or the far enemy. In chapters 4-6, the report proceeds to examine internal debates and divisions. In Chapter 4, Vahid Brown explores problems and divisions inherent in the transnational character of al-Qa'ida, namely, tensions between al-Qa'ida Central and locally-focused jihadis. In Chapter 5, Brynjar Lia discusses one of the most critical jihadi internal divides: the tensions between jihadi strategists and jihadi

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[6] Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[7] Joseph Felter, Jeff Bramlett, Bill Perkins, Jarrett Brachman, Brian Fishman, James Forest, Lianne Kennedy, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Tom Stocking, "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities," Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, February 2006; Jarret M. Brachman and William F. McCants, "Stealing Al-Qa'ida's Playbook," Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, February 2006; Joseph Felter, J. Vahid Brown, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Clinton Watts, eds, "Al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa," Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, 2007; J. Vahid Brown, "Cracks in the Foundation: Leadership Schisms in Al Qa'ida 1989-2006," Combating Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, September 2007.

[8] See, for example, Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling: The Jihadi Revolt Against Bin Ladin," *New Republic*, 11 June 2008; and Nelly Lahoud, "The Forgotten Recantation," Jihadica.com, 8 January 2010.

[9] For examples of writings about Dr Fadl, see, "The Rebellion Within: An Al Qa'ida Mastermind Questions Terrorism," *New Yorker*, 2 June 2008; and Jarret Brachman, "Al Qa'ida's Dissident," *Foreign Policy Online*, December 2009. Available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/29/al_Qa'idas_dissident (last accessed 19 August 2010).

doctrinarians. In Chapter 6, Anne Stenersen examines the extent to which ethnic divisions between Arab jihadis and their non-Arab counterparts have driven a wedge into the larger movement. The later chapters assess jihadi relations with other Muslim and Islamist groups. Finally, chapters 7-9 explore divisions that are external to the jihadi movement. In Chapter 7, Marc Lynch provides a comprehensive overview of the complicated relationship between global jihadis and the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest Islamist movement in the world. In Chapter 8, Reuven Paz highlights the rifts between al-Qa'ida and Hamas, a particularly important case study given the centrality that the struggle against Israel assumes in the objectives of both of these groups. In Chapter 9, Bernard Haykel focuses on the tensions between jihadis and the Shi'a community. The concluding Chapter 10 summarizes the study's main findings and discusses its implications for policy.

A Conceptual Framework

Divisions among jihadis can be divided conceptually into seven types: those related to ideology, strategy, tactics, goals, enemy, organizational structure, and power. Each will be discussed in turn.[10]

Ideology

Global jihadis use ideology for four purposes.[11] First, by re-explaining and raising awareness of the past, jihadis argue to Muslims that Islam is in a state of decline. Second, they identify the alleged source of the Muslims' plight in persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what they term "Crusaders," "Zionists" and "apostates." Third, they attempt to create a new identity for their adherents by offering them membership in a globalized community of like-minded believers. Finally, like all ideologies, jihadis present a program of action, namely, violent jihad.

Like other militants, jihadis distinguish between adherents to their ideology and those who reject their doctrines. Westerners are commonly described as infidels, while Muslim moderates are labeled apostates. To the most extreme jihadis, Muslims who reject their doctrinal ideas deserve death. The process of dividing and contrasting the

[10] Although developed independently, these categories are strikingly similar to the "sources of disunity" among insurgents identified by Bard O'Neill in his classic text *Insurgency and Terrorism*. O'Neill also identified seven elements: social cleavages, political-cultural, personal, teleological (goals), theoretical (ideology), strategic and tactical. See Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, 2nd Edition (Dulles, VA: Potomac Book, 2005), 115-38.

[11] For a more extensive discussion of the functions of jihadi ideology, see Assaf Moghadam, "The Salafi Jihad as a Religious Ideology," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 (February 2008), 14-16.

virtues of the in-group from the detrimental influence of the out-group leads al-Qa'ida to present the in-group as ideologically homogeneous and politically coherent.

In reality, ideological cleavages rend the global jihad and shape intra-jihadi debates about strategy and tactics. Debates that might be practical in another terrorist organization are, for jihadis, deeply important ideological questions. Jihadis, for instance, are divided on the question of whom to blame for the Muslim's ongoing misery. Are Islam's internal enemies—apostate regimes or Shi'a Muslims—the real culprit, or is the far enemy the ultimate source of the Muslims' troubles? (This is a separate question from the strategic issue of whether it is more prudent to attack the near or far enemy first.) And who leads the far enemy camp? Is it the United States of America or the Zionists? Intra-jihadi disagreements on the ideological level also emerge on the question of how best to address the current crisis: is wanton and indiscriminate violence legitimate? What will happen to the souls of Muslims killed by jihadi terrorists? What are the ideological and theological requirements for establishing an Islamic state? What must that state accomplish in order to be viable?

There are several possible explanations for ideological disagreements among global jihadis. One is that complex political movements driven by motivated individuals are bound to see ideological divisions. Second, ideological divisions within the jihadi movement may be due to the variegated backgrounds of the movement's members. Jihadis come from a variety of economic, social and political milieus and their early careers have shaped their subsequent ideological outlook. Quantity and quality of ideological divisions may also be related to organizational structure. Loosely structured groups such as al-Qa'ida, which depend on networked ties with associates, may be more prone to ideological divisions (or their public airing) than more hierarchically organized groups.

At times, a mismatch between words and deeds may be responsible for ideological divisions. In recent years, for example, al-Qa'ida has been criticized by supporters for failing to target Israel and Iran despite increasing its anti-Israel and anti-Iranian propaganda.[12] Al-Qa'ida's failure to target Israel may be particularly striking to Muslims the more vitriolic al-Qa'ida's anti-Israel propaganda becomes. Ideological divisions are also likely to spring up when a group's tactic is controversial. Thus, the fact that the vast majority of al-Qa'ida's victims are Muslims has led to an outcry in

[12] See, for example, Jarret Brachman, Brian Fishman and Joseph Felter, *The Power of Truth? Questions for Ayman al-Zawahiri* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, April 2008).

many quarters of Islam questioning much more than simply the jihadis' signature tactic.[13]

Goals

Setting objectives is critically important for all organizations, and terrorist groups are no exception. Setting specific goals, however, is fraught with potential pitfalls because organizations run the risk of alienating current or potential members. Those members might agree with the group's overall disposition or grievances, but dissent from some of its goals. Even a brief overview of al-Qa'ida's objectives reveals that the group and the movement it leads pursue a variety of objectives that are rarely clearly defined. Al-Qa'ida advocates everything from reestablishing the caliphate to the personal religious salvation of its members. Moreover, the group's actions do not always appear to further its objectives, and ultimately the group has failed to achieve even its partial goals. Vague objectives are a useful way to appeal to a broad variety of angry people, but such imprecision also weakens the group's ability to explain the final purpose of self-sacrifice.

Perhaps the vaguest of objectives is the reestablishment of the caliphate. As Ayman al-Zawahiri states, for instance, "the establishment of a Muslim state in the heart of the Islamic world…constitutes the hope of the Muslim nation to reinstate its fallen caliphate and regain its glory."[14] Yet one looks in vain for practical guidance from al-Qa'ida leaders on how that Islamic superstate should be achieved, the dimensions it should assume or the characteristics it should possess.

A different problem is the existence of numerous goals, in part due to the heterogeneous composition of this movement.Thus, geographic and ethno-linguistic blocks within the jihadi movement often pursue different goals. Egyptian jihadis have famously focused on returning their jihad to Egypt and it remains to be seen whether new jihadi enterprises in Somalia and Iraq will focus more on resolving their local grievances or contributing to al-Qa'ida's broader global effort. Al-Qa'ida maintains a unifying theme among such disparate groups by advocating a sort of oil-spot strategy toward building a caliphate—various emirates slowly expanding and bleeding together—and by defining another main goal in negative terms: defending the pan-Islamic nation from a vast Islamophobic conspiracy of Crusaders, Zionists, and apostates.

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[13] For a discussion of Muslim victims of al-Qa'ida's violence, see Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah and Muhammad al-Obaidi, *Deadly Vanguards: A Study of al-Qa'ida's Violence Against Muslims* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, December 2009).

[14] Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *Knights under the Prophet's Banner* (London: *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2001), part 11.

But the group's imprecise description of what jihadi governance means remains a limitation. The most detailed description of what Islamic governance under al-Qa'ida rule might look like can be found in a text called *Informing the People about the Islamic State of Iraq*, which was produced in late 2006 by al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[15] The text weighs the respective importance of applying stern judicial punishments against providing services requested by constituents, like food, security and garbage cleanup. Even in a direct comparison, the authors prioritize strict enforcement of sharia rather than providing services—an indication that ideology, rather than political feasibility, drives even the jihadis' most sophisticated thinking about political goals.

Enemy

The vast Islamophobic conspiracy jihadis believe is attacking Muslims is useful because it creates a bogeyman everywhere for jihadis to fight, but the failure to agree on the primary enemy seems to confuse jihadi supporters and hamper efforts to design an effective strategy. This failure is particularly grave for the movement because jihadis' inability to precisely define their goals makes labeling and demonizing enemies even more important. If jihadis—and al-Qa'ida in particular—cannot exactly explain what they are fighting *for*, they must offer a distinct picture of whom and what they are fighting *against*. For al-Qa'ida, fighting its enemies—and indeed justifying its own violence as a response to an alleged attack waged by that enemy—is its raison d'être.[16]

For that reason, it is rather odd that al-Qa'ida's description of the enemy is confusing and inconsistent. The group has alternatively mentioned the United States, Crusaders, Zionism, global unbelief, Jews, the international order and others among its list of enemies. As the "head of the snake," the United States usually tops that list, at least since the second half of the 1990s.[17] Indeed, Al-Qa'ida's 1998 declaration of war was almost exclusively focused on killing Americans. Similalry, in December 2001, bin Ladin declared that "for now, the battle is against us and America."[18] But "Zionism"'—

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[15] Abu Ali Tamimi, "Informing the People About the Islamic State of Iraq,"*Al-Furqan Media*, December 2006.

[16] It is true that most terrorist groups see themselves as being under attack. Still, most other groups seem to be motivated more by a desire to attain goals than merely by a desire to defend their communities. Nationalist-separatist groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA) or single-issue groups such as Animal Liberation Front (ALF) or Earth Liberation Front (ELF), for example, are fighting *for* something (an independent homeland or animal rights, respectively).

[17] This description is attributed to Saif al-Adel. Quoted in Anonymous [Michael Scheuer], *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2003), 46-47.

[18] Quoted in Brynjar Lia, "Does al-Qaida Articulate a Consistent Strategy? A Study of al-Qaida's Leadership Statements, 2001-2009," Paper presented at the International Studies Association's 50th Annual Convention, New York, NY (15-18 February 2009).

in the jihadi vernacular, shorthand for Israel and the Jews at large—also features prominently among al-Qa'ida's list of enemies and may even surpass the United States in al-Qa'ida's ranking of most despised and implacable foes. As Brynjar Lia perceptively notes, Israel and the Jews at large are the only group that has never been mentioned in positive terms by al-Qa'ida and/or offered a truce. While Americans and their European and Muslim allies have all been offered a way to avoid al-Qa'ida's attacks—be it through the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Muslim countries, conversion to the Muslim faith, or by severing ties with the United States and adopting so-called true Islam—no such offer has ever been extended to Zionists.

If, however, al-Qa'ida sees its primary enemy as Israel, then the movement around bin Ladin and Zawahiri is doing a poor job articulating that message. By including a growing list of Muslim states among its enemies, the jihad movement has muddied the anti-Zionist message and lost legitimacy with potential supporters in the process. Al-Qa'ida has attempted to square that circle by arguing that "apostate" Muslim states protect Israel and must be removed before a confrontation with Israel can begin.[19] That tactic reveals al-Qa'ida's time-honored solution to the problem of multiple, sometimes over-lapping enemies: the argument that they are all the same. Thus, al-Qa'ida cites the various perceived infractions against Muslims as events that should not be seen separately from one another, but instead as "part of a long chain of conspiracies."[20] The ultimate goal of this effort, of course, is not to unite al-Qa'ida's enemies, but to encourage potential supporters to understand their commonalities. And that is the reason why the United States is such a useful enemy. As the preeminent world power, it can be plausibly tied to proximate enemies around the globe.

Strategy

Some analysts question whether al-Qa'ida is even capable of developing strategy and then acting on it, pointing out that the religious elements of al-Qa'ida's ideology may obscure rational thinking about concrete political events.[21] But setting fantastical and

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[19] Usama bin Ladin, "Practical Steps for the Liberation of Palestine," *Al-Sahab*, 14 March 2009 (available in translation at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefaubl0309.pdf).

[20] Statement by Usama bin Ladin dated 3 November 2001, as quoted in Lia (2009a), 7.

[21] Jeffrey Bale, "Jihadi Ideology and Strategy and the Possible Employment of WMD," in *Jihadis and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, ed. Gary Ackerman (Danvers, MA: CRC Press, 2009). On jihadi strategic studies, see Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaida Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 27, No. 5 (September-October 2004); Steven Brooke, Jihadist Strategic Debates Before 9/11," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (March 2008); and Mark E. Stout, Jessica M. Huckabey, and John R. Schindler, *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

ideological end goals does not preclude serious strategic thinking about how to achieve them. Indeed, a wide range of jihadi strategic thinkers illustrate a commendable understanding of the movement's strengths and weaknesses and they identify creative mechanisms for emphasizing the former and circumventing the latter.[22] As Brynjar Lia argues in Chapter 5, jihadis are divided between "strategists," who aim to build broad constituencies, and "doctrinarians," who are willing to sacrifice broad support for ideological homogeneity. Strategists are generally consumed by the prosaic political impact of violent and non-violent stratagems rather than their spiritual content. Doctrinarians argue instead that doctrinal purity consistent with the movement's theological pretenses is more important than political machinations. The debate between jihadi strategists and doctrinarians is critical for understanding not only the direction of jihadi movements, but also the distinctive nature of jihadi strategy itself. Although some jihadis argue that smaller, elite organizations will be more effective, a more common argument is that doctrinal purity is critical because God's will, rather than any earthly strategy, will determine victory or defeat. A cursory review of Islamist movements, however, suggests that doctrinarian factions have not often been rewarded with victory. The strategic missteps of violent doctrinarian factions in Algeria, Iraq and Afghanistan are now used by strategists as warnings of ideological excess.[23] This observation raises a disquieting paradox for civilians and counterterrorism officials alike. If doctrinarian jihadis are more likely to create enemies and fail strategically than their strategist counterparts, are they preferable enemies despite the brutality resulting from their propaganda?

It is worth remembering the military parable that "amateurs talk strategy and professionals talk logistics." Although there are many jihadi strategic documents circulating online—and quite a few are disturbingly well-conceived—it is not clear that al-Qa'ida (or other nodes in the jihadi movement) can systematically distinguish between good and bad strategic ideas. In the end, speaking of al-Qa'ida's "strategy" is a misnomer. The jihadi movement's various operational units, whether named al-Qa'ida affiliates or small cells, cull through various ideological and strategic documents to identify elements that they can achieve. Such strategic variation is enhanced by jihadis'

[22] See, e.g., Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, transl. William McCants (Cambridge, MA: Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2006), http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/olin/images/Management%20of%20Savagery%20-%2005-23-2006.pdf.

[23] A good example is Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's *Call for International Islamic Resistance*. See Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

inability to coordinate closely, which likely limits their ability to achieve ultimate policy goals, but also complicates the processes to combat the movement writ large.[24]

Comparing jihadi strategies to those of traditional Islamist actors is important, but often devolves into specious comparisons about tactics. To understand strategy, it is critical to know not just what groups aim to do to manipulate their enemies, but how they mobilize their supporters and recruit fence-sitters.[25] Decisions about the use of violence, on whether to work within existing political structures and over the advantages and disadvantages of providing social services are mechanisms for creating change, but also mechanisms for mobilization. Two of the key strategic differences between jihadi groups like al-Qa'ida and other Islamists—even those that use violence—are that jihadis condone only violence as true activism and roundly reject existing political processes as corrupt. By contrast, Hamas and other Islamist groups consider their social service infrastructures as critical parts of the broader activist effort and use existing democratic institutions to garner power, authority and popular support.

Al-Qa'ida's narrow-minded focus on violence does not preclude internal disagreement over the strategic utility and object of that violence. The most prominent is the near versus far enemy discussion explored in Chapter 3 by Steven Brooke. That conceptual debate has manifested itself in practice on numerous occasions, most notably in the disagreement within al-Qa'ida over the strategic wisdom of the 9/11 attack.[26] But, as Brooke and others have argued, jihadis now suggest that the near and far enemies have effectively merged in places like Iraq and Pakistan, warranting a hybrid strategy targeting both.

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[24] Some of the best examples of communication difficulties contributing strategic missteps are the various letters from al-Qa'ida Central leaders to commanders in Iraq, and notes from al-Qa'ida in Iraq leaders to their various commanders once internal communication mechanisms began to break down in early 2007. See Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi, dated 9 July 2005," released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 11 October 2005, http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2005/zawahiri-zarqawi-letter_9jul2005.htm; Atiyah abd al-Rahman, "Note to Zarqawi," 12 November 2005, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf; Abu Yahya al-Libi (Yunus al-Sahrawi) "A Message to Mujahid Leader Abu-Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi from Abu-Yahya Yunis Al-Sahrawi," *Jihadi Websites*, 20 November 2005; Bill Roggio, "Letters from al-Qaeda Leaders show Iraqi Effort is in Disarray," *Long War Journal*, 11 September 2008, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11782255&Itemid=353 ; Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir, "Recommendations to Emirs," *Al-Furqan Media*, 23 September 2007; Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir, "Recommendation to Soldiers," *Al-Furqan Media*, 23 September 2007.

[25] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[26] Vahid Brown, *Cracks in the Foundation Foundation: Leadership Schisms in al-Qa'ida 1989-2006* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).

Tactics

Tactics are the specific techniques used and operations conducted by organizations to achieve their goals. Jihadi tactics include not only violent attacks, but distinct operational security measures, propaganda and even internet communication techniques. Weapon choice and targeting are not the full story. Nonetheless, the most important tactical differences among jihadis involve the target of violence and the techniques used to create it. In particular, the most significant debates have centered in recent years on the legitimacy of violence against Muslims and the use of suicide attacks, beheadings and other particularly cruel forms of violence.

In part because ideological disagreements are often reflected in practical arguments over tactics, tactical disagreements have generated some of the most important rifts within the jihadi movement. The most important jihadi tactical debates revolve around excessive violence, especially the killing of Muslims, which itself hinges on the ideological question of *takfir*, the process by which jihadis excommunicate other Muslims, thereby rendering them subject to attack. In Chapter 2, Mohammed Hafez explores the different ideological conceptions of *takfir*, each of which bolsters different tactical approaches. Tactical debates among jihadis cannot be separated from broader issues of authority, enemy-definition and goals in the jihadi movement. Hafez notes that the most rancorous questions about *takfir* are whether it can be applied to broad social groups collectively and who has the authority to pronounce a self-declared Muslim apostate.

Jihadi concerns over excessively violent tactics rest on both ideological and strategic grounds. Senior jihadis frequently reference the tactical excesses of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) in Algeria to explain its ultimate demise.[27] Similarly, they point to less remembered factions in Afghanistan, such as Jamil al-Rahman's operation in Kunar province, which ultimately disintegrated because its brutal tactics alienated the population.[28] One of the most important examples of strategic disagreement about tactics is the internal al-Qa'ida opposition to the 9/11 attack itself.[29] Despite general agreement among jihadis that attacking the United States was morally just, a variety of jihadi leaders have since argued that the consequence of such a large attack on the U.S. homeland—namely, losing the Afghan safe haven—was not worth the tactical success.

Despite such warnings, jihadi groups tend toward tactical excess. At least some in the movement interpret this as a failure to remember the Clausewitzian principle that

[27] Al-Rahman.
[28] Zawahiri (2005).
[29] Brown (2007).

strategy, operations and tactics must serve policy rather than the inverse. Sounding a decidedly Clausewitzian note, Atiyah Abd al-Rahman reminded Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi that "policy must be dominant over militarism. This is one of the pillars of war that is agreed upon by all nations, whether they are Muslims or unbelievers. That is to say, that military action is a servant to policy."[30]

Organizational Structure

Unsurprisingly in a transnational movement, financial quarrels, dissatisfaction with leadership, and divisions arising from competition among regional, ethnic or religious stakeholders are not uncommon among jihadis. Some of those debates are bureaucratic disputes common to traditional terrorist organizations, but many are rooted in al-Qa'ida's unique nature as a transnational, and increasingly networked, movement.[31] Enforcing authority is very difficult, and fosters dissension.

Like other organizations, al-Qa'ida's bureaucratic problems often revolve around money. As journalist Alan Cullison put it, "at the most basic—that is to say, human—level the work relationships of al-Qaeda's key players were characterized by the same sort of bickering and gossiping and griping about money that one finds in offices everywhere."[32] Jamal al-Fadl, for example, an al-Qa'ida member who began cooperating with the FBI after embezzling over a hundred thousand dollars from al-Qa'ida, complained about salary differences among al-Qa'ida members.[33] Another former al-Qa'ida member, L'Houssaine Kherchtou, who belonged to the terrorist cell responsible for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombing in Nairobi, was disillusioned by the spending habits of senior members of his cell, accusing them of embezzlement. He was also angered when a bin Ladin aide refused to pay him $500 for his wife's caesarian section.[34]

Bureaucratic confusion frustrated some figures within al-Qa'ida. One of the most serious dissenters was Abu al Walid al-Masri, whose disagreements with Usama bin

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[30] Al-Rahman.

[31] This is not to say that some of the traditional terrorist groups active between the 1960s and into the 1990s did not see themselves as international movements—the left-wing/revolutionary organizations of the 1960s and 1970s, for example, certainly did see themselves as pursuing global goals, and some even had a modest number of members in foreign countries. However, unlike al-Qa'ida, which has credibly underscored its transnational aspirations with attacks against a multitude of countries, traditional terrorist groups were mostly localized in deed, if not in words. On this point, see Moghadam (2008a).

[32] Alan Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Hard Drive: Budget Squabbles, Baby Pictures, Office Rivalries—And the Path to 9/11," *Atlantic* (September 2004).

[33] *U.S.A. v. Usama bin Laden, et.al*., S(7) 98 Cr. 1023, S.D.N.Y., testimony of Jamal al-Fadl, 6 February 2001. See also Gerges, 105-07.

[34] *U.S.A. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al*., S(9) 98 Cr. 1023, S.D.N.Y., testimony of L'Houssaine Kherchtou, 21 February 2001, 1282-84.

Ladin ranged from the frequency of shura council meetings to more serious accusations, including his belief that bin Ladin displayed "gross ignorance of the fundamental principles of military action."[35] Abu al Walid also charged al-Qa'ida with poor organization of its operations—at one point calling them "random chaos"—and criticized the group's recruitment tactics by saying that recruitment focused on quantity more than quality.[36] Some of Abu al Walid's accusations were echoed by Saif al-Adel, who accused the al-Qa'ida leadership of an inability to receive criticism. "If someone opposes [bin Ladin]," al-Adel bemoans, he "immediately puts forward another person to render an opinion in his support, clinging to his opinion."[37]

Beyond bureaucratic, internal quarrels, al-Qa'ida contends with an additional set of fault lines inherent in its nature as a transnational movement. The first is a rift that Brown has aptly labeled "brand" versus "bureaucracy," which describes the internal jihadi debate over whether to structure al-Qa'ida as a quasi rapid reaction force for the Umma or build al-Qa'ida as a global brand and ideological standard for a wider range of jihadi militants.[38] According to Brown, this rupture "defined every major leadership schism in al-Qa'ida," with the "brand managers" almost always reigning supreme.[39] In the words of Brown:

> In what boils down to a struggle between branding and bureaucracy, al-Qa'ida has consistently put its ability to inspire a broader movement over the development of its organizational capacities to pursue strategic military goals. While its guerrilla strategists have fought for the resources to build an effective command-and-control military organization, its two supreme leaders—Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri—have preferred press releases over battlefield preparedness.[40]

Al-Qa'ida also suffers from structural rifts based on poor communication and geographic and organizational divisions between al-Qa'ida Central and its regional affiliates. These principal-agent problems are a function of jihadi leaders assigning various tasks to subordinates who are unwilling or incapable of executing them effectively. Principal-agent problems are important for all covert groups, but are

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[35] Mohammed al Shafey, "The Story of Abu Walid al Masri: The Ideologue of the Afghan Arabs," *Asharq al-Awsat*, 11 February 2007.

[36] These and other accusations by Abu al-Walid al-Masri are discussed in Brown (2007). On al-Masri's criticism of al-Qa'ida's operations and recruitment tactics, see Brown (2007), 13.

[37] "Al Adl Letter," 2, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/pdf/Al%20Adl%20Letter_Translation.pdf (accessed 15 August 2010).

[38] See generally Brown (2007).

[39] Ibid., 1.

[40] Ibid.

exacerbated by the difficulty of communicating and enforcing central dictates across the vast spaces where al-Qa'ida operates. According to Jacob Shapiro:

> Such delegation poses no problem if all the agents are perfectly committed to the cause and agree with leaders on how best to serve the cause… However, preferences aren't always aligned. When they are not, the covert nature of terrorist groups necessarily implies that agents can take advantage of delegation to act as they prefer, not as their principals would like.[41]

The third subset of problems connected to the global character of the jihad movement has to do with the international and multi-ethnic composition of its membership. In Chapter 6, Anne Stenersen explores ethnic and racial tension among jihadis. A related problem for al-Qa'ida is that nationalism has continued to influence members of the jihadi movement, effectively rendering al-Qa'ida's vision of a united Umma a pipe dream. Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdullah al-Bahri, a former bodyguard of bin Ladin's who is better known by his nom de guerre, Abu Jandal, wrote in his memoir that he had to frequently intervene among the various nationalist groups that composed al-Qa'ida. [42] Bin Ladin himself worried that al-Qa'ida's foes would exploit this weakness to undermine the jihadi group. Abu Jandal writes that non-Egyptian members railed against the dominance of Egyptians among al-Qa'ida's senior ranks, a sentiment that was also expressed in court testimony by Jamal al-Fadl.[43]

Power

Power is the ability to produce change and direct events. It can be exercised by different actors in various ways at many organizational levels. In the jihadi world, ideological and bureaucratic powers are both important, and each has the ability to determine the choices of al-Qa'ida and its Islamist cousins.

On the one hand, bin Ladin and Zawahiri are still recognized as the overall leaders of al-Qa'ida and have successfully asserted influence over much of their far flung institution, including among intransigent elements such as that in Iraq. These leaders

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[41] Jacob N. Shapiro, "Theoretical Framework: The Challenges of Organizing Terrorism," in *Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities*, ed. Joseph Felter, et al. (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), 12-13. On agency problems related to al-Qa'ida finances in Iraq, see Jacob N. Shapiro, "Bureaucratic Terrorists: Al Qa'ida in Iraq's Management and Finances," in *Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleedout: Al Qa'ida's Road In and Out of Iraq*, ed. Brian Fishman (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008).

[42] Gerges, 102-104.

[43] Ibid.

still have a unique ability to attract an audience in the complex world of jihadi propaganda. On the other hand, various affiliates of al-Qa'ida operate independently of one another, have more operational capability than al-Qa'ida Central, and are generally free to choose how closely to align themselves with al-Qa'ida's leadership. If bin Ladin and Zawahiri have power over these far-flung affiliates, it is based on reputation and brand, not direct operational authority. Considering that affiliate leaders control more operational elements than bin Ladin and Zawahiri, it is reasonable to think they may actually be the critical leadership nodes in al-Qa'ida.

Innovative studies of the jihadi movement have offered additional ways to think about competing power nodes in the jihadi universe. In the *Militant Ideology Atlas*, William McCants attempted to determine ideological authority within the jihadi corpus by identifying how ideological influence shapes the jihadi movement.[44] The study suggested that bin Ladin and Zawahiri were not particularly influential within the jihadi ideological movement and instead focused on a series of lesser-known writers and theologians that provide the intellectual basis for operational elements.

The Internet has proven very useful for al-Qa'ida and its jihadi brethren, but has introduced a host of new questions about power within the movement. Not only have the technical producers of jihadi propaganda assumed a new prominence because of the expectation of supporters for slick audio, video and print products, but the administrators and second-tier reproducers of original jihadi content are able to shape the overall information environment. Some studies even suggest that jihadi propagandists may be diverging from and eclipsing the original terrorist operators that made al-Qa'ida and the jihadi movement famous in the first place.[45] These people have important authority within a networked movement with few established and durable brands.

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The terrible pain and horror inflicted by al-Qa'ida and other jihadis leads some to dismiss efforts to understand their motivations without bias as weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only by understanding the jihadis—who they are, who they are not, what they believe and where they disagree—can we bring an end to their violence. Platitudes are no substitute for analysis; recycled tropes and misapplied metaphors peddled as research or policy recommendations are counterproductive. Any strategy of terrorism or insurgency relies for success on the misapplication of government resources, and the jihadi war on the United States is no different. There is

[44] William McCants, ed., *The Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006).
[45] Daniel Kimmage, "Al-Qaeda Central and the Internet," *New America Foundation* (2010).

no doubt that any sincere analysis of the jihadi movement is bound to be flawed, perhaps in important ways, but the honest discussion of jihadi strengths and weaknesses is a prerequisite for defeating that movement. This report does not resolve all of those questions, but it clarifies some and calls attention to others. We hope that scholars and practitioners will not only read the text, but use focused research to challenge and improve its conclusions. For one of the great advantages that many victims of jihadi violence have over the jihadis is that we transform disagreement into strength and competition into solidarity. The jihadis have not yet shown that they can swing that trick, and the Western counterterrorism community should exploit their inability to do so.

Chapter 2: Tactics, *Takfir*, and anti-Muslim Violence

Mohammed M. Hafez

> My brother Usama, who is responsible for activating many of the concepts of takfir, and the explosions and killing that have spread within the one [Muslim] family, and according to which the son sometimes judges his father to be an unbeliever, judges his brother to be an infidel, kills his relatives in cold blood, and thinks that he is closer to God through such deeds?
>
> -- Shaykh Salman al-`Awda[46]

Introduction

Since the ascendance of radical Islamism in the 1970s, the violence of its adherents has become progressively cruel and indiscriminate, especially toward their coreligionists. Consequently, advocates of jihadism have had to defend themselves against charges of extremism, terrorism and internecine bloodletting.[47] Two ideological predispositions in particular, reflected in Sheikh Salman al-`Awda's rhetorical question to Usama bin Ladin, have put extremists on the defensive. The first of these is *takfir* (the act of Muslims declaring other Muslims to be infidels, which is analogous to excommunication in Catholicism). *Takfir* is an important stepping stone to engaging in violence against secular Muslim rulers and others who are perceived to be supportive of those rulers. The second is the use of mass-destruction tactics that result in the killing of innocent Muslims.

These two issues have generated intense debates among radical Islamists, as well as between jihadists and mainstream Islamic scholars. Historically, these debates have taken place inside prisons and in the confines of a radical milieu.[48] In recent years, however, disagreements have been airing publicly in online publications, Internet forums and on satellite television. Jihadists' use of new media technologies to proselytize supporters, foster linkages between radicals and their potential recruits and publicize their so-called victories against the West has, ironically, exposed profound

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[46] Shaykh Salman Bin Fahd al-`Awda, "Letter to Usama Bin Ladin" (Arabic), *Islam Today*, 14 September 2007. Al-`Awda is a former Saudi dissident whose imprisonment during the 1990s inspired bin Ladin to declare war on the Saudi ruling family.

[47] The terms "radical Islamists," "extremists," "jihadists" and "jihadi Salafists" are used interchangeably. These terms exclude other Islamists that may also be considered radical, such as the Muslim Brotherhood movements, as well as Islamic nationalists, such as the Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hizballah.

[48] Barbara Zollner, *The Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Hudaybi and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 50-63.

internal divides within their ranks. We are beginning to know more about these debates and the events that trigger them, but their impact on the unity and cohesion of radical Islamists in not yet understood, much less measured.

At the heart of these debates is a central paradox. On the one hand, radical Islamists must anchor their violence in classical Islamic texts and traditions in order to uphold their image as bearers of authentic Islam and as followers of divine commandments. On the other hand, the classical Islamic tradition imposes constraints on many aspects of these same radical Islamists' violent activism. One such constraint is that Muslims should not kill themselves intentionally (suicide).[49] Another is that Muslims should not kill their fellow Muslims.[50] Yet another is that Muslims should not intentionally harm non-combatants (civilians).[51]

These clear prohibitions have not prevented radical Islamists from killing themselves through suicide attacks in which most of their victims are either fellow Muslims or non-Muslim civilians.[52] From Morocco to Indonesia, extremists have conducted mass-destruction "martyrdom operations" in which ordinary Muslims are the primary targets. However, to engage in this type of violence, the extremists have had to interpret away the prohibitions in the inherited tradition by unearthing exceptions to general rules and elevating some classical rulings and opinions over others. Thus, it is no surprise that their operations and the justifications that accompany them have unleashed intense criticisms by Muslim scholars, as well as by Islamists that sympathize with the jihadists.

The revulsion toward Islamists killing their coreligionists became evident in December 2007, when Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa'ida's deputy commander, issued an open invitation to answer questions posed to him through online forums. In that year,

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[49] The prohibition against suicide derives from Qur'anic verses 4:29-30: "Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful! If any do that in rancor and injustice,- soon shall We cast them into the Fire: And easy it is for Allah." It is also inferred from a Prophetic tradition cited in Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari: "And whoever commits suicide with a piece of iron will be punished with the same piece of iron in the Hell Fire."

[50] Qur'anic verse 4:93 is the basis for this prohibition: "If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him."

[51] The prohibition against killing non-combatants derives from Qur'anic verse 2:190: "Fight in the path of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits, for God does not love transgressors." It is also found in a Prophetic tradition quoted in Sahih Muslim: "It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah that a woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him). He disapproved of the killing of women and children."

[52] Moghadam (2008a).

bloodshed in Iraq, Algeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan—mainly targeting Muslims—reached new heights. Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates came under intense criticism by friends and foes alike for shedding the blood of believers. More disconcerting for Zawahiri is the ideological retreat of his former Egyptian colleague and jihadist ideologue Sayyid Imam al-Sharif.[53] In response to these developments, the Sahab media outlet, in coordination with the Fajr media center, announced Zawahiri's invitation on 16 December. The questions, and Zawahiri's reply to them, appeared in two installments on 2 April and 22 April 2008.

The first three questions presented by participants reflected their rage at the criminal negligence with which radical Islamists target their own people. A person with a forum name of "Geography Teacher" asks: "Excuse me, Mr. Zawahiri, but who is killing the innocent in Baghdad, Morocco and Algeria with Your Excellency's blessing? Do you consider the killing of women and children jihad?" Another participant with a forum name of "University Student, Medicine, Algeria" asks: "I want al-Zawahiri to answer me about those who kill the people in Algeria. What is the legal evidence for killing the innocent?" Another with the online name of "For Public Information" asks: "Does the doctor have assurances that those who were killed in the Algerian operations were unbelievers? And what is it that makes legitimate the spilling of the blood of even one Muslim?"[54]

These are tough questions, indeed. They are at the heart of the ideological conflict within the radical Islamist movement. This chapter will not explore the historical antecedents of the intra-radical debates over *takfir* and the killing of Muslims, which are beyond the scope of this chapter.[55] Instead, the focus will be on the reemergence of these disputes in recent years due to the internecine nature of the Iraqi insurgency that began in 2003 and the wave of suicide bombings that killed hundreds of Muslims in places like Afghanistan, Algeria and Pakistan in the last few years.

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[53] Sayyid Imam al-Sharif is also known as Abdel Qadir Bin Abdel Aziz and previously wrote under the pen name "Dr. Fadl." He has been in an Egyptian prison since 2001 for his past activities in the Islamic Jihad organization. During his militant career, he produced a number of important ideological documents in support of jihad against secular Muslim governments. However, in 2007, he issued a document entitled "Guiding Jihadi Action in Egypt and the World" (Arabic), in which he revised his earlier views and offered an incisive theological critique of contemporary jihadism, especially al-Qa'ida. His document was serialized in fifteen parts in *al-Masri al-Yaoum*, an Egyptian newspaper, between 18 November and 26 December 2007.

[54] Answers for round one of questioning were released by Al-Ikhlas Islamic Network (http://ek-ls.org/forum) on 2 April 2009.

[55] See, e.g., Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19-54.

The debates over the intentional and accidental killing of Muslims by radical Islamists revolve around three issues:

1. The meaning of piety and apostasy in Islam, and the permissibility of intentionally killing those who are deemed apostates and heretics by Islamists.

2. The permissibility of unintentionally killing innocent Muslims in warfare.

3. The advisability, from a public relations perspective, of engaging in operations that harm Muslims.

Takfir and the Debates over Killing "Apostates"

The principle ideological mechanism that enables extremists to justify killing their coreligionists is *takfir*—the act of Muslims declaring other Muslims to be infidels. Central to *takfir* is the distinction between genuine and nominal Muslims. To outside observers, radical Islamists appear to be killing their fellow Muslims. To the extremists, however, their violence is not against coreligionists but people who have betrayed their creed and, therefore, should no longer be considered Muslims. Specifically, radical Islamists divide their coreligionists into at least four categories:

1. **Tyrants** (*tawaghit*, singular *taghout*)—Muslim regimes that do not rule in accordance with Islamic law (sharia) and are obstinate in their refusal to heed calls to return to Islam. They cease to be members in the community of the faithful. Their crime is compounded by the fact that they repress the true believers that work toward establishing Islamic states.

2. **Apostates** (*murtadin*, singular *murtad*)—Muslims who have violated the principle of Al Wala' Wal Bara', loyalty to Muslims and disassociation from unbelievers, by working for the tyrants and other infidels such as foreign powers. These include members of the military and security services, government employees, local police and anyone who sustains the ruling regime directly and even indirectly.

3. **Heretics and polytheists** (*mubdi`een* and *mushrikeen*)—Muslims who violate the principles of monotheism (*tawhid*) upheld by orthodox Sunnis (such orthodoxy is usually claimed by Salafists and Wahhabists). This label mainly applies to Shi'a, but it also encompasses Baha'is in Iran, Ahmadis in Pakistan and Sufis in many countries.

4. **True believers**—Muslims who support the Islamist project or at least abstain from supporting tyrants and engaging in heresies. This usually applies to Sunni masses in the Muslim world.[56]

It is fair to say that radical Islamists agree on what is the proper conduct toward the first category—tyrants. Extremists cite the Qur'anic verse 5:44 as proof that secular rulers are infidels indeed: "…and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers." Their impiety is clear to all and they have been told over and over to repent or abandon their thrones, yet they refuse to do so and, instead, repress true believers. Their punishment is death and they could be targeted directly without moral compunction. This, of course, does not mean that it is advisable to attack such rulers anywhere and anytime without regard to capabilities and circumstances, but at a minimum, there is ideological agreement that such individuals are outside of the Islamic creed and killing them does not entail violations of Islamic law. On the contrary, it is a religious obligation to pronounce their infidelity and remove them from power. Failure to denote them as infidels is itself a cardinal sin.[57]

The second and third categories—apostates and heretics—are more problematic for radical Islamists. The debate revolves around who could be deemed an apostate *and* how to proceed to deal with his or her apostasy. Here we have at least three views among radicals. The first maintains that Islamists should avoid collective *takfir* and, hence, it is impermissible to indiscriminately target nominal Muslims, even if they are suspected of apostasy and heresy. Individual *takfir* is permissible, but it involves a rigorous process of verification and adjudication before punishment is meted out. The second holds that it is permissible to engage in the collective *takfir* of those who *directly*

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[56] To be precise, jihadi Salafists refer to themselves as the "victorious sect" (*al-taifa al-mansura*), which they contrast with apostates (*murtadeen*), infidels (*kufar*), polytheists (*mushrikeen*, such as those who believe in nationalism, democracy, or worship saints and pray at graves), hypocrites (*munafiqeen*), tyrants (*tawagheet*), deceivers (*mudhalileen*, such as those who deemphasize the importance of jihad in Islam or refuse to engage in *takfir* or excommunication), secularists (*`ilmaniyeen* or those who permit suspension of religion, *tafreet bi deen*), religious extremists (*ghulat* or *mufriteen bi deen*, such as the *khawarij*) and creedal innovators (*mubdi`ieen*, such as Shi'a, rationalists and Sufis). See Abi al-Fadhl al-Iraqi and Abu Islam al-Ansari, "The Markers of the Victorious Sect in the Land of the Two Rivers [Iraq]" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws) with the date of 8 December 2004 (25 Shawal 1425 in Islamic calendar); Abdel Mun`im Mustapha Halima (Abu Basir al-Tartusi), "Features of the Victorious Sect" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws) with the date of 6 February 2002.

[57] Seminal militant writings on this issue include Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (n.p., 1964); Muhammad Abdel Salam Faraj, *Jihad: The Missing Obligation* (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Al Ansaar Publications, 2000 [original c. 1981]); Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, *Proof of the Infidelity of the Saudi State* (Arabic, n.p., 1991); and Abu Basir al-Tartusi, *The Requirements of "No Deity but Allah"* (Arabic, n.p., October 2002).

support secular regimes or foreign forces because their actions make them unbelievers, no different than the tyrants and infidels they support. According to this view, the prohibition against collective *takfir* applies when Muslims are in a position to adjudicate degrees of culpability, but not in the context of a defensive *jihad* when Muslims are besieged by external and internal enemies. The third view argues that whoever supports secular regimes and foreign forces, *directly or indirectly*, ceases to be a Muslim and thus it is permissible to shed his or her blood. Adjudicating degrees of culpability or the circumstances that brought about one's behavior is not necessary in a defensive *jihad*. In this view, the blood of heretical Shi'a does not deserve the same Islamic protection as that of Sunnis.

Interestingly, each of these positions is defended by reference to classical textual sources and traditions associated with the pious ancestors (*al-Salaf al-Salih*). It is worth exploring each argument in detail.

Arguments against the Collective Killing of Apostates

Those who promote the first view—avoid killing nominal Muslims even if they appear to be apostates—make a distinction between general infidelity (*kufr al-`aam*) and individual impiety (*kufr al-mu`ayen*). The most comprehensive work on this issue comes from Abu Basir al-Tartusi in his 1994 treatise *Foundations of Takfir*.[58] Al-Tartusi argues that Muslims have an obligation to point out that certain categories of beliefs and behaviors constitute cardinal sins (*kufr kabir* or *al-kabaair*). For example, accepting Shi'a doctrines is tantamount to heresy, governments that do not apply Islamic law are infidels and Muslims who aid infidels against other Muslims are apostates. Therefore, one can say, *in general*, that anyone who holds these beliefs or acts in such manner is an apostate or an infidel.

For al-Tartusi, however, general *takfir* (*kufr al-`aam*) does not mean that individuals that hold these beliefs or act in such ways could be deemed apostates without going through a rigorous process of verification and clarification before punishment is meted out. There are conditions that preclude a pronouncement of individual apostasy (*kufr mu`ayen*) and requirements that must be met before such a pronouncement is made. Al-Turtusi lists eight conditions that preclude individual charges of *takfir* even when it is obvious that the actions or beliefs of the individual involved constitute unequivocal cardinal sins, generally speaking. These can be summarized as: lacking proper knowledge of what constitutes cardinal sins in Islam due to lack of mental maturity

[58] Abu Basir al-Tartusi is also known as Abdul Mun`em Mustapha Halemah. He is a Syrian jihadi Salafist residing in London. He distributes his radical writings on his websites: www.abubaseer.com and http://www.abubaseer.bizland.com/books.htm.

associated with young age, retardation or insanity; ignorance, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the proper doctrine, or improper socialization in the faith; coercion by unbelievers; and dilemmas in which believers have to choose between greater and lesser forms of impiety.[59] In other words, outward appearance of major impiety does not automatically translate into permission to engage in *takfir*; one has to proceed on a case-by-case basis.

Assuming the conditions that preclude *takfir* do not exist or are impermanent, those who pronounce *takfir* against specific individuals have to fulfill two other major requirements. The first is *al-tabyin wal tathbit*, exposing the cardinal sin to the individual concerned and substantiating the violation with definitive textual proof from the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. Those who deliver the evidence should be credible, authoritative sources so that the validity of their message is not tainted by the unreliability of the messenger. The implication of this requirement is that jihadists in the field may not be in a position to issue declarations of *takfir* against specific individuals because their status as legitimate Islamic authorities is often unacknowledged and, more often than not, disputed. The second requirement is *iqamat al-hujja*, presenting the evidence of impiety directly to the individual and addressing any possible misunderstandings he or she may have regarding the textual proof. Once these two requirements are met, the legitimacy of *takfir* against unrepentant individuals is assured.

Sayyid Imam in his recent revisions raises similar objections to *takfir*. He insists that it is not enough to judge Muslims on the basis of their manifest actions; it is also necessary to inquire as to the intentions behind their actions before declaring them infidels. Even then, the culpable person must be given an opportunity for repentance (*istitaaba*). Finally, adds Sayyid Imam, those that engage in *takfir* must balance between the benefits and harms of punishing those deemed infidels. At times, what is permissible toward individuals in Islam may be temporarily suspended because of the *mafasid* (harms) that will accrue to the collective.[60]

The implication of al-Tartusi's and Sayyid Imam's views on *takfir* is that the apostasy of secular rulers (presuming that one agrees that they are apostates indeed) does not mean that every individual that works for them is also an apostate. As a general rule, anyone that supports a tyrant is an infidel, but such a general pronouncement of *takfir* (*kufr al-`aam*) does not give Islamists license to declare that every individual that works for these governments is an infidel without first going through the rigorous process of issuing *takfir* against each and every individual involved (*kufr al-mu`ayen*). Al-Tartusi's

[59] Abu Basir al-Tartusi, *Foundations of Takfir*, 13 July 1994, 57-72.

[60] Sayyid Imam, "Guiding Jihadi Action," in *Al-Masri al-Yaoum* (3 December 2007), part 9.

and Sayyid Imam's positions do not put an end to the possibility of Muslim-on-Muslim violence, but they place major obstacles in front of those who wish to carry out mass-destruction attacks against Muslims working for secular governments and foreign forces in places like Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq and Pakistan.

Argument for the Collective Killing of Apostates that Directly Support Tyrants

Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi do not reject the distinction between general and individual *takfir*.[61] However, they still insist that those who *directly* support tyrants and foreign invaders have become apostates and are legitimate targets individually and collectively. Zawahiri and al-Libi present three lines of argumentation in support of this position. The first relates to the impracticality of fighting tyrants and invaders without fighting those who keep them in power. The second relates to the concept of Al Wala' Wal Bara' (loyalty to Muslims and disassociation from infidels). The third is perhaps the most complex. It involves striking a balance between striving for the general good of Muslims and the costs or evils associated with harming individual Muslims. If the collective good of Muslims can only be achieved through acts that will inflict harm on individual Muslims, such acts are permissible in Islam, they argue.

Zawahiri and al-Libi insist that those who work directly with tyrants and infidel invaders are like the tyrants and infidels themselves. It is not necessary to present further evidence of their apostasy on a case-by-case basis. Al-Libi, in response to Sayyid Imam's critique, quotes the earlier works of Sayyid Imam on the subject:

> Hasn't Shaykh Abd-al-Qadir [Sayyid Imam] written about the legal status of those who aid modern tyrants, explaining who they are by saying: "By them are meant the helpers of the apostate rulers who rule by what is other that what God has reveled in many of the countries of Muslims today. Their helpers are those who guard them, protect them, and help them against Muslims engaged in jihad to depose them. Their helpers are those who protect them by words and fight for them with arms. They are the reason why the laws of impiety have lasted in these countries... The legal status of the helpers of these tyrants is a corollary to the status of the

[61] Abu Yahya al-Libi is a senior al-Qa'ida commander of Libyan origins and a vocal jihadi Salafi ideologue. In 2002, the Pakistani authorities handed him over to U.S. forces and he was detained in the Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan. Al-Libi escaped with three other high-profile detainees on the night of 10 July 2005.

> tyrants. The legal ruling concerning those who rule by something other than what God has sent down is that they are apostates."[62]

Al-Libi has also directly responded to the criticisms of the Saudi cleric Dr. Nasir al-Umar, who published an article criticizing bombings in Muslim lands following devastating attacks in Algeria in 2007. Al-Umar had argued, in reference to a Prophetic tradition, that Muslim blood, honor and property are sacred and should not be spilled by other Muslims. He went on to say, "we do not advocate refraining from holding evil persons accountable. Yet there are legal means to do this. It cannot be done by terrorizing peaceable citizens and killing weak people whose lives and property should be left unharmed."[63] In reply to this criticism, al-Libi writes: "what is meant by the respectable blood and inviolable groups is the army, national guard, and the intelligence services… Those are the corrupting hands of tyranny that are used by their tyrannical system to permit the killing of those who defend Islamic law and torture those who summon [people to Islam] and the holy warriors that command the good and prohibit the forbidden."[64]

For al-Libi, one cannot fight tyrannical governments and foreign invaders except by targeting those who give them aid directly:

> I swear to God, if it was not for the betrayal of these measly armies and the mobilization of their intelligence services by these secular, pagan countries, and their absolute support to nations of infidelity—both western and eastern, the forces of the Christian and Jewish occupiers would have never been able to stay in Islamic lands all this time, using [Muslim] resources, defiling their honor, embezzling their money, and shedding their blood.[65]

Zawahiri echoes al-Libi's line of argumentation. In his response to online questions, he states:

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[62] Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Rebutting the Falsehoods of the Guidance Document: Part 1" (Arabic) (n.p., n.d.). This document is eighty-five pages long and was released on the Ana al-Muslim website (www.muslm.net) on 13 December 2008.

[63] Nasir al-Umar, "The Position on Bombings Inside Muslim Countries" (Arabic), released on the author's website, http://www.almoslim.net/, on 16 May 2007.

[64] Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Precious Words in response to the Critics of the Algerian Bombings" (Arabic), a seventeen-page document written on 16 June 2007 and released by the al-Fajr Media Center through the Global News Network (w-n-n.com) on 11 July 2007.

[65] Ibid.

> I believe that the officers of the state security and the anti-religious activities branch—those who investigate Islamic causes and torture the Muslims—are infidels, each and every one of them. They know more about Islamic movements than the members of those movements know about themselves. And it is permissible to kill the officers of the state security and the rest of the police personnel whether we declare them unbelievers individually or collectively…[66]

Zawahiri goes on to argue that in the case of defensive jihad, which is the state of Muslims today, killing individuals who may not meet the requirements of *takfir* is permissible as long as the jihadists are not in a position of official authority or *de facto* dominance. Jihad cannot be suspended in a defensive situation to determine under what circumstances each individual in the opposing camp came to support the tyrants. That would mean the end of jihad and victory for the tyrants.

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) goes a step further by insisting that the requirement for extending apostates an opportunity to repent does not exist in a defensive jihad. Such an opportunity, it argues on the authority of the Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), is possible when Muslims are in a position of power. Absent this condition, apostates could be killed without giving them a chance to repent.[67]

Whereas al-Tartusi and Sayyid Imam put the emphasis on the distinction between general and individual impiety in their limitations on *takfir*, Zawahiri puts the emphasis on the concept of Al Wala' Wal Bara' to extend collective responsibility to those who give direct support to tyrants. The subject of loyalty to Muslims and enmity toward infidels is presented in a lengthy treatise by Zawahiri, written in December 2002.[68] The basic proof-text for this concept comes in Qur'anic verse 5:51:

> O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a

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[66] Round one of questions and answers with Zawahiri released by Al-Ikhlas Islamic Network (http://ek-ls.org/forum) on 2 April 2009.

[67] This point was made in two separate tracts by AQI. The first is entitled "The Creed and Methodology of Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers" (Arabic). It appeared in the "Lion's Den" web forum on 21 March 2005. The second is entitled "Why Do We Fight and Whom Do We Fight?" (Arabic). It was authored by Abu Hamzah al-Baghdadi, the senior Islamic advisor to Zarqawi. It appeared in the Islamic Renewal Organization web forum on 10 June 2005. Both were issued by the Islamic legal council of Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's Jihad Base in the Land of the Two Rivers.

[68] See the English translation in Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 66-115.

> friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.

It is important to note that the verse refers to Jews and Christians, which presumably would not extend to Muslim governments. Zawahiri, however, extends this verse to secular rulers because their apostasy has put them outside of Islam and because they are direct instruments of the purported Zionist-Crusader conspiracies against Muslim countries. Thus, supporting these nominally Muslim rulers is a violation of Al Wala' Wal Bara', and those who violate this principle are fair game just like the tyrants they serve.

The third line of argumentation with regard to the collective *takfir* and targeting of those who give direct support to tyrants revolves around the distinction between public goods and private harms. Zawahiri and al-Libi argue that, given the degree of external and internal threats facing Islam and Muslims today, and given the defensive nature of jihad in the modern era, the ultimate priority must go to repelling the infidels and tyrants and expelling them from Muslim lands. Otherwise, jihad would come to a halt and true Islam would disappear. Al-Libi writes:

> Anyone who studies the arguments of [classical Islamic] scholars when they discuss the reign of unbelievers over any Muslim country…will realize how much they sensed the gravity of the matter and understood its horror. They considered it the mother of all disasters, the gate of all evils, and the final catastrophe. Therefore, they tolerated every other imaginable evil and expected harm in order to prevent and repel it… Thus we say that the dominance of unbelievers, be they apostates or original infidels, over the lands of Muslims must be put at the head of the list of corruption that the people of Islam must strive to end, no matter how much it costs them in lives, property, and trouble. All their efforts, strengths, and resources must first be turned toward this goal.[69]

The positions of Zawahiri and al-Libi are extreme, but their extremism is outmatched by jihadists in conflict zones who attack anyone they deem supportive of tyrants and infidels, whether directly or indirectly.

[69] Al-Libi (2008), 63.

Arguments for the Collective Killing of Apostates (and Heretics) without Limits

The most extreme position on the issue of killing apostates and heretics is put forward by AQI and its late leader Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi.[70] AQI insists that Islam is not just a mere utterance with the tongue (*iqrar*); it is also sincere belief in the heart (*niyah*) and manifest deeds (*`amal al-jawarih*). The three must be present for a person to truly be a Muslim. While true believers do not know what is in the heart of other Muslims, the former can certainly judge the latter on their manifest deeds. AQI cites the example of Abu Bakr, the first caliph in Islam, who fought wars with tribes that claimed to be Muslim but refused to pay the alms tax (*zakat*). Abu Bakr judged the members of these tribes on their deeds, not words or intentions. Given this precedent from the pious ancestors, it is permissible to judge the "so called Muslims" of Iraq based on their deeds, not their words alone.[71]

In the case of the Iraqi security services, AQI argues that taking the Americans and British as their guardians—indeed as "masters"—is a violation of the aforementioned verse 5:51. According to AQI, one violation that puts Muslims outside the creed is giving support to unbelievers over the believers. By siding with the non-Muslims against the Muslim insurgents, the Iraqi forces have forfeited their claim to being Muslims and have become apostates. Targeting them collectively is permissible.

As for others who are outside the security services and the government, they are safe as long as they refrain from aiding the regime and the occupation forces in any way. However, AQI defines support for the occupation and the existing regime in very broad terms that puts nearly every Iraqi who is not an insurgent into the circle of enemies:

1. Those who give aid by "word of mouth," such as the "evil Islamic scholars," chief among them the Shi'a cleric "al-Sistani, his followers, his troops, and his sympathizers."

2. Those who give aid by their actions, not just soldiers and police forces, but also those who "maintain public order in the state," those who "defend constitutional legitimacy," and those who uphold the law by "carrying out the verdicts passed by the tyrannical, man-made courts."

[70] There is no evidence to suggest that the current leaders of AQI and the broader coalition to which they belong, the Islamic State in Iraq, have abandoned Zarqawi's extreme interpretations. On the contrary, their targeting of Sunnis that cooperate with the Coalition Forces and the government of Iraq suggests continuity with Zarqawi's views.

[71] AQI, "The Creed and Methodology;" AQI, "Why Do We Fight."

3. Anyone who assists the enemy in any way, even if "he might be a Muslim in his heart, might have no thoughts in his mind against Islam, and there might be no suspicions surrounding him."[72]

According to AQI, to the extent that most of the collaborators are from the Shi'a camp, indiscriminate attacks against Shi'a are permissible because, unlike true (i.e., Sunni) Muslims, their blood is not sacrosanct. The Twelver Shi'a are heretics outside of the creed because they reject the first three caliphs of Islam—Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Omar Ibn al-Khattab, and Uthman bin `Afan—which are the core of the pious ancestors for Sunni Muslims. They also dishonor `Aisha, the Prophet's favorite wife, by raising doubts about her chastity, this despite the fact that the Qur'an insists on her pure character. The Shi'a also hurl invectives at Abu Hurayrah, one of the most prolific transmitters of Prophetic traditions in Sunni Islam. In doing so, they call into question the foundations of Sunni jurisprudence, which is based in no small part on Prophetic traditions. Given that they are heretics, which is worst than being original infidels, their blood is not inviolable and may be shed for the interest of deterring attacks on the people of the Sunna.

Abu Yahya al-Libi seems to support this expansive targeting of Shi'a, but not Zawahiri. The former rejects Sayyid Imam's admonition against inciters of sectarian strife:

> [The author Sayyid Imam] considers the condition of the Shiites to be merely a "religious *madhhab*" [school of jurisprudence]. This is an intentional suggestion, not a slip of the pen. It means one of two things. Either it is meant to approximate the Shiites to this description so that everyone can think that they are just like members of the other Islamic jurisprudential schools that ought to be respected and venerated and whose members' lives are fully sacrosanct, or else it is meant to give the reader the idea that the holy warriors accept killing members of the well-known Islamic legal schools: Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi`is, and Hanbalis. The underlying idea is to improve the image of the criminal Shiites by applying this description to them or to tarnish the image of the holy warriors because they target people who belong to the Islamic religious schools.[73]

Zawahiri takes a different view of the Shi'a. While undoubtedly he disagrees with their doctrines and considers them heretics, he does not advocate targeting them collectively unless they work directly for the invaders and tyrants. In response to a sympathetic

[72] AQI, "The Creed and Methodology;" AQI, "Why Do We Fight."
[73] Al-Libi (2008), 31.

online questioner who inquires about the status of neutral Shi'a in various conflict zones, Zawahiri says "my stance towards the Shiite laity is the stance of the men of knowledge of the people of the Sunna, which is that they are excused through their ignorance…"[74] He goes on to add that if they refrain from participating in the aggression against Muslims,"our way with them is to invite them to true Islam and expose the crimes of their leaders."[75]

In summary, radical Islamists do not dispute that *takfir* is permissible in Islam, but they do disagree over the process of engaging in *takfir* and which categories of Muslims could be targeted collectively or individually. Central to this debate is a distinction among tyrants, apostates, heretics and true believers. All radical Islamists agree that targeting a tyrant is permissible, but differences emerge over when, how and in what way to deal with apostates and heretics. The less hawkish view asserts that apostates and heretics could be targeted individually, after a rigorous process of verification and clarification, but not collectively. The most extreme view holds that it is permissible to target apostates and heretics collectively because of their direct, or even indirect, support to tyrants and infidel invaders. Proponents of each of these perspectives cite evidence in the classical sources to substantiate their claims.

What, then, is the ruling regarding the killing of true believers—those that are not tyrants and heretics, and those that refrain from giving direct or indirect support to tyrannical regimes and foreign forces? Could they be killed in the jihad? Here, too, radical Islamists disagree.

Debates over the Unintentional Killing of Innocent Muslims

Muslims in general agree that the blood, dignity and property of fellow Muslims are sacrosanct. According to a Prophetic tradition related in the collections of Sahih Muslim, "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim; he neither oppresses him, nor does he lie to him, nor does he look down upon or humiliate him... All things of a Muslim are sacred for his brother-in-faith: his blood, his property, and his honor."[76] Radical Islamists accept this tradition, but, as the previous discussion suggests, they have different views on who is a Muslim and who is outside of the community of the faithful. Tyrants, apostates and heretics do not qualify as Muslims even if they insist that they are believers.

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[74] Round one of questions and answers with Zawahiri released by Al-Ikhlas Islamic Network (http://ek-ls.org/forum) on 2 April 2009.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Sahih Muslim Book 31, no. 6219.

The biggest challenge for extremists is justifying the killing of innocent coreligionists in mass-destruction attacks that target those deemed to be infidels, tyrants and apostates. Critics of radical Islamists insist that, from an Islamic jurisprudential viewpoint, it is not enough to say that collateral damage is an unfortunate part of the jihad. They cite the Qur'anic verse 48:25 as proof that attacks in which Muslims are killed, even unintentionally, are impermissible:

> Had there not been believing men and believing women whom ye did not know that ye were trampling down and on whose account a crime would have accrued to you without (your) knowledge, (Allah would have allowed you to force your way, but He held back your hands) that He may admit to His Mercy whom He will. If they had been apart, We should certainly have punished the Unbelievers among them with a grievous Punishment.[77]

This verse suggests that God held back the believers' advance in order to prevent the accidental killing of other believers who were in the company of infidels. Had they "been apart," the verse says, God would not have held back the Muslims from attacking. Given the apparent clarity of this verse, radicals like Zawahiri and al-Libi expend a great deal of effort to refute its implications. They do so in two ways. First, they insist that the verse applies to an offensive jihad, not a defensive one. Second, they unearth a classical legal ruling concerning the permissibility of killing Muslim human shields.

Muslim Collateral Damage in a Defensive Jihad

In a document entitled "Jihad, Martyrdom, and the Killing of Innocents," Zawahiri puts forward the case for the permissibility of killing innocent Muslims unintentionally in a defensive jihad.[78] He begins by arguing that Islamic scholars disagree with regard to this issue, resulting in at least three distinct views. The first view, associated with the Maliki school of jurisprudence, prohibits the killing of innocent Muslims even as collateral damage in warfare. Adherents of this view cite verse 48:25 as sufficient proof.

The second view permits the killing of innocent Muslims completely in both offensive and defensive warfare if the advantages incurred to Islam and Muslims outweigh the evils of harming individual believers. Advocates of this position point out that the Prophet Muhammad had prohibited the killing of civilians, but ultimately made an exception to this general rule in the siege of al-Ta'if, where the Prophet used catapults

[77] Qur'anic verse 48:25 (partial verse).

[78] See the English translation in Ibrahim, 141-71.

against his adversaries, a tactic that could not have distinguished between combatants and innocent civilians. He did so because the benefits that would accrue to Islam outweighed the costs brought about by harming innocent people. The implication of this historical event is that it is permissible to make exceptions to a general rule when these exceptions are deemed beneficial to Muslims.

The third view permits the killing of innocent Muslims, but only under the condition of a defensive war. In a defensive jihad, when Muslims are besieged by enemies, it is the ultimate duty of Muslims to defend their religion, land and honor. This must be done by all possible means. In these circumstances, Muslims that are mixed with infidels can "be killed mistakenly, [but] not intentionally."[79] Citing Ibn Taymiyya, Zawahiri argues that Muslims who are killed in these circumstances are martyrs "and the obligatory *jihad* should never be abandoned because it creates martyrs."[80]

Zawahiri accepts the third view as binding, but does not explain why from an Islamic legal perspective it is better than the first or second. However, he does proceed to make an instrumental argument for the third view. Basically, he avers that: (a) jihad today is defensive in character; (b) the tyrants and infidels protect themselves with heavy armory and fortified buildings that can only be destroyed through explosives and rockets; (c) the tyrants and infidels position themselves among innocent Muslims; and, therefore, (d) using explosives and rockets to kill tyrants and infidels will inevitably result in Muslim collateral damage.[81] The holy warriors, argues Zawahiri, should take precautions against harming Muslims and should warn them to avoid areas in which tyrants and infidels reside. Moreover, jihadists could atone for killing fellow Muslims and even pay blood money, but only if "there is a surplus of monies, which are no longer needed to fund the jihad."[82]

The Permissibility of Killing Muslim Human Shields

The most intriguing argument for the permissibility of killing coreligionists is based on a classical juristic ruling concerning attacking a human shield (*qatl al-turse*).[83] According to this ruling, it is permissible for Muslims to kill other Muslims who are unwillingly

[79] Ibid., 168.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 169.
[82] Ibid., 170.
[83] It is not entirely clear how classical Islamic jurists defined human shields, but their ruling suggests that these were individuals who were intentionally used against their will as a buffer between invading forces and Muslim defenders. An alternative—but not a mutually exclusive—interpretation may be that they are Muslim individuals taken against their will by non-Muslim forces and positioned as outer shields for their garrisons.

being used as human shields by unbelievers if such an action benefits the broader struggle against the infidels.

Zawahiri and al-Libi have repeatedly referenced this ruling in many of their writings to justify Muslim collateral damage.[84] Both, on the authority of the classical scholar al-Qurtubi, argue that it is permissible to kill Muslim human shields "if the advantage gained is imperative, universal, and certain."[85] They expain:

> "Imperative" means that reaching the infidels cannot be attained without killing the human shield; "universal" means that the advantage gained by killing the human shield benefits every Muslim…; and "certain" means that the benefit gained by killing the human shield is definite.[86]

The benefit here is repelling infidels and preventing them from controlling Muslim lands and having hegemony over them. This evil, argues al-Libi, is the source of all other evils, great and small. The infidels would see to it that Islam perishes from earth because of the hate they harbor toward the true faith. If Muslims recognize this existential threat, then they also must accept that it is permissible to repel a greater evil (infidels in Muslim lands) with a lesser evil (killing Muslim human shields). Zawahiri, citing the authority of Ibn Taymiyya, adds that those who are killed "die by God's hand," not the hands of the jihadists.[87]

AQI has used this logic to legitimize its indiscriminate slaughter in Iraq. It argues that the occupation forces are hiding behind ordinary Muslims in public places. It is impossible for the jihadists to fight the enemy without inflicting unintentional harm on other Muslims. If mass-destruction attacks, especially suicide bombings, were to stop in Iraq in order to save the lives of these innocent Muslims, the struggle would come to an end and the unbelievers would triumph. This outcome harms the collective interests of Muslims by allowing tyrants and other unbelievers to control Muslim lands and wealth, and inflict humiliation and suffering on the entirety of the Muslim community. Conversely, operations that kill ordinary Muslims result in "private" harms against individuals, while they bring collective benefits to the entirety of the Muslim

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[84] Ibid., 163-64; Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Human Shields in the Modern Jihad" (Arabic), dated 6 January 2006 and posted to the Ana al-Muslim website (www.muslm.net) on 10 April 2008. See also Ayman al-Zawahiri, *The Exoneration* (Arabic) (n.p., 2008). This book is 216 pages of direct rebuttals of Sayyid Imam's revisions in "Guiding Jihadi Action in Egypt and the World." It was released by the *Shumukh al-Islam Network* forum (www.shamikh.com/vb) on 2 March 2008.

[85] Ibrahim, 163-64; al-Libi (2006).

[86] Ibrahim, 163-64; al-Libi (2006).

[87] Zawahiri (2008), 76.

community in Iraq, indeed Muslims around the world.[88] This utilitarian rationale, as it were, approximates closely the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham more than the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Other Salafists have taken issue with the applicability of the ruling concerning human shields in Iraq. They argue that this rule comes with stringent conditions that must be met before Muslims are allowed to kill fellow Muslims. Abu Basir al-Tartusi points out four such conditions. First, it must be impossible to fight the aggressor except through harming the human shields. If there are other ways to repel the invaders, then it is not permissible to harm the human shields or to seek to fight them directly. Second, it must be clear that avoiding harm to the human shields results in a bigger harm to Muslims. Islamic principles command that you repel the greater harm with the lesser harm if one or the other is unavoidable. Third, the benefit stemming from killing human shields must be absolutely clear and undisputable, not a mere possibility or a probabilistic outcome. Finally, if the first three conditions are met, it is permissible to attack the enemy being shielded by Muslims, but the intent must be to kill the enemy, not the Muslims.[89]

Sayyid Imam similarly rejects the human shields ruling as sufficient justification for attacks in the West and in Muslim lands. He begins with the observation that Muslims today are everywhere, including non-Muslim lands. Attacks in these lands constitute offensive jihad, not a defensive one, because they are initiated by radicals without explicit provocation. Therefore, it is not permissible to strike in these lands because believers could be among the victims (as per verse 48:25). Killing believers in this instance is a cardinal sin that cannot be excused by spurious claims of defensive jihad waged out of necessity. Moreover, Muslims are in the West by choice, not by coercion. The human shield ruling applies to Muslims who are coerced into acting as human shields. Therefore, attacks in the West are not permissible.[90]

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[88] This claim is made explicitly by Zarqawi in his audio recording entitled "The Descendents of Ibn al-`Alqami Are Back." However, his claim is largely derived from other jihadi Salafi scholars that have made this argument long before he did. See, e.g., Hamoud Bin Aqla al-Shu`aybi, "Ruling Concerning Martyrdom Operations" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws), 2 February 2001; and Abu Jandal al-Azdi, "Passages of Jurists about the Rules Concerning Raiding and Human Shields (Bombings and Ambushes)" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws), 20 May 2003.

[89] Abu Basir al-Tartusi, "Warnings Concerning Martyrdom or Suicide Operations" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws), 24 August 2005. See similar arguments made by Zarqawi's former mentor, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Reflections on the Fruits of Jihad: Between the Ignorance of Islamic Law and the Ignorance of Reality" (Arabic), posted on the Tawhid wal Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws), April 2004.

[90] Sayyid Imam, "Guiding Jihadi Action," part 7 in *al-Masri al-Yaoum*, 25 November 2007.

As for attacks in Muslim countries, here too the ruling concerning human shields is not applicable, according to Sayyid Imam. The Qur'anic verse 48:25 is an explicit one against killing believers, whereas the ruling of scholars, even venerable ones like Ibn Taymiyya, is a form of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). In Islam, explicit verses are binding, whereas *ijtihad* is not. Moreover, the argument that killing Muslims by necessity is permissible if it brings collective benefits or prevents collective harms is specious, argues Sayyid Imam. He insists that there has to be "total and definite necessity" based on Qur'anic verse 6:119, which reads, in part: "He hath explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you—except under compulsion of necessity..." Necessity means certain and undisputable threat to Muslims, not a perceived or imagined threat invented by self-proclaimed jihadists.[91]

Zawahiri responds to Sayyid Imam by insisting that attacks in the West are defensive in nature and, thus, are consistent with the earlier argument that killing Muslims accidentally in the West is permissible when jihad is defensive. He writes, "Operations in the lands of unbelievers is, for certain, a defensive jihad to expel infidels from Muslim lands, and Muslims are in dire need of them."[92] Operations in foreign lands will stop when the enemy departs from Muslim territories.

In summary, radicals argue that killing innocent Muslims in their operations is permissible when two conditions exist: (1) Muslims are fighting a defensive jihad to save Islam from the tyranny of infidels; and (2) it is impossible to avoid killing innocent Muslims without halting the jihad completely, thus giving unbelievers the victory they seek. Qur'anic verse 48:25—which commands a halt to aggressive action when believers might be harmed—is applicable in offensive jihad only and, the radicals argue, Muslims are currently engaged in defensive, rather than offensive, jihad.

The Inadvisability of Killing Muslims

Establishing the Islamic legitimacy of operations in which Muslims are killed does not obviate the need to affirm the value of such killings from a strategic communication perspective. Jihadists have to appeal to Muslim masses and these attacks may alienate them. Indeed, intra-radical debates over the strategic value of indiscriminate tactics became intense after AQI engaged in spectacular suicide attacks against Iraq's Shi'a population and its shrines. Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi argued that these operations were necessary to unify the Sunnis against a common enemy and punish the Shi'a for their

[91] Ibid.

[92] Zawahiri (2008), 156.

collective collaboration with foreign forces.[93] As explained earlier, AQI views the Shi'a as heretics that do not deserve the same Islamic protections granted to Sunnis. Zarqawi's position unleashed intense criticisms from his former mentor, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, as well as Zawahiri and other al-Qa'ida leaders. These sympathetic critics, collectively, make three arguments against AQI's actions in Iraq. First, these attacks, even if permissible from a jurisprudential viewpoint, alienate broader Muslim support, which is essential for the long war against the United States and local tyrants. Second, these attacks unnecessarily open too many fronts when the priority should be given to expelling invading forces from Muslim lands. Third, indiscriminate attacks against Muslims tarnish the image of Islam and, thus, defeat the broader objective of drawing people to the Islamic faith.

In 2005, U.S. forces in Iraq captured a letter by Zawahiri addressed to Zarqawi. The letter is dated 9 July 2005 and its contents were released by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence three months later.[94] Zawahiri begins his letter by acknowledging the valuable leadership of Zarqawi and his efforts in Iraq, but proceeds to remind him that the short term objectives of the jihad in Iraq require the support of its people and mass publics in neighboring countries. "Therefore, our planning must strive to involve the Muslim masses in the battle, and to bring the [jihadist] movement to the masses and not conduct the struggle far from them."[95] Moreover, the movement "must avoid any action that the masses do not understand or approve..."[96] Concerning attacks on Iraq's Shi'a, Zawahiri argues that while confronting the Shi'a is a historical inevitability, now is not the time for this confrontation. He writes:

> [T]he majority of Muslims don't [sic] comprehend this [confrontation] and possibly could not even imagine it. For that reason, many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia… My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue.[97]

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[93] Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), 43-45.

[94] There is little public information regarding the circumstances under which this letter was discovered, leading some to cast doubt on its authenticity. Its content, however, appears consistent with statements subsequently made by Zawahiri in his 2008 reply to online questions. The original Arabic text and the English translation can be obtained at the Open Source Center, "Report: Complete Text of Al-Zawahiri 9 July 2005 Letter to Al-Zarqawi," 11 October 2005.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

Zawahiri was particularly concerned with the ability of adversaries to exploit the attacks on the Shi'a and other excesses, such as the beheading of hostages, to tarnish the image of the jihadists in the media, portraying them as bloodthirsty killers of innocent people:

> I say to you: that we are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a…race for the hearts and minds of our [Muslim nation]. And that however far our capabilities reach, they will never be equal to one thousandth of the capabilities of the kingdom of Satan that is waging war on us.[98]

Another al-Qa'ida leader, `Atiyah, echoed Zawahiri's admonition of AQI's actions in a separate letter to Zarqawi.[99] He wrote, "true victory is the triumph of principles and values, the triumph of the call to Islam. True conquest is the conquest of the hearts of people..."[100] Drawing on the earlier lessons of failed jihad in Algeria, `Atiyah explains how Islamists in that country snatched defeat from the jaws of victory by their excessive violence toward the general population:

> Ask me whatever you like about Algeria between 1994 and 1995, when [the movement] was at the height of its power and capabilities, and was on the verge of taking over the government... I lived through that myself, and I saw first hand; no one told me about it. However, [the insurgent Islamists] destroyed themselves with their own hands, with their lack of reason, delusions, their ignoring of people, their alienation of them through oppression, deviance, and severity, coupled with a lack of kindness, sympathy, and friendliness. Their enemy did not defeat them, but rather they defeated themselves, were consumed and fell.[101]

Similarly, al-Maqdisi, equally concerned about the negative public relations that stem from publicized beheadings and attacks on Shi'a, offered cold and calculating advice to the jihadists in Iraq: if it is necessary to kill, do so through assassinations and without

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[98] Ibid.

[99] The identity of the author is not known. His letter was discovered shortly after American military forces killed Zarqawi in an air strike on a safe-house near Baquba, Iraq, in June 2006. An English translation of the letter can be found in a report by the West Point Combating Terrorism Center Harmony Document Database (http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf). See Combating Terrorism Center, "Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa`ida High Command," 25 September 2006.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

public pronouncements and claims of responsibility.[102] Zawahiri outmatches al-Maqdisi with sage advice of his own: "…we can kill the captives by bullet."[103]

Concerning the second critique of AQI's operations against Iraq's Shi'a, critics argue that these attacks divert jihadists from attacking their main enemy and open too many fronts in the long war against the United States and its collaborators. Zawahiri asks Zarqawi a series of rhetorical questions to illustrate the danger of fanatical hatred of the Shi'a:

> [I]s the opening of another front now in addition to the front against the Americans and the government a wise decision? Or, does this conflict with the Shia lift the burden from the Americans by diverting the mujahedeen to the Shia, while the Americans continue to control matters from afar?... And what loss will befall us if we did not attack the Shia?[104]

Al-Maqdisi raises a similar critique of the jihad in Iraq. He points out that even if certain actions are permissible in Islam, they should not be carried out without regards to the *circumstances* and *capabilities* of Muslims. Actions must be judged according to the balance between *masalih wa mafasid* (interests and harms). An action may be permissible in abstract, but when applied in practice, it ceases to be wise because its deleterious effects (*mafasid*) outweigh its presumed benefits (*masalih*). In the case of Iraq, operations against the Shi'a are not only dubious from a theological viewpoint (due to the distinction between individual and collective *takfir*), they are also dangerous because they turn the Shi'a masses against the Sunni insurgents and force the Shi'a to seek protection from the occupation forces.[105] `Atiyah issued words of warning that proved prescient in light of the conflict that has been raging between AQI and the Sunnis of Iraq since 2006:

> If you [are] hostile to and [argue] and [push] away everyone who [does not] please you, then most people would shun you, be hostile towards you, argue with you and try to make war on you as well, and they would turn towards your enemy.[106]

The final critique of AQI's operations in Iraq is that they tarnish the image of Islam and Muslims, thus harming the *da`wa* (call to Islam), which is an essential part of comprehensive Islamic activism. Al-Maqdisi in particular is concerned about how

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[102] Al-Maqdisi (2004), 87.
[103] Open Source Center.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Al-Maqdisi (2004), 71-72.
[106] Combating Terrorism Center (2006).

indiscriminate bombings and beheadings reflected on Islam and jihadist actions. He insists that those who love jihad must take into account how their actions elevate the image of Islam or tarnish it. Citing a Prophetic tradition, al-Maqdisi points out that the Prophet Muhammad avoided killing some of the hypocrites that surrounded him "so people will not say that Muhammad kills his companions."[107] In other words, while the Prophet would have been justified in eliminating those who would betray him, he refrained from doing so in order to protect his image and, ultimately, the image of a burgeoning religion. Sheikh Salman al-`Awda similarly raises this critique in his September 2007 open letter to Usama bin Ladin: "My brother Usama Bin Ladin, the image of Islam today is not at its best. People all over the world say that Islam orders the killing of those who do not believe in it. They also say that Salafis kill the non-Salafi Muslims…" He later adds, "Have we reduced Islam to a bullet or a rifle?"[108]

These critiques appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Al-Qa'ida's leaders continue to urge jihad against Muslims in Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere, and AQI intensified its attacks against Iraq's Shi'a in 2006, producing sectarian strife that consumed the lives of thousands of innocent Iraqis—Shi'a and Sunnis alike. Indeed, despite its growing misfortunes in Iraq, AQI's war now extends to attacking Sunnis who turned against it. The words of the critics proved Prophetic in foretelling its demise.

Conclusion

Nearly eight years into the global war on terrorism, we have yet to engage successfully in the battle of ideas against radical Islamism. There is a growing recognition among counterterrorism specialists that the current struggle with al-Qa'ida must involve an ideological component to deprive it of supporters and recruits. An inside perspective on how extremists view themselves and their struggles, as well as a nuanced understanding of the ideological fissures that divide them, are steps in this effort. This chapter is a modest attempt to gain insight into how jihadists rationalize their extremist worldviews and confront ideological and theological challenges posed by mainstream and other radical Islamists. Four observations emerge from the previous analysis.

The first, and the most obvious, observation is that radical Islamists are most vulnerable to critique when it comes to their violence against ordinary Muslims. As Zawahiri stated in his 2005 letter to Zarqawi, the Muslim masses do not comprehend violence directed toward their coreligionists, no matter how much jihadists seek to explain it to them. Consequently, any strategic communication campaign against al-Qa'ida must

[107] Al-Maqdisi (2004), 76.
[108] Al-`Awda.

hone in on this point—and do so repeatedly and with creativity. In particular, extremists demonize their victims by insisting that they are apostates, heretics and collaborators. They paint a picture of turncoats that aid in the assault on Muslims, their lands and honor. Yet, counterterrorist practitioners in the West and in the Muslim world, with few exceptions, view victims of radical Islamism as mere statistics, with no faces or stories to represent them. One opportunity to counter the narratives of al-Qa'ida is to humanize the victims by showing that the so-called infidels, apostates and heretics are real, genuine Muslims with families to care for, children to raise and dreams that have been shattered by murderous violence. It is necessary to encourage and support journalists, filmmakers and others in the media around the Muslim world to collect the stories of the individuals killed, maimed and deformed by indiscriminate violence. It is vital to reflect their agony and the suffering of their families, and tell the stories of the fatherless and motherless children orphaned in the name of God. Treating the victims like human beings, not statistics to be entered into a database, is an important step in turning ordinary people against the extremists. Media footage and images can be used in television public service announcements against terrorism to frame jihadists as wanton killers with no regard for human life. The suffering of Muslims at the hands of jihadis can be reported in the news in the same way al-Jazeera effectively relates the suffering of people after American and Israeli bombardments. Stories of victims can be placed in educational documentaries to be played in schools in order to inoculate the public against extremism, and can be distributed on the Internet for the world to see.

The second observation is that it is often argued that jihadists distort their religion in order to engage in extreme violence. This description is inaccurate, just as it is incorrect to claim that their violence represents the true essence of Islam. What the debates over *takfir* and intra-Muslim violence reveal is that the Islamic tradition is sufficiently ductile to be shaped in many forms and bent in multiple directions without losing its constituent material or fracturing. Both the extremists and their less hawkish interlocutors draw on Islamic texts and traditions to substantiate their ideological positions. Both represent Islam because this religion, like all others, is subject to multiple interpretations. Rather than distorting religion, it is more accurate to say that the extremists conveniently shift their method of jurisprudence in order to justify tactics that would normally be rejected by their strict constructionist reading of religious texts. Radicals have reverted to an interpretive method that contravenes their literalist predispositions. In this respect, Sayyid Imam is correct when he accuses al-Qa'ida of employing the "jurisprudence of justification" (*fiqh al-tabrir*).[109] When it serves its objectives, al-Qa'ida does not hesitate to innovate by turning clear and unequivocal

[109] Sayyid Imam, "Guiding Jihadi Action," part 2 in *al-Masri al-Yaoum*, 19 November 2007.

traditions and Qur'anic verses (*muhkamat*), such as the prohibition against killing oneself and killing civilians, into ambiguous ones that require further contextualization and interpretation. Conversely, when it comes to declaring secular rulers to be infidels and apostatizing fellow Muslims, the group ignores the inclination of classical scholars and jurists, even Hanbali ones, to show deference to worldly rulers, reject rebellion against them and avoid internecine fighting (*fitna*) among the faithful. In short, it is no mere exaggeration to say that the jihadists opportunistically shift between strict constructionist and interpretive methods of jurisprudence to justify their extreme violence.

The third observation is that, despite the internal debates over Muslim-on-Muslim violence, the jihadists in the battlefield do not appear to be swayed by the authoritative arguments of imprisoned ideologues and others who are not in the crucible of jihad. As a matter of fact, there appears to be a split between the theological thinkers of Salafism and the hotheaded field commanders, with the latter prefering to rely on "warrior scholars" like Zawahiri and al-Libi, rather than on media personalities like `Awda or Hamid al-Ali. Therefore, we should not expect internal critiques to influence the strategic orientation of active jihadist in the near future. The impact of these debates, if any, is likely to come from their cumulative effect over time. Rather than a sudden deflation of support for jihadism in the same way a pinprick punctures an inflated balloon, the effect of these debates on levels of Muslim radicalization will likely resemble water under a slow-burning stove: it loses steam gradually until it completely evaporates.

The fourth, and final, observation is that radical Islamists, to the extent they are able to justify their extreme violence, can do so by insisting that they are waging a *defensive jihad* against an existential threat to Islam, one with internal and external fronts. Many of the arguments of Zawahiri and al-Libi rest on this predicate. It is reasonable to assume that as long as Muslims continue to view the war on terrorism as a war on Islam, the arguments in support of extreme violence will resonate with a substantial number of them. Therefore, it is imperative for U.S. policymakers and military leaders to avoid the clash of civilizations trap that has been set for them. Al-Qa'ida's framing of its violence as defensive jihad gains credibility when Western leaders appear to target Islam and Islamism with their words and actions. It is vital that these leaders employ nuanced, rather than inflammatory, rhetoric when discussing the al-Qa'ida threat. Ultimately, it is necessary to reduce the size of Western military footprints in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the dilemmas a drawdown in forces will create in these places. As long as the jihadists appear to be resisting neocolonialism, they will be able to frame their extremism as mere defensive jihad against infidels and local collaborators. Reducing foreign military presence in this part of the world may not end internal

Muslim conflicts, but it will at least channel the rage inward, away from Western citizens and their capitals.

Chapter 3: Strategic Fissures: The Near and Far Enemy Debate

Steven Brooke

Introduction

The jihadist movement has been marked by a visceral series of disputes over strategic priorities, and perhaps the most contentious of these disagreements has been over how to liberate Jerusalem. Jihadists have debated whether they should concentrate their efforts on Israel (later they would include Israel's Western supporters in the same category), which they dubbed "the far enemy" (*al-adou al-baeed*), or whether they should first attack their own local purportedly apostate regimes, "the near enemy" *(al-adou al-qareeb*). From 1979 to 1998, jihadism was dominated by those who believed that revolution in the Arab world must precede any confrontation with Israel. From 1998 to 2003, Usama bin Ladin and a small group of lieutenants argued the reverse: that Jerusalem could only be liberated by a direct attack on the far enemy, the "alliance" between Jews and their superpower patron, the United States.[110] While the debate inside the jihadist community has become significantly hybridized and fragmented since 2003, the near enemy has seemingly returned as a priority for jihadist action. In an evolution from the pre-1998 near enemy strategy, however, today's hybridized strategy makes explicit the sequencing of overthrowing those Arab regimes surrounding Israel, followed by an attack on Israel proper.

The most recent stage in al-Qa'ida's strategic target preferences has been driven by the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as al-Qa'ida's post-9/11 structural changes. The presence of U.S. troops, and the new near enemy governments they protect in Afghanistan and Iraq, have created strong incentives and opportunities for local jihadist action. The rationale for attacking these governments, particularly in Iraq, however, is more than just a tactical concession. It is a return to a position of broader support among jihadists that fighting near regimes, specifically those Arab states bordering Israel, must come before the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem. The relationship between al-Qa'ida and its local affiliates, or franchises, has similarly affected the recent strategic direction, as al-Qa'ida must make concessions to address the narrow concerns of local groups joining its global banner. Al-Qa'ida's challenge is to convince these local affiliates that their particular struggles—in North

[110] A few authors have written on the near and far enemy debate. See Gerges; Guido Steinberg, *Der Nahe und Der Ferne Feind: Die Netzwerke der Islamischen Terrorismus (The Close and the Distant Enemy: The Islamic Terrorist Networks) (*Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005); Guido Steinberg and Isabelle Werenfels, "Between the 'Near' and the 'Far' Enemy: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Mediterranean Politics* 12, no. 3 (November 2007), 407-13. See also Jeannie L. Johnson, "Exploiting Weakness in the Far Enemy Ideology," *Strategic Insights* (June 2005).

Africa, Southeast Asia or the Middle East—are actually part of a broader fight that will culminate in the liberation of Jerusalem and the destruction of Israel.

These adaptations allow al-Qa'ida to leverage a key motivating factor and have the potential to unify the far enemy and near enemy camps. A focus on Israel also helps al-Qa'ida deal with criticisms from both grassroots jihadists and movement luminaries that, despite the 1998 fatwa's revolutionary claim that an attack on the United States would liberate Jerusalem, Israel has only been strengthened and America even more enmeshed in Islamic lands since 1998. Refocusing the conflict's center of gravity on the Middle East and articulating a new plan for confronting Israel could help al-Qa'ida return to a position of deeper support from within the jihadist environment. Attacking Israel, especially after the January 2009 Gaza war, would be perhaps the quickest, easiest way for al-Qa'ida to rehabilitate its damaged reputation in the broader Muslim world.

This chapter will chart the jihadist debate over how to liberate Jerusalem from 1979 onwards.[111] Beginning with a discussion of the formation of the near enemy strategy in the late 1970s, the chapter will trace the evolution of this idea during the first Afghan jihad; the fallout of bin Ladin's decision to overturn the near enemy strategy in 1998; the effect of the invasion of Iraq on jihadist strategy; and finally, the emergence of a hybridized jihadist strategy blending the focus on both near enemies, such as Jordan, and far enemies like Israel. Although the schism of near versus far enemy is still a stress point in the global Salafi jihad, theorists and strategists have begun to adopt a more ecumenical position towards strategic thought.

Jihadist Strategy in Historical Context

The publication of *The Neglected Duty* in 1979 marked the first attempt to set a strategy by which jihadist groups should operate. Its author, the leader of the Egyptian group al-Jihad, Mohammed Abdelsalam Faraj, argued that the jihadist movement's priority must be fighting existing regimes in the Muslim world (the near enemy) rather than Israel (the far enemy).[112] Faraj's argument drew on a particular reading of history.[113] Because

[111] This is a macro level analysis, focusing on the trajectory of al-Qa'ida Central through an examination of the rhetoric and strategic guidance offered by the movement's leadership and most prominent strategic thinkers. As such, this paper will not examine the various structural/institutional and theological factors in determining the course of jihadist action. For an example of the importance of structural factors in the specific case of Saudi Arabia, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia," *International Affairs* 84, no. 4 (2008), 703-6.

[112] Steven Brooke, "Jihadist Strategic Debates Before 9/11," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2008).

the 1948 establishment of Israel was made possible by the 1924 dissolution of the Ottoman caliphate, he reasoned, the resurrection of the caliphate must occur before Israel could be vanquished. The establishment of a caliphate, in turn, could only occur after a confrontation with the existing, un-Islamic, rulers. As Faraj laid out:

> To begin by putting an end to imperialism (destroying Israel) is not a laudatory and useful act. It is only a waste of time. We must concentrate on our own Islamic situation: we have to establish the Rule of God's Religion in our own country first, and make the Word of God supreme… From here we should start.[114]

An important counter to Faraj's argument came from the founder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Fathi al-Shiqaqi, who argued that an attack on Israel must be given priority. For Shiqaqi it was partly personal—he had grown up in the occupied territories before going to Egypt for schooling in the 1970s. There, he immersed himself in the burgeoning jihadist scene. Shiqaqi's ideology also borrowed from Ayatollah Khomeini's proclamations concerning the necessity of attacking Israel.[115] While Shiqaqi's vision would go on to carry organizational weight in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it was Faraj's guidance that would dominate jihadist action across the Middle East. Indeed, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, captained by Abdelsalam Faraj, but with Ayman al-Zawahiri on the Shura council, carried out the near enemy strategy to deadly effect with the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Divisions in Faraj's strategic vision began to show during the first Afghan jihad. Importantly, however, fighters who traveled to Afghanistan were not motivated by a desire to confront the far enemy. The Soviet Union was targeted because it invaded Muslim lands, not because it was a far enemy. While the legitimization of fighting an aggressor was well within the guidelines of traditional Islamic doctrine, in the Afghan case, the innovation was an argument that all Muslims, not just those living in the area of the attack or those designated by the government, were required to participate in the

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[113] To some extent, Faraj was probably also influenced by the Pan-Arabist argument popular during the 1960s that Arab unity must precede the liberation of Palestine. On the role of this formulation in the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestine Liberation Organization: People, Power, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 24-25.

[114] Johannes J.G. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East* (New York: MacMillan, 1986), 193.

[115] Fathi Shiqaqi, *Al-A'mal al-Kamila* (The Complete Works) (Cairo: Markaz Yafa lil Dirasat wal Abhath, 1997). See also Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and* Gaza (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 92-102

jihad.[116] Thus, the debate surrounding the Afghan jihad took place largely outside of the near/far enemy paradigm. Nevertheless, events and relationships that formed in Afghanistan would have a significant impact on issues of jihadist strategy in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal. Primarily, the Afghan jihad created an environment where dedicated activists, committed jihadists and the representatives of Arab states they sought to overthrow rubbed shoulders for the first time. Members of Faraj's iconic al-Jihad, for instance, used the Afghan jihad to try to muster resources for an eventual campaign against near enemies. They were opposed by others, such as the leader of the so-called Afghan Arabs, 'Abdullah 'Azzam, who rejected any conflict with near enemies and instead advocated the liberation of Palestine after the Soviet withdrawal.[117] Other jihadists simply wanted to use Afghanistan as a base and training ground for struggles around the globe.[118] All of this fomentation occurred amidst a crowd of freelancers, adventure seekers, religious figures and representatives of sprawling Islamic networks like the Muslim Brotherhood.[119]

The conflicts over the direction of the jihadist movement intensified after the founding of al-Qa'ida in 1988 and the subsequent Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Importantly, however, a number of events conspired to push bin Ladin towards the camp of the revolutionary jihadists. As the Afghan jihad wound down, a number of senior al-Jihad figures, including Zawahiri, pressed bin Ladin to focus on the near enemy. This pressure increased when 'Abdullah 'Azzam, an outspoken critic of revolutionary jihadists like Ayman al-Zawahiri, was assassinated in Peshawar in 1989.[120] 'Azzam's death was followed by the Saudi leadership's decision to invite American troops to protect the kingdom from Saddam Hussein. All the more stunning for bin Ladin was that the Saudi leadership had earlier dismissed his offer to use his newly-formed al-Qa'ida for the same task. Spurred by the Saudi betrayal, an episode he later called the "biggest shock of his entire life," bin Ladin began sending an increasingly threatening series of letters to the Saudi leadership. [121]

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[116] As 'Abdullah 'Azzam argued, "jihad is currently *fard ain* (an individual duty) in person and by wealth, in every place that the disbelievers have occupied. It remains *fard ain* continuously until every piece of land that was once Islamic is regained." See 'Abdullah 'Azzam, *Join the Caravan* (London: Azzam Publications, 2001), 51. See also 'Abdullah 'Azzam, *Defense of Muslim Lands* (London: Azzam Publications, n.d.), 14.

[117] See Thomas Hegghammer, "Abdullah Azzam, l'imam du jihad," in *Al-Qaida Dans le Texte*, ed. Gilles Kepel (Paris: Proche Orient, 2005).

[118] Brown (2007), 9.

[119] For more on the internal divisions in the Afghan jihad, see Brooke (2008).

[120] Ibid., 212-15.

[121] Adel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al-Qa'ida* (London: Saqi Books, 2006), 45. For an account of the escalating rhetoric used by bin Ladin against the Saudi government, see the letters sent by bin Ladin,

The Far Enemy Turn

Even though al-Qa'ida blamed the United States and various international bodies (including the European Union, United Nations and NATO) for allegedly perpetrating crimes against Muslims throughout the 1990s, the group remained focused on the near enemy until the second half of that decade. During the early 1990s, bin Ladin was speaking of the "priority" of overthrowing the Saudi state, and Zawahiri was arguing as late as 1995 that "Jerusalem will not be opened until the battles in Egypt and Algeria have been won and until Cairo has been opened."[122] However the geopolitical tumult of the early 1990s caused some senior al-Qa'ida figures to begin to broaden their target calculus. In particular, the head of the shura council, Abu Hajer al-Iraqi (Mamdouh Mahmud Salim), began to lay down justifications for attacks on American military targets in the Middle East. To this effect, al-Iraqi issued two fatwas in the early 1990s justifying the accidental killing of innocents during jihad and attacks on American troops, respectively.[123] In 1996, bin Ladin followed by issuing a fatwa justifying attacks on the American military presence in Saudi Arabia entitled "A Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Expel the Infidels from the Arabian Peninsula)." Importantly, however, these early fatwas targeted the American military presence within the boundaries of Islamic lands. While they contained within them the seeds of the far enemy strategy, the fatwas remained closer to the defensive jihad doctrine articulated by 'Abdullah 'Azzam than to the innovation to come.Yet, on 23 February, 1998, bin Ladin, Zawahiri and an assortment of religious figures and militant leaders issued the "Statement of the World Islamic Front against the Jews and Crusaders." By explicitly threatening the so-called Zionist-Crusader alliance, the Front clearly established al-Qa'ida as dedicated to fighting the far enemy and abandoned the decades-old struggle against near enemy regimes in the

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under the auspices of the Advice and Reform Committee, specifically, Usama bin Ladin, "Our Invitation to Give Advice and Reform," 12 April 1994, AFGP-2002-003345; Usama bin Ladin, "Saudi Arabia Supports the Communists in Yemen," 11 July 1994, AFGP-2002-003345; Usama bin Ladin, "Saudi Arabia Unveils its War Against Islam and its Scholars," 12 September 1994, AFGP-2002-003345; Usama bin Ladin, "Higher Committee for Harm," 15 October 1994; AFGP-2002-003345. See also Usama bin Ladin, "The Betrayal of Palestine, 29 December 1994," in *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence (London: Verso, 2005).

[122] "The Mujahid Osama Bin Laden Talks Exclusively to Nida'ul Islam about the New Powder Keg in the Middle East," *Nida'ul Islam* (October-November 1996), 15. Tellingly, though bin Ladin condemns the American presence and speaks of expelling the Americans, he notes that the "most important goal would be to change the current regime." For Zawahiri's thought during this time, see Ayman al Zawahiri, "*Al-Tariq ila al-Quds yamurr 'abr al-Qahira* (The Road to Jerusalem Passes Through Cairo)," *Al Mujahidun*. See also Montasser al Zayyat, *The Road to al-Qa'ida: The Story of Bin Laden's Right-Hand Man*, trans. Ahmed Fekry (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 63-64.

[123] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (London: Penguin, 2007), 170-75. See also Moghadam (2008a), 129-33.

Muslim world. The document also formally expanded the definition of the far enemy by including the United States alongside Israel. Theoretically, at least, this union had a long pedigree. Among jihadists, and many Islamists, Israel's founding in 1948 was merely the logical continuation of the Crusades, the establishment of a foreign, western, non-Muslim outpost in Islamic lands. However for a number of reasons discussed below, it was not considered permissible to target the U.S. homeland or American civilians. The key premise of the World Islamic Front is summarized in one sentence from the fatwa:

> To kill the American and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty incumbent on every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the al Aqsa mosque (in Jerusalem) and the Holy Mosque from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim.[124]

Decades of confrontation between jihadist groups and purportedly apostate regimes in Egypt, Algeria, Syria and throughout the Middle East had left the jihadist groups battered and broken while the regimes remained firmly in control of their countries. The success of the regimes in beating back the jihadist's challenge, bin Ladin reasoned, was largely due to the close and continuing economic, military and political alliances between those governments and the West. The West used the puppet regimes in the Middle East to guarantee Israel's security, provide cheap oil and check the Islamic revival. As bin Ladin explained to Peter Arnett in the spring of 1997, "our main problem is the U.S. government while the Saudi regime is but a branch or an agent of the U.S."[125] Therefore, according to bin Ladin, it was better to concentrate on the real power and source of control rather than to "squander" any further resources by continuing the campaign against near enemies.[126] As bin Ladin justified it to recruits at his camp, "leave them [apostate regimes] alone and do not preoccupy yourselves with them. They are scum…When they witness the defeat of the United States, they will be in their worst situation."[127]

Despite bin Ladin's justifications, veterans of the assorted jihads against the local regimes in Egypt and elsewhere assailed the 1998 World Islamic Front. The most explosive reactions came from Zawahiri's compatriots in al-Jihad. Besides learning

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[124] Usama bin Ladin, et al., "Declaration of the World Islamic Front Against the Jews and Crusaders, 23 February 1998," in Lawrence, 61.

[125] Peter Arnett, "Interview with Osama Bin Laden," *CNN,* March 1997.

[126] John Miller, "Interview with Osama Bin Laden," *ABC News*, May 1998.

[127] "Al-Qa'ida from Within: As Narrated by Abu Jandal, Bin Laden's Personal Guard," *Al Quds al Arabi*, 2 April 2005 (FBIS translation).

about Zawahiri's—and, by extension, their own—participation in the Front through the media, al-Jihad's leadership and cadres were thrown into disarray over the Front's expressed strategy of direct confrontation with the United States. Zawahiri's actions were all the more stunning because they negated the near enemy strategy sketched out by al-Jihad's founder, Mohammed Abdel Salam Faraj, twenty years earlier. According to one al-Jihad operative:

> The [1998] *fatwa* to kill the Americans contravenes the principles of Islamic *sharia*. It also contravenes the strategy and principles of the Jihad Organization, which believes that…it is more appropriate to fight the ruler than to fight a faraway enemy, like Zionism and imperialism.[128]

It seems that despite being supported by a small minority within al-Jihad (reportedly less than ten members endorsed the move), Zawahiri pressed on.[129] A decade after the decision the wound is still fresh. Writing in 2008, former al-Jihad leader Sayyid Imam al-Sharif accused Zawahiri of basing his decision to attack the United States on "criminal principles" (*ijaraamiyya al-mabaad'a*) that Zawahiri himself "invented" (*ikhtara'*).[130]

Joining bin Ladin and Zawahiri on the 1998 statement was a senior member of the Egyptian terrorist group al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group), Rifa'i Ahmed Taha. Like al-Jihad, al-Jama'a had historically targeted the Egyptian regime and, similar to the followers of al-Jihad, the al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya membership vocally protested their inclusion in the Front.[131] Less than six months after Taha signed the fatwa (apparently

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[128] Muhammad al-Shafi'i, "Fundamentalist Sources: Al Zawahiri Ousted Following Many Complaints in the Jihad Organization's Shura Council: Said the Call to Kill the Americans Contravenes the Principles of Islamic Shari'ah and the Organization's Strategy," *Al Sharq al Awsat*, 27 January 2000 (FBIS translation).

[129] Muhammed al Shafi'i, "Al-Qa'ida's Secret Emails, Pt. 2," *Al Sharq al Awsat*, 14 December 2002 (FBIS translation).

[130] "*Sayyid Imam, Mufti "al Jihad," Yarid 'ala "Tabria al Zawahiri" al-Halaqa al-Thalatha, al-Rajal al-Thani fi Tanzim al-Qa'ida Makhaada'*" (Sayyid Imam, the Leader of al Jihad, Responds to Zawahiri's "Exoneration," Part 3: The #2 Man in the al-Qa'ida Organization, the Deceiver), *Al Masri al Youm*, 21 November 2008. Regarding this series of articles by Sayyid Imam, I rely in part on the summary translations and analysis by William McCants at jihadica.com.

[131] The spiritual leader of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, the "Blind Shaykh," was found guilty for his involvement in a series of plots targeting New York City landmarks during the early 1990s. However, it appears that 'Abd al-Rahman was acting in his personal capacity and not as the leader of the al-Jama'a organization. Al-Jama'a never specifically targeted Americans, nor claimed any attacks on American targets outside Egypt. For an early statement of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya's strategic reasoning, see Dr. Naajeh Ibrahim, Asim Abdul Maajid and Essam ud-Deen Darbaalah, *In Pursuit of Allah's Pleasure* (London: Al Firdous, Ltd., 1997). Al-Jama'a has since deradicalized. See Omar Ashour, "Lions Tamed? An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalizaton of Armed Islamist Movements: The Case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 4 (Autumn 2007).

after not consulting the group's leadership), al-Jama'a leaders forced him to issue a statement clarifying that the group had no interest in attacking Americans.[132] The al-Jama'a prison leadership soon issued its own statement expressing its "full support for the stance of our brothers abroad in distancing ourselves from the anti-American front."[133]

Al-Qa'ida's new direction was seen by many as a serious risk, and the decision did not go unchallenged. Dissents were advanced on theological as well as practical grounds. Primarily, bin Ladin's new strategy seemingly contravened a Qur'anic imperative, verse 9:123, which reads in part: "fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness." Similarly, some have made the case that the 1998 fatwa's blanket justification for murder solely on the basis of nationality was not supported by the sharia.[134] There were also discussions during this time, particularly in "Londonistan," about the extent to which Muslims in non-Muslim countries were bound by a "covenant of security" not to harm the countries which had granted them entry.[135]

Practically, one leading personality in the jihadist movement argued that in order to maintain international support, jihad must adhere to geographic boundaries. Broadening the jihad to liberate Palestine risked uniting Western opposition to al-Qa'ida.[136] Others just wanted no part of a conflict with the United States. For instance, as the amir of an independent group in northwestern Afghanistan, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi had refused bin Ladin's entreaties to join al-Qa'ida because Zarqawi was focused on the near enemy, specifically Jordan.[137] A Jordanian militant told German interrogators that Zarqawi's group "was specifically for Jordanians who didn't want to

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[132] Muhammed al Shafi'i, "Al-Qa'ida's Secret Emails, Pt. 3," *Al Sharq al Awsat* (UK), 15 December 2002 (FBIS translation).

[133] Diaa Rashwan, "Struggle Within the Ranks," *Al Ahram* (Egypt), 5 November 1998.

[134] "*Sayyid Imam, Mufti "al Jihad," Yarid 'ala "Tabria al Zawahiri" al-Halaqa al-Thaniyya, Ayman al-Zawahiri Khan al-Imana wa sarq Kataba al-Jami'a,"* (Sayyid Imam, the Leader of al-Jihad, responds to Zawahiri's "Exoneration," Part 2: Ayman al-Zawahiri corrupted and stole the book "al-Jamia' (the Compendium)"), *al Masri al Youm*, 19 November 2008.

[135] See, for instance, Anthony McRoy, "There Can Be No End to Jihad: Islamist Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, in an exclusive interview, discusses the rationale for 9/11, the Christians he most respects, and the Jesus he defends," *Christianity Today*, 2 January 2005; Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006). See also the series of audio lectures by London-based shaykh Abu Baseer al-Tartusi, available on his website, www.altartosi.com.

[136] Abu Walid al-Misri, "The Story of the Arab Afghans from the Time of Arrival in Afghanistan until their Departure with the Taliban," *Al Sharq al Awsat* (UK), 9 December 2004 (FBIS translation).

[137] Loretta Napoleoni, *Insurgent Iraq: Al Zarqawi and the New Generation* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 95. See also Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "Who is Abu Zarqawi? What We Know About the Terrorist Leader Who Murdered Nicholas Berg," *Weekly Standard* (24 May 2004).

join al-Qa'ida."[138] Zarqawi's mentor, the widely-cited Jordanian theologian Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, had also been a consistent advocate of targeting the near enemy.[139] Around the time of bin Ladin's 1998 fatwa, al-Maqdisi gave an interview in which he stressed:

> I believe and continuously pronounce that carrying out Jihad against the enemies of Allah who substitute His *sharia* and are overpowering the *ummah* today, is one of the most important obligations that should take the interest of the Muslims. In fact, in my opinion, it is more important than and given preference over the Jihad against the Jews who occupy Palestine.[140]

Even inside al-Qa'ida there was skepticism about the new strategic direction. A June 2000 email from an al-Qa'ida member to bin Ladin revealed the heated discussions over the decision to target the far enemy:

> Everything is subject to negotiations except [the infallible *sharia*], and consequently, the Movement came up with a strategy that identifies the original non- believing enemy [the far enemy] whereas it focused in the past on renegade non-believers [the near enemy] who they considered as more dangerous than the original non-believing enemy and thus, from the *sharia* point of view, fighting them is more obligatory than the original non- believing enemy. We support this trend in public thinking and discussing ideas in the open and in a healthy environment away from any psychological pressure practiced by some groups in their Movement.[141]

Beyond the strategic and theological questions arising from the issuance of the World Islamic Front, operational questions were also broached. One point of contention was how the shift to the far enemy would affect the Taliban. According to the *9/11 Commission Report*, the Taliban leadership was concerned that an al-Qa'ida attack on the U.S. would jeopardize its own planned major offensive against the Northern Alliance. Others inside al-Qa'ida protested that bin Ladin lacked the authority to override Mullah Omar's injunction against attacking the United States, which was binding because bin

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[138] German Interrogation Report, "Summary Interrogations S. Abdalla: UK and European Connections Plus Background Al Tawhid/ Zarqawi" (April 2002-May 2003), 2.

[139] For al-Maqdisi's influence in jihadist circles, see McCants (2006).

[140] "An Encounter Behind the Apostates' Bars in Jordan," *Nida'ul Islam* (Australia) (February-March 1998).

[141] Abu Huthayfa, "A Memo to the Honorable Sheikh Abu Abdullah (Bin Laden)," AFGP-2002-003251, 20 June 2000, 39.

Ladin had pledged loyalty to Mullah Omar.[142] Some were worried that provoking the United States risked not only the training camp archipelago built up by al-Qa'ida and other groups, but could also result in the destruction of the Taliban's nascent caliphate. As a trainee asked bin Ladin in the summer of 2000, "how is it that you raise the call to fight America, knowing that the Taliban wouldn't hear of such a thing, for reasons of the safety and security of Afghanistan (may God protect the Taliban)?"[143]

With the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the destruction of the Taliban government, these fears were realized. In his 2008 refutation of Zawahiri, former al-Jihad leader Sayyid Imam al-Sharif rhetorically asked if the benefits of destroying two buildings in America were worth the destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the only Islamic State?[144] Similarly, in his massive book, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, pre-eminent jihadist theoretician Abu Mus'ab al-Suri lamented the loss of the Taliban, using the words "genocide" and "extinction."[145] Finally, Abu Waleed al-Misri, editor of the Taliban's Arabic-language journal, wrote:

> Afghanistan, the strongest fortress of Islam in history, was also lost because of a series of losses that reached a disastrous level because of the deeds of Bin Laden in Afghanistan. This disaster is worse than the calamity of the Arabs and Muslims in their wars with the Jews in 1948, which the Arabs call the "catastrophe" and the 1967 war, for which they invented the term "Setback."[146]

The bombing of Tora Bora in December of 2001 and the attack on the Shah-i-kot Valley (Operation Anaconda) in 2002 further dispersed al-Qa'ida's network across the greater Middle East. But it also left unanswered broader questions about the movement's strategic directives. As Thomas Hegghammer writes:

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[142] *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: Norton, 2004), 251-52. Writing in 2008, Sayyid Imam argued that bin Ladin had innovated a principle, "the localization of leadership," which meant that bin Ladin only had to obey his amir (he had pledged to obey Mullah Omar) in matters pertaining to the geographic area controlled by the Taliban. See "*Sayyid Imam, Mufti "al Jihad," Yarid 'ala "Tabria al Zawahiri" al-Halaqa al-Thalatha, al-Rajal al-Thani fi Tanzim al-Qa'ida Makhaada'*" (Sayyid Imam, the Leader of al Jihad, responds to Zawahiri's "Exoneration." Part 3: The #2 Man in the al-Qa'ida Organization, the Deceiver), *Al Masri al Youm* (Egypt), 21 November 2008.

[143] "Some Administrative Documents," AFGP-2002-801138, 170, cited in Brown (2007), 17.

[144] "*Al-Maraja'at al-Thaniyya Litanzeem al Jihad, al-Halaqa al-Akheera, Sayyid Imam: Al Dawr al-Aska'ra al-Arab fi Jihad al-Afghani did al-Rus Ukdthuba,*" (Second Revisions of the Jihad Organization, Final Part: The Military Role of the Arabs in the Afghan Jihad Against the Russians are Lies), *Al Masri al Youm* (Egypt), 29 November 2008.

[145] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *Da'wa al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya al-Alamiyya* (Global Islamic Resistance Call) (n.p., 2004), 622, 730.

[146] Al-Misri.

> In 2002, the various local branches of the al-Qa'ida network were strategically disoriented, and it seemed that old ideological debates and dividing lines started reappearing. Not everyone agreed that the liberation of Afghanistan was the most important issue. What about Palestine? And what about the struggle against the local regimes in the Arab world?[147]

Iraq and the New Strategic Environment

The U.S. invasion of Iraq reoriented the jihadi movement. Abstract and theoretical debates about target selection seemed fatuous while thousands of American troops were in the heart of the Middle East. At the same time, the fact that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was seen by many mainstream Islamist figures as a legitimate case for resistance—for "defensive jihad"—helped tamp down the dissent which had arisen over the initial decision to target the U.S. homeland.[148] In addition to questions of strategy, it was also a question of efficacy. As one analyst of Saudi fighters in Iraq noted, "it was far easier to motivate people to fight the U.S. military in Iraq than to blow up cars in the streets of Riyadh."[149]

Iraq's unique geographic and cultural position was also important. The ease with which fighters could enter Iraq—through borders with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Iran and Turkey—meant that ingress was far easier than in Afghanistan. Once inside, linguistic and socio-cultural commonalities made functioning within Iraq easier, as well.[150] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri commented on these dynamics in his *Global Islamic Resistance Call*:

> Praise god, the enemy's military attack has put us within the borders of the same map, it is called the "middle area of operations" (*mantiqat al-a'maliyyat al-wusta*) and, in practice, it includes most of the states and countries of the Arab and Islamic world.[151]

The shifting strategic goal was more than just a tactical concession to the proximity of American troops or an acknowledgement that the invasion of an Islamic country

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[147] Thomas Hegghammer, "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 1 (Winter 2006), 14.

[148] For example, Yousuf al Qaradawi headlined a fatwa shortly after 9/11 that Muslims serving in the American military were permitted to take part in the invasion of Afghanistan. The text is here: http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/Qaradawi_et_al.htm. Contrast this to his (convoluted) statements on Iraq, which express support for violent resistance against occupying military forces. See, e.g., Essam Talima, "Islam Forbids Kidnapping, Killing Civilians: Qaradawi," *Islamonline.net*, 10 September 2004.

[149] Hegghammer (2006), 13.

[150] Ibid., 24.

[151] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, as quoted in Lia (2008), 368-69.

necessitated jihad. With the establishment of governments in Afghanistan and Iraq that explicitly and heavily rely on the American military presence, the U.S. became both the near and the far enemy.[152] As Shaykh Isa (aka Abd al-Hakim Hassan), a reputed senior figure in al-Qa'ida, argued, the presence of U.S. forces in Islamic lands changed the strategic calculus:

> Undertaking jihadi operations in countries that were ruled by Islam and then taken over by the enemy—like Afghanistan—are more obligatory and have greater priority than undertaking these operations in the abodes of the original infidels that Muslims have never conquered and in which Islamic law has never been applied—like America. Preserving capital has greater priority than new profit, especially when the person who has taken over Muslim abodes is an apostate.[153]

With the recognition of this new state of affairs, a strategy emerged which privileged the confrontation with Coalition forces in Iraq as a way to gain a secure foothold for further mujahidin operations, both within Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. This potentially solved one of the jihadist movement's most enduring problems. For instance, when Zawahiri reflected on his jihadist experience in Egypt in the 1980s and 1990s, he recalled:

> The problem of finding a secure base for jihad activity in Egypt used to occupy me a lot, in view of the pursuits to which we were subjected by the security forces and because of Egypt's flat terrain which made government control easy… Such a terrain made guerrilla warfare in Egypt impossible.[154]

Similarly, one of the earliest documents purporting to examine jihadist action in Iraq noted that an American loss in Iraq would furnish the jihadist movement with "an advanced base" from which to spread the jihad.[155] In his 2008 question and answer

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[152] Brian Fishman, "After Zarqawi: The Dilemmas and Future of al Qaeda in Iraq," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2006), 19-32.

[153] As cited in William McCants, "Shaykh 'Isa on Near Enemy Vs. Far Enemy," *Jihadica.com*, 12 June 2008, http://www.jihadica.com/shaykh-isa-on-near-enemy-vs-far-enemy/.

[154] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner: Meditations on the Jihadist Movement," *Al Sharq al Awsat* (UK), 3 December 2001 (FBIS translation). This is a theme that has repeatedly arisen inside jihadist circles. See "Lessons Learned from the Jihadi Ordeal in Syria," AFGP 2002-600080, 23-24; "A Short Report on the Trip from Nairobi," AFGP-2002-600113; Naji, 15-19; Brown (2007), 100.

[155] Hegghammer (2006), 33 (quoting *Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Dangers*).

session, Zawahiri similarly cited the importance of "a secure base and mobilization of popular support" in order to facilitate the jihad.[156]

Because of Zawahiri's experiences in al-Jihad, and given the lessons learned from other jihadist campaigns across the Middle East, a high priority was put on establishing this base as hastily as possible. In a list of stages included in his July 2005 letter to Zarqawi, Zawahiri placed the establishment of an Islamic emirate after only the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq.[157] However, pressures from the Awakening Councils and the beginnings of the so-called surge pushed up the timeline. With Zawahiri's prodding, al-Qa'ida in Iraq announced the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in western Iraq in mid-October 2006. One of the justifications cited by ISI ideologue Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi for the establishment of the Islamic State was the need for a secure base for jihadist activity in Iraq and abroad.[158]

To many, however, the establishment of an Islamic State was done abruptly and without fulfilling the necessary theological requirements.[159] Serious critiques were leveled by personalities like Kuwait-based Hamed al-Ali and the London-based Abu Baseer al-Tartusi, who questioned the ISI's ability to control its territory and implement sharia law, as well as the ISI's decision to appoint the relatively unknown Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi as its leader.[160] Probably in response to these criticisms, in April 2007, al-Baghdadi named a series of cabinet ministers, clearly attempting to project competence and control.[161]

The Near Enemy and the Emergence of a Hybrid Strategy

The March 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent emergence of a significant al-Qa'ida presence there had a noticeable impact on jihadist strategic formulations. With the base provided by the ISI in western Iraq in hand, al-Qa'ida's leadership began to make the case that a confrontation with Israel was forthcoming. As the leadership explained it, however, confrontation with Israel would only occur after jihadists had

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[156] "The Open Meeting With Shaykh Ayman al Zawahiri: Part 1," *As Sahab*, 2008.
[157] The text of this letter is online at http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-10-05.pdf.
[158] Uthman Bin Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, *Informing the People About the Birth of the Islamic State of Iraq* (2007), 109. An excellent analysis of this document is Brian Fishman's *Fourth Generation Governance: Shaykh Tammimi Defends the Islamic State of Iraq* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).
[159] For a summary of the initial reactions, many skeptical, see Marc Lynch (Abu Aardvark), "Al-Qaeda Declares Islamic Iraqi State," *Abuaardvark.typepad.com*, 17 October 2006, http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2006/10/alqaeda_declare.html.
[160] Brachman, Fishman and Felter, 12-15.
[161] See Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi's 19 April 2007 videotaped statement, released by the Islamic State of Iraq through the *al Furqan* Foundation for Media Production, in which he names the cabinet ministers of the Islamic State of Iraq.

gone through the near enemy "cordon states" that stood between the ISI and Jerusalem.[162] In effect, the jihadist community was returning to a focus on the near enemies, but explicitly noting that a conflict with Israel would follow.[163] Thus, as Abu Bakr Naji, whose book *The Management of Savagery* is a serious and pragmatic analysis of jihadist strategy, argues:

> By the permission of God, with the exit of America from Iraq, what remains of its deceptive media halo will collapse and every regime which supports it will fall… After that, the throngs will apply themselves (by the aid of God) to liberating Jerusalem and that which surrounds it and liberating Bukhara, Samarkand, Andalusia, and all of the lands of the Muslims. Then we will begin liberating the earth and humanity from the hegemony of unbelief and tyranny through the power of God.[164]

In another example of this strategic shift, in 2007, Zawahiri gave a progress report on the stages he laid out two years earlier in the letter to Zarqawi.[165] In an interview with al-Qa'ida's *Al-Sahab* media production arm Zawahiri assessed:

> The Jihad in Iraq today, by the Grace of Allah, is moving from the stage of defeat of the Crusader invaders and their traitorous underlings to the stage of consolidating a Mujahid Islamic Emirate which will liberate the homelands of Islam…and raise the banner of Jihad as it makes its way through a rugged path of sacrifice and giving towards the environs of Jerusalem, with Allah's permission.[166]

Speaking on the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Israel in May 2008, bin Ladin invoked Saladin's campaign to retake Jerusalem to argue that "the only way to reach Palestine is to fight the governments and parties that surround the Jews, for they stand between us and them [the Jews]."[167] Similarly, in a March 2009 audio release bin Ladin offered that "a sufficient force of Mujahidin must be formed to lift the blockade from Palestine so they can help our family there, because all the Arab cordon states have

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[162] An early mention of the "Cordon States" concept is in "al-Qa'ida from Within: As Narrated by Abu Jandal, Bin Laden's Personal Guard," *Al Quds al Arabi* (UK), 2 April 2005.

[163] See also Thomas Hegghammer, "The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 9 (2009).

[164] Naji, 144-45 .

[165] Ayman al-Zawahiri's 2005 letter to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi describes four specific stages: 1. Expel the Americans from Iraq; 2. Establish an Islamic Authority in Iraq; 3. Confront the regimes on Iraq's borders; and 4. Attack Israel (although this could be done in the preceding stages as well). See Zawahiri (2005).

[166] "Ayman al Zawahiri's Third Interview,"*Al-Sahab*, May 2007.

[167] Usama bin Ladin, "Message to the Umma on the 60th Anniversary of Israel," *Al-Sahab*, 18 May 2008.

closed their borders with Palestine and are guarding them from the movement of the Mujahidin."[168] He went on to single out Jordan because, among other reasons, "half its residents are from the people of Palestine."[169]

There are precedents for the cordon states argument. Historically, jihadists had noted the difficulty of attacking Israel, given the massive security apparatuses of the Arab states devoted to keeping their borders with Israel calm. Omar Abdel Rahman, the "Blind Shaykh," pointed to this in an early interview with Hizballah's *al-Ahd*:

> But if we in al-Jihad are going to fight Israel from Egypt, with Egypt being in the state of capitulation in which it is in, our government would not help us. It would turn us over to the Jews in accordance with the Camp David Agreement which stipulates that Egypt arrest all those who oppose the Jews and turn them over to them.[170]

A similar dynamic undoubtedly led some to go fight in Iraq against the Americans even though Israel was far closer to home. For instance, when the journalist Nir Rosen asked a Lebanon-based member of Zarqawi's network why he fought in Iraq rather than next-door Israel, he responded: "It's impossible to go fight in Palestine, the Arabs closed the borders, Jordan, Syria."[171]

By returning to Faraj's twenty-five year old argument and making explicit that an attack on Israel will follow an attack on the near enemies, al-Qa'ida is able to address one of its most significant weaknesses. Despite the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being perhaps bin Ladin's preeminent grievance, al-Qa'ida has battled the perception that it is unwilling, or unable, to attack Israel.[172] Although the 1998 fatwa promised to liberate Jerusalem by

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[168] Usama bin Ladin, "Practical Steps to Liberate Palestine," *Al-Sahab*, 14 March 2009.

[169] Ibid.

[170] "Al Jihad in Egypt: What Is It? How Does It Think? What Does It Want?," *Al-'Ahd* (Lebanon), 17 January 1987 (FBIS translation). Though the interview was published in 1987, the introduction states that this is a "reprinting." Other evidence suggests that this interview took place in the late 1970s or early 1980s, primarily because 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman ceased to be the amir of al-Jihad around late 1981 or early 1982, as the group split after Sadat's assassination over the issue of *imarat al-darir* (the leadership of the blind), in which members of al-Jihad, including al-Zawahiri, argued that 'Abd al-Rahman's blindness disqualified him from being the group's amir. 'Abd al-Rahman went on to serve as the leader of al-Jihad's competitor al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya.

[171] Nir Rosen, "Al-Qa'ida in Lebanon: The Iraq War Spreads," *Boston Review* (January/February 2008).

[172] On the importance of Palestine to bin Ladin, and the misperceptions that have emerged on this issue, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Osama Bin Laden's True Priorities," *Guardian* (UK), 3 December 2007; Sayyid Zayed, "*al-Qa'ida"…Bayna al-Tahreedh ala al-Jihad wa al-Tahjoum ala Hamas*" (al-Qa'ida…between inciting to jihad and the attack on Hamas), *Islamonline.net*, 6 January 2008. However, an argument can be made that bin Ladin and Zawahiri are simply using the importance of the Israel-Palestinian dispute to mobilize Muslims against the United States.

confronting the United States, ten years on al-Qa'ida has no serious attack on Israel or Jewish interests to claim, and on issues related to Palestine, the organization has been all but eclipsed by its ideological rival Hamas. This impotence vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is arguably the group's largest liability.

This perception was on full display when Ayman al-Zawahiri took a series of public questions in early 2008. One poster, who ironically titled himself "Geography Teacher," asked:

> Excuse me, Mr. Zawahiri, but who is it who is killing with Your Excellency's blessing the innocents in Baghdad, Morocco and Algeria? Do you consider the killing of women and children to be Jihad? I challenge you and your organization to do that in Tel Aviv. Why have you—to this day—not carried out any strike in Israel? Or is it easier to kill Muslims in the markets? Maybe it is necessary [for you] to take some geography lessons, because your maps only show the Muslims' states.[173]

Former al-Jihad leader Sayyid Imam al-Sharif similarly taunted Zawahiri in their recent public debate by saying Zawahiri and bin Ladin have offered the Palestinians nothing more than slogans and lip service.[174]

Al-Qa'ida has tried to deflect its irrelevance vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestinian conflict by offering excuses or vague promises that attacks are forthcoming. For instance, in a early 2009 question and answer session produced by the al-Qa'ida-affiliated Global Islamic Media Front, jihadist internet personality "Asad al Jihad2" (Lion of Jihad) strongly hinted at an al-Qa'ida presence in the Palestinian territories, but noted that it would be announced publicly only after a huge attack on Israel.[175] A few days later, during Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip, al-Qa'ida was caught flat footed, forcing Zawahiri to explain away al-Qa'ida's lack of action:

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[173] "The Open Meeting With Shaykh Ayman al Zawahiri: Part 1." The Combating Terrorism Center's *Power of Truth* charted that ninety-three out of 1,888 total questions dealt with Hamas. See Brachman, Fishman and Felter, 18.

[174] "*Al-Maraja't al-Thaniyya Litanzeem al Jihad, al-Halaqa Thamina: Sayyid Imam: al Zawahiri Yaqlib al-haqa'q Mithal Jamal Abdel Nasser*" (Second revisions of the Jihad organization, part 8: Al Zawahiri Distorts the Facts like Gamal Abdel Nasser), *Al-Masry al-Youm* (Egypt), 27 November 2008.

[175] "*Al-Jaza' al-Awal al-Ijooba al-Khasa al-bilqa'a: Anta Tasa'l wa Asad al-Jihad 2 Yajeeb*" (Answers to the First Part of The Special Meeting: You Asked and Asad al Jihad 2 Answered), *Global Islamic Media Front*, 12 January 2009. Asad al-Jihad2's identity is unknown, however the fact that his interview was prepared and released by the al-Qa'ida organ GIMF signals his importance. Adbul Hamid Bakier, a Jordanian analyst, advances the idea that Asad al-Jihad2 may be Egyptian al-Qa'ida figure Muhammed Khalil Hukaymah, however this is open to debate. See Abdul Hamied Bakier, "Al-Qa'ida Outlines it's Strategy Seven Years After 9/11," *Terrorism Focus* 5, no. 35 (1 October 2008).

> My Muslim and Mujahed brothers in Gaza and the rest of Palestine; We are with you in the battle, striking the Zionistic-Crusader alliance wherever we got enabled of it, and we are proceeding to you promptly, and soon we will—by Allah's might—destroy the borders and constraints that prevent us from reaching you, the withdrawal of Americans from Iraq is a good omen for approaching you by Allah's might.[176]

Geopolitical developments in 2005 and 2006 had already created a difficult situation for al-Qa'ida. In January 2006, the Islamist movement Hamas won parliamentary elections in the Palestinian territories and formed the Palestinian government. This was a powerful testimonial to its support in the Palestinian territories and posed a serious challenge to al-Qa'ida's ideological project.[177] Al-Qa'ida appeared even more impotent after Hizballah's huge boost in popularity following its battle against Israel in the 2006 war.[178]

Increasing the rhetorical focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while also presenting a plan to enter the Israel-Palestinian arena through cordon states, allows al-Qa'ida to potentially release some of the pressure that has built up on the organization as a result of its inaction against Israel. Such actions also allow al-Qa'ida to leverage the centrality of the Israel-Palestinian dispute to Muslims to further its specific near enemy objectives of overthrowing apostate governments in the Arab Middle East.

Rhetoric portraying a particular, local struggle as part of a broader campaign to liberate Jerusalem increasingly appears in the rhetoric of both al-Qa'ida Central and affiliated groups. Zarqawi's final public comments before his June 2006 death proclaimed "we fight in Iraq and our eyes or [sic] on Bait al Maqqdis (Jerusalem). We fight in Iraq and

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[176] Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Gaza Massacre and the Traitor's Seige," *Al-Sahab*, 6 January 2009. A similar theme was later presented by bin Ladin in his audiotape "A Call for Jihad to Stop the Assault on Gaza," *Al-Sahab*, 14 January 2009.

[177] Al-Qa'ida has historically been unable to either infiltrate operatives into the Palestinian territories or radicalize the Palestinian population due to Hamas's ideological and physical presence. "*Muaskarat al-Tadreebeet 'Alneet…wa Yanshat wa Faq Tafahum Gheer Maktoob ma' "Hamas"…"Jaish al Umma" Tanzeem Usooli fi Qitaa' Gaza Martibt Aqa'idan bi al-Qaeda wa Fatah al Islam*" (Open Training Camps…and Active Without the Written Agreement of Hamas…the Jaish al Umma Fundamentalist Organization in Part of Gaza is Linked Ideologically to al-Qa'ida and Fatah al Islam), *al Hayat* (UK), 2 September 2008. See also Ulrike Putz, "Compared to us, Hamas is Islamism Lite," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), 18 July 2008; Fadhil Ali, "al-Qa'ida's Palestinian Inroads," *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 8 (2008); Fadhil Ali, "Hamas Arrests Pro-Al-Qa'ida Leader of Jaysh al Umma in Gaza," *Terrorism Focus* 5, no. 34 (24 September 2008).

[178] See, for instance, the poll numbers in Shibley Telhami, "2008 Annual Arab Public Opinion Poll," *Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland* with *Zogby International*, 95-97, http://www.brookings.edu/topics/~/media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf.

our eyes are on Makkah and Madinah."[179] Similarly, the January 2009 re-launch of the combined Saudi-Yemeni al-Qa'ida affiliate was announced with a video entitled "From Here We Begin and In Jerusalem We Meet." In his March 2009 audio release, bin Ladin explicitly linked the fight in Iraq (the near enemy) to the future liberation of Jerusalem (the far enemy): "The rare and valuable opportunity for those honest in their desire to deliver al-Aqsa (Jerusalem) is in backing the Mujahidin in Iraq with everything they need in order to liberate Mesopotamia."[180]

Risks and Benefits of a Hybridized Strategy

The renewed focus on Iraq and the cordon states surrounding Israel and other near enemies in the Islamic world has eased the establishment of franchise relationships with local jihadist groups. An analysis by the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point charted the broadening of the al-Qa'ida umbrella:

> Between 2003 and 2007, al-Qa'ida aligned itself with [ten] new and extant groups (excluding affiliated groups operating in Iraq). Through these gains, al-Qa'ida increased its presence in at least [nineteen] countries, conducting operations in Europe, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and West Africa.[181]

Because al-Qa'ida seeks to cultivate relationships with local groups, concessions must be made to those specific local issues and grievances that are used to mobilize supporters.[182] For instance, in recent video messages, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi each tied local and regional Somali issues to al-Qa'ida's larger, globalized narrative, portraying the fighting in Somalia as part of the larger jihad and offering al-Qa'ida's support for the jihadists' project in Somalia.[183] Another important indicator of the importance of maintaining this local link can be seen in the taxonomy of current and former al-Qa'ida affiliate groups. Nearly all append the al-Qa'ida name to a specific geographic marker: al-Qa'ida in Iraq, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, etc. While adhering to the near enemy strategy, al-Qa'ida allows these groups a broader degree of autonomy in their specific operations. According to Zawahiri, "the objective is to remove the corrupt, apostate regime and set

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[179] "Dialogue with Sheikh Abu Musab al Zarqawi, Part 2," *Al Furqan*, 2006, http://www.jihadunspun.com/intheatre_internal.php?article=106976&list=/home.php.

[180] Usama bin Ladin, "Practical Steps to Liberate Palestine," *Al-Sahab*, 14 March 2009.

[181] "Al-Qa`ida's Five Aspects of Power," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 1 (January 2009), 4.

[182] On the importance of personal experiences and the local narrative to the radicalization process, see Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), ch. 4.

[183] See, e.g., Ayman al-Zawahiri's 22 February 2009 release "From Kabul to Mogadishu," or al-Qa'ida lieutenant Abu Yahya al-Libi's 12 February 2009 release commenting on the situation in Somalia.

up the Islamic government," although "the means of change differ from one territory to another."[184]

Yet, in practice, the convergence of strategies has created a new dynamic in some affiliate groups. Rhetorically juxtaposing near and far enemies by admitting both as major targets in a group's specific targeting calculus offers benefits, but muddying the strategic directives can also threaten a group's organizational cohesion.

The experience of the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in Central Asia offers some insights into the risks and benefits of strategic ambivalence. The IJU split from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 2002 because IJU leaders wanted to attack the far enemy, while the IMU rejected that strategy.[185] The IJU's first attacks 2004 in Tashkent, however, targeted both near enemy Uzbek government installations as well as far enemy Israeli and American diplomatic targets.[186] In a May 2007 interview, the IJU's leader, Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih, continued to blend the organization's targets:

> One of the armed forces of the union is activate [sic] in Afganistan [against Coalition forces]. Besides, we have been in contact and also been working on our common targets together with Caucasian mujahedeen. We have also been working together on plans and aims against [sic] infidel regime of Özbekistan [Uzbekistan] which is one of our major targets.[187]

However, the IJU's most recent operations have targeted far enemies. A few months after Fatih's interview appeared, American authorities notified their German counterparts of a planned attack on the U.S. military base at Ramstein, Germany, as well as on a number of Uzbek and American diplomatic targets in Germany. The attacks were to be carried out by European-based IJU operatives who had been trained in Pakistani camps and possibly directed by al-Qa'ida lieutenant Abu Laith al-Libi, who was killed by a missile strike in Pakistan in January 2008.[188] As in Spain, the attacks in Germany were timed to precede the parliamentary vote over German participation in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Enduring

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[184] "The Open Meeting With Shaykh Ayman al Zawahiri: Part 1."

[185] The best summary of the IJU-IMU relationship available is Guido Steinberg, "A Turkish al-Qa'ida: The Internationalization of Uzbek *Jihadism*," *Strategic Insights* (July 2008). See also Guido Steinberg, "The Islamic Jihad Union: On The Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism," *SWP Comments* (April 2008). A slightly different account is Cerwyn Moore, "Uzbek Terror Networks: Germany, the Jamoat and the IJU," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 21 (November 2007).

[186] "United States Designates Uzbek Group as Terrorist Organization," *America.gov*, 26 May 2005.

[187] "A Chat With the Commender [SIC] of the Islamic Jihad Union Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih," 31 May 2007, http://www.minbar-sos.com/forum/mediatheque/2647 chat_commender_islamic_jihad_union_ebu_yahya.html. See also Steinberg (2008b).

[188] Steinberg (2008a).

Freedom, and mobilize German public and parliamentary opinion against those issues.[189]

Since the arrests of the so-called Sauerland cell in Germany in the summer of 2007, IJU statements have continued to stress that the German mission in Afghanistan makes Germany and German interests legitimate targets.[190] In October 2008, a German convert to Islam, Eric Breininger, appeared on an IJU video to warn that the IJU had "declare[d] war on every country fighting alongside the Americans against Muslims. So the German people have to approach their own government if they want to be spared from the attacks of Muslims in Germany."[191] This followed an April 2008 video in which Breininger praised a fellow German suicide bomber and encouraged German Muslims to join the jihad.[192] Following an attack on the German Embassy in Kabul in January 2009, al-Qa'ida released a new video, entitled "A Rescue Package for Germany," featuring a German-speaking al-Qa'ida member warning that Germany's operations in Afghanistan had made it a legitimate target.[193] However, it remains to be seen if the organization's recent and pronounced drift towards an internationalist line targeting "Jews and Crusaders" and abandonment of attacks on the Uzbek government will mean severing the organization's local link and adversely affect the organization's ability to recruit and maintain members.

Since the IJU's split from the IMU in 2002, the group has seemingly retained its organizational cohesion, despite an ambiguous target set. This is not the case in the Algerian jihadist community. In September 2006, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced that the Algerian *Groupe Salafiste Pour la Prédication et le Combat* (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, or GSPC) had joined the al-Qa'ida network.[194] In January 2007, the group cemented the announcement by officially changing its name to Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Despite a long-standing focus on the near enemy Algerian government, since 2001, the GSPC's rhetoric against France, the far enemy, increased in

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[189] "Islamic Jihad Union Threatens Attacks Outside Germany, *Der Spiegel* (Germany), 12 September 2007. For a summary of German political views on these issues, see Jan-Thilo Klimisch, "Afghanistan: Germany Extends Troop Mandate While Fighting PR Battle at Home," *Eurasianet*, 17 October 2008; James Blitz, "Poll Shows EU Resistance on Afghan War," *Financial Times*, 19 January 2009.

[190] "Al-Qaeda moves Germany up on hit list: officials," *AFP*, 9 February 2008.

[191] Eric Breininger, "The Call from the Hindu Kush," *Badr al Tawhid,* 10 October 2008.

[192] For more background, see Yassin Musharbash, "German Islamist Resurfaces by Video from Afghanistan," *Der Spiegel* (Germany), 22 October 2008**.**

[193] Abu Talha the German, "*Khatha al-Unqaadth Lialemaniyya*" (The Rescue Package for Germany), *Al-Sahab,* 17 January 2009.

[194] "Hot Issues: The Second as Sahab Interview with Ayman al Zawahiri," *Al-Sahab,* 10 September 2006.

anticipation of a relationship with al-Qa'ida.[195] A 2005 message even named France as the group's primary target.[196]

The bloody, unpopular and ultimately unsuccessful struggle of near enemy Algerian jihadist groups such as the GIA throughout the 1990s was likely a reason the GSPC tried to recast itself as fighting the far enemy Jews and Crusaders. Yet, the new internationalist focus and relationship with al-Qa'ida has reportedly caused a number of GSPC members, including some key leaders, to leave the group.[197] On 11 March 2009, for example, North African media reported that 134 members of AQIM had surrendered based on invitations towards national reconciliation headed by former GSPC leader Hassan Hattab.[198]

Expanding a particular group's target list and keeping the actual strategic dictates vague does offer advantages. For instance, it broadens the group's appeal to potential recruits. By sourcing grievances to both near and far enemies, the group offers a narrative that can monopolize the ideological space inside a community and prevent the emergence of competitors. However, as the GSPC/AQIM case shows, the long-term lack of tight strategic guidance can have deleterious effects on group cohesion.[199]

Challenges for U.S. Policy

Al-Qa'ida's strategic adaptations, as well as its organizational decentralization, pose a number of challenges for U.S. policy. Primarily, this conflict's center of gravity is shifting back towards the Middle East. Coupled with al-Qa'ida's plans for the cordon states, the presence of fighters who have been trained in the Iraq conflict and formed transnational connections there means that flare ups of the type witnessed in Lebanon in 2007 will likely increase in frequency across the Middle East. As the authors of the Combating Terrorism Center's review of the Sinjar records of al-Qa'ida in Iraq summarized:

> The Iraq war has increased Jihadi radicalization in the Muslim world and the number of al-Qa'ida recruits. Foreign fighters in Iraq have also

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[195] A number of GSPC communiqués from before the official merger are available online, http://gspc-algerie.50webs.com/pages/bay.html. For background, see Steinberg and Werenfels, 407-13.
[196] Lianne Kennedy Boudali, *The GSPC: Al-Qa'ida's Newest Franchise in the Global Jihad* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, April 2007), 2-3.
[197] Geoff D. Porter, "Splits Revealed Inside Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 17 (14 September 2007); "Murder in the Maghreb," *Economist* (15 February 2007); Boudali, 6.
[198] "Review of al-Qa'ida Activities in North Africa 1-14 Mar 09," *BBC Monitoring*, 14 March 2009.
[199] For a somewhat different view, see Thomas Hegghammer, "New Issue of Sada al-Malahim," *Jihadica.com*, 19 January 2009, http://www.jihadica.com/new-issue-of-sada-al-malahim/.

> acquired a number of useful skills that can be used in future terrorist operations, including massive use of suicide tactics, organizational skills, propaganda, covert communication, and innovative improvised explosive device (IED) tactics. Some AQI fighters that have already trickled out of Iraq have bolstered violent movements in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. This trend will likely continue.[200]

Given the potential for further conflict emanating from the Iraq war, the United States must ensure that regional allies, particularly those bordering Israel, are fortified against al-Qa'ida operations in their countries. However, care must be taken to ensure that this increasing ability to prevent and disrupt jihadist activity does not become a cover to further constrict the political space in these countries. Political liberalization is an important tool for actually undermining the appeal of violent radicalism. [201] While taking regional and local contexts into account, the United States must steadily push for legal and political reforms in Middle Eastern countries.

Al-Qa'ida's inability to undertake operations in Israel and the Palestinian Territories continues to constitute a serious strategic weakness. There is a link between the declining support for al-Qa'ida and the group's increasing rhetorical focus on Israel in recent years. Al-Qa'ida surely understands the potential reservoir of support available should the organization manage to carry out a significant attack against Israel. But rhetoric will only go so far. As Zawahiri's question and answer session showed, al-Qa'ida's excuses are wearing thin. Absent the popular boost that would come from being able to shove its way into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, al-Qa'ida will continue to lose supporters and alienate the broader Islamic world through its extreme violence and dogmatism.[202]

It is therefore in the interests of the United States to ensure that al-Qa'ida continues to be prevented from attacking Israel proper. In addition to fortifying allied cordon states such as Jordan and Egypt, the United States must forge a workable relationship with regional actors hostile to American policy, such as Syria, Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Despite their hostility to Israel and aspects of U.S. foreign policy, Hamas and Hizballah have been largely successful in thwarting the attempts of

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[200] Fishman (2008a), 7.

[201] See Steven Brooke and Shadi Hamid, "Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited," *Policy Review*, no. 159 (1 February 2010).

[202] When al-Qa'ida has attacked near enemy targets in Jordan and Algeria, it has seriously depleted its support. In addition, the spasm of violence that wracked Iraq, particularly in 2004 and 2005, alienated many potential supporters and sapped a desire for similar confrontations elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Salafi jihadists, including al-Qa'ida, to access the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[203] Hamas and Hizballah's ability to blend political Islam with resistance to Israel poses a powerful ideological challenge for al-Qa'ida. As the previously mentioned CTC analysis argues, Iran, Hizballah and Hamas "present the most significant obstacles to al-Qa'ida's strategic messaging efforts."[204] As antagonistic as these entities are to U.S. policy in the region, the possibility must be considered that al-Qa'ida would be the primary beneficiary if these entities, especially Hamas, were to suddenly and chaotically lose support.

Finally, the U.S. must recognize the importance of attacks in Europe to al-Qa'ida's new strategy. Starting around mid-2007, al-Qa'ida messages and intelligence reports began to point to the increasing likelihood of attacks in Europe. These attacks are meant to serve al-Qa'ida's goals in the Middle East, specifically preserving the Islamic State of Iraq and retaining and strengthening the power of al-Qa'ida and the Taliban along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.[205] The attacks on Europe are linked to the idea propagated by al-Qa'ida strategist Abu Bakr Naji, who stressed the importance of mounting attacks elsewhere to relieve the pressure on jihadist safe havens.[206] While the context of Naji's statements seem to suggest a focus on near enemies, for instance attacking one area of a country to draw the security forces away from a jihadist safe haven, the strategy is seemingly being applied on a larger scale regarding the far enemy. The planned attacks in Europe are designed to split the alliances between the United States and European nations by inflaming the divide between popular attitudes and government policies. As troops pull out of contested areas in Iraq and Afghanistan, the jihadist havens in these areas will benefit. Besides the high-profile attacks in Spain (11 March 2004) and the UK

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[203] See Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's 1 June 2006 audio release in which he assails Hizballah for "stand[ing] guard against Sunnis who want to cross the border." See also Usama bin Ladin, "Practical Steps to Liberate Palestine," *Al-Sahab*, 14 March 2009.

[204] "Al-Qa`ida's Five Aspects of Power," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 1 (January 2009), 2.

[205] Usama bin Ladin, "Message to the European Peoples," *Al-Sahab*, 29 November 2007. See also Jason Burke, "Target Europe," *Guardian*, 9 September 2007; "The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland," *National Intelligence Estimate* (July 2007); Souad Mekhennet and Michael Moss, "Europeans Get Terror Training Inside Pakistan," *New York Times*, 10 September 2007; Mike McConnell, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community" (February 2007); Mike McConnell, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community" (February 2008); "The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas," *Government Accountability Office*, Report GAO-08-622 (April 2008), 3. However, this reorienting has likely been slowed somewhat by the targeting of mid-level al-Qa'ida lieutenants in Afghanistan and Pakistan. See James Gordon Meek, "Unleashed CIA Zapped 8 Qaeda Lieutenants Since July," *Mouth of the Potomac Blog (New York Daily News)*, 18 January 2009.

[206] Naji, 40, 46, 76-77, 197.

(7 July 2005), attacks have been foiled in other European countries, such as Germany, where opposition to participation in the so-called war on terror is deemed strongest.[207]

The U.S. should pre-empt this strategy by working closely with European allies, especially those, like Germany, involved in the NATO ISAF mission. On the structural side, Europeans should become further invested in the planning and execution of NATO missions. A good start would be Barry Posen's innovative suggestion that a European officer be appointed as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander-Europe (SACEUR).[208] This would create a more equitable burden sharing arrangement and help smooth cooperation in a notoriously fractious command structure.

On the mission side, ISAF should explore negotiations with factions of the insurgency, including the Taliban, in an effort to isolate al-Qa'ida and affiliated groups. Once violence abates, European elements can be either redeployed out of Afghanistan or utilized in targeted missions that enjoy higher support among their respective publics. Despite the influx of American troops, this conflict is unlikely to be solved by military means alone. Especially given the increase in Afghan civilian casualties that will likely accompany further military operations, American policymakers should be open to the possibility that victory in the Afghan context may simply mean preventing the emergence of a Taliban-dominated (but not Taliban-free) government.

[207] For a fuller discussion, see Robert S. Leiken, *Europe's Angry Muslims* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 2010).
[208] Barry Posen, "Name A European SACEUR," *Advice to President Obama* (Boston: MIT Center for International Studies, 2009).

Chapter 4: Al-Qa'ida Central and Local Affiliates

Vahid Brown

Introduction

Ever since its inception, al-Qa'ida has sought to position itself as a vanguard within the broader milieu of violent Sunni Islamism. Defining itself as the forefront standard-bearer of global jihad, al-Qa'ida has worked for over two decades to rally disparate groups and individuals from throughout the Muslim world behind its vision of inter-civilizational conflict. Given this self-definition, al-Qa'ida's core organizational objectives have as much—or more—to do with influencing processes of violence as they do with initiating them. Since the early 1990s, al-Qa'ida has pursued this quest for influence through an aggregation strategy, an ongoing effort to enlist a variety of jihadist groups operating in different parts of the world under the al-Qa'ida banner and in pursuit of al-Qa'ida's global aims. This strategy has been beset from the beginning with critical problems and has entailed significant setbacks, both for al-Qa'ida and for the groups with which it has forged alliances. The present chapter seeks to identify the fault lines that have served to frustrate al-Qa'ida's aggregation efforts and to place them within the historical context of the emergence and evolution of transnational jihadism.

Contrary to the prevailing perceptions of al-Qa'ida in much of the policy and research literature, this study concludes that al-Qa'ida has been a marginal actor in the larger drama of international Islamist militancy. The following detailed history of al-Qa'ida's relations with peer organizations in the pre-9/11 period, drawing on an abundance of often under-utilized primary sources, finds that on balance, al-Qa'ida's quest for influence has been in vain, and that the scope of that influence has been greatly exaggerated.

Al-Qa'ida's Double Bind

While a multitude of factors have complicated or undermined al-Qa'ida's efforts to achieve its desired status of influential vanguard, several of which are explored in depth in other chapters of this volume, the present discussion will highlight two central and inter-related tensions that have proven, throughout al-Qa'ida's history, to be fundamental obstacles to its strategic aims. The first, which will be termed the global/local dichotomy, pits the global scope of al-Qa'ida's stated project against the local or national concerns of the militant actors it seeks to influence and ultimately co-opt.[209] The second tension, which I term the global/classical dichotomy, relates to al-

[209] Insightful and eloquent analyses of the global/local dichotomy in contemporary Islamist violence can be found in Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon*

Qa'ida's radical reinterpretation of the concept of jihad, an interpretation that has long been contested by more authoritative and influential clerical proponents of a classical delimitation of legitimate jihad to the defense of Muslim lands against non-Muslim aggressors.[210] In effect, al-Qa'ida asks local actors to abandon the particular grievances that drive their revolutionary struggles in favor of its vision of globalized civilizational conflict, while couching such appeals in a framework of religious justifications that depart radically from traditional Islamic understandings of jihad.

As will be shown below, the interplay of these two tensions function as a double bind. On the one hand, al-Qa'ida's globalist ideology and objectives marginalize it in specific theaters of violent political contestation, where local and national grievances and motivations are more salient to the mobilization of militancy (the global/local dichotomy). On the other hand, in the global, pan-Islamist arena, al-Qa'ida's doctrine of global jihad is marginalized by the religiously more authoritative exponents of classical jihad (the global/classical dichotomy). There is, in other words, an acute and unresolved tension between the political and religious dimensions of al-Qa'ida's identity and mission. Al-Qa'ida's religiously justified hostility to any Islamic political identity narrower than ideological citizenship in the Umma renders its voice irrelevant to all but the most marginalized actors in specific, real-world political contexts.[211] At the same time, the tactical expediency of al-Qa'ida's political methods, in addition to the fact that its leadership is composed of life-long political violence specialists with no objective religious credentials, leaves it highly vulnerable to attacks on its religious legitimacy from ideological competitors in the broader Islamist community and, more specifically, from other violent Islamists.

Al-Qa'ida's Organizational Genetics: The Afghan Origins

Al-Qa'ida's current efforts to unify disparate Islamist groups and struggles into a global conflict against the so-called Zionist-Crusader alliance evolved from the unique context

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(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Jean-Pierre Filiu, "The Local and the Global Jihad of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib," *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 213-26; Mamoun Fandy, *Saudi Arabia and the Politics of Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); and, from a social movement theory perspective, Roel Meijer, "Yusuf al-Uyairi and the Transnationalisation of Saudi Jihadism," in *Kingdom Without Borders: Saudi Arabia's Political, Religious, and Media Frontiers*, ed. Madawi al-Rasheed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 221-43.

[210] I am indebted here to Thomas Hegghammer's analyses of "classical" versus "global jihadism," especially in his *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010). I am grateful to Dr. Hegghammer for sharing a copy of his manuscript with me. Hegghammer also develops the categories of "classical" and "global jihadism" in Hegghammer (2008), 706.

[211] On "ideological citizenship," see Rougier (2007), 183.

that gave birth to the organization in the first place: the 1980s anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. But it was also in this original context that al-Qa'ida's double-bind problems first emerged. The central tensions that have constrained the effectiveness of the aggregation strategy are thus a part of al-Qa'ida's organizational DNA.

The anti-Soviet Afghan jihad was the first great aggregator of Islamist militants from throughout the Muslim world, bringing together thousands of foreign volunteers and witnessing the parallel erection of international networks of propaganda, recruitment and resource mobilization on behalf of Afghanistan's beleaguered Muslims.[212] The "Afghan Arabs," as the foreign volunteers came to be known, were initially a very small group, numbering in the tens at most through the first half of the 1980s, steadily increasing during the 1986 to 1989 period, and then growing much more markedly between 1989 and 1992, the only period during which significant numbers of foreign fighters actually participated in battle.[213] The earlier arrivals were mainly involved in providing relief and support services and hailed from a handful of countries, including Egypt, Algeria, Syria and the Arab Gulf states.[214] By the end of the Afghan jihad, however, citizens of more than forty countries were represented, with most nationalities having their own separate guesthouses in Peshawar.[215]

The organization at the heart of this global mobilization effort was the Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), led by 'Abdullah 'Azzam and funded largely by his wealthy Saudi

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[212] On this mobilization, see Camille Tawil, *al-Qa'ida wa akhawatuha: qissa al-jihadiyin al-'arab* (London: Saqi, 2007), 13ff.; Basil Muhammad, *al-Ansar al-'arab fi Afghanistan* (Riyadh: Lajnat al-birr al-Islamiyya, 1992); 'Abdallah Anas, *Wiladat al-afghan al-'arab* (London: Saqi, 2002); Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin, 2004); Vahid Brown, "Foreign Fighters in Historical Perspective: The Case of Afghanistan," in Fishman (2008a), 16-31; Thomas Hegghammer, "The Origins of the Muslim Foreign Fighter Phenomenon" (forthcoming).

[213] Tawil (2007); Mohammed Hafez, "*Jihad* after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32 (2009), 75. The battles involving large groups of Afghan Arabs during these years thus all occurred after the Soviet withdrawal, and centered on the cities of Jalalabad, Khost and Gardez in eastern Afghanistan. The largest numbers of Afghan Arabs fought around Khost, a battle space under the overall command of Jalaluddin Haqqani. See Mustafa Hamid Abu'l-Walid al-Masri, *Tharthara fawq saqf al-'alam* (distributed online, 2007-2009), vols. 4 (on the battle of Jalalabad), 8 (on Khost), and 9 (on Gardez). Lengthy accounts of these battles from another Afghan Arab can be found in Abu Qudama Salih al-Hami, *Fursan al-farida al-ghayba* (posted to jihadi internet forums, 2007), *passim*.

[214] On the early establishment of medical and other humanitarian infrastructure in Peshawar, see Muhammad; Hami, 684f. (section on "Afghanistan and the doctors' jihad").

[215] On the early Afghan Arabs, see Tawil (2007a), 13-44; on the vast diversity of the Afghan Arabs' country-of-origin by the later years of the jihad, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 130; Hami, 311-15; Fazul 'Abdallah Muhammad's eyewitness account of the plethora of guesthouses (*mudhafat*), including one for fellow-countrymen from the Comoros Islands, in *al-Harb ala'l-Islam* 1 (posted to a jihadi internet forum, February 2009), 56f.

lieutenant, Usama bin Ladin.[216] The MAK, headquartered in offices in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, began in 1984 to create a series of camps on the Pak-Afghan border that provided training and indoctrination to the international volunteers, who were eventually divided into three groups based on region of origin.[217]

The question of how to train these varied individuals, as well as the potential uses of the pool of international graduates both within and beyond Afghanistan, proved to be divisive issues for the MAK leadership and led to a split between 'Azzam and Bin Ladin, and indeed to the eventual emergence of the al-Qa'ida organization. 'Azzam insisted that the training of the foreign volunteers should be limited to religious indoctrination and guerrilla warfare instruction, and that the foreigners' military involvement within Afghanistan should be subordinated to the needs and direction of the Afghan mujahidin leadership. As for possible post-Afghanistan uses of the MAK-trained jihadis, 'Azzam consistently maintained that the first priority after victory in Afghanistan should be the liberation of Jerusalem and the Palestinian lands, though he never formulated a specific strategy for such an eventual shift of the battle front. Bin Ladin, on the other hand, felt that the Arabs should form and train independent units to fight on the Afghan fronts, in order to prepare "the nucleus of an Islamic army capable of fighting jihad anywhere in the world," not just in Palestine and not strictly against uniformed (non-Muslim) combatants deemed enemies of Muslim populations.[218] For Bin Ladin and the growing number of Egyptian revolutionary jihadis that became his allies during this period, the legitimate zones of jihad were not limited to Muslim territories invaded by a non-Muslim aggressor—like Soviet-occupied Afghanistan or Israel-occupied Palestine—but included revolutionary struggles against apostate

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[216] On 'Abdallah 'Azzam and the MAK, see Thomas Heggehammer, "Abdallah Azzam, the Imam of Jihad," in *Al Qaeda in its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 81-101; 'Abd al-Rahim 'Ali, *Hilf al-Irhab: Tanzim al-Qa'ida min 'Abdallah 'Azzam ila Ayman al-Zawahiri, 1979-2003* 1 (Cairo: Mahrusa, 2004).

[217] 'Abdallah Anas, one of the co-founders of the MAK and 'Abdallah 'Azzam's son-in-law, describes the division of these volunteers into three "tribes": non-Arab Asians, Gulf Arabs (including Kuwaitis, etc.) and people from Egypt and North Africa. See Peter Bergen, ed., *The Osama Bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 41f.

[218] Ayman Sabri Faraj, *Dhikriyyat 'Arab Afghan Abu Ja'far al-Masri al-Qandahari* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002), 24; Tamim al-'Adnani, the deputy to 'Azzam until 'Adnani's death in 1988, described the differences between bin Ladin and 'Azzam in the following terms: "Shaykh 'Abdallah 'Azzam and I sought to connect the youth directly to the Afghans and in service to the Afghans, while Abu 'Abdallah [bin Ladin] was of the view that the Afghan cause had benefited us more than we could benefit it individually. It was as if [bin Ladin] wanted us to gain from the jihad more than we gave to it, whereas we wanted to give to the jihad more than derive benefit from it." Abu'l-Walid al-Masri, *Ma'arik al-bawwaba al-sakhriyya* (n.p.: 1995), 230. All translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise indicated.

regimes within the Arab Muslim world.[219] With this in mind, Bin Ladin began at the end of 1986 to establish his own training camps in Paktia, Afghanistan, in which the curriculum was expanded from ideology and guerrilla warfare to include clandestine organizational and terrorist tactics.[220] Two years later, Bin Ladin and his Egyptian supporters secretly established the al-Qa'ida organization, which was independent of the infrastructure of the MAK and began to directly compete with the MAK for camp recruits.[221] A year after the establishment of al-Qa'ida, on 24 November 1989, 'Abdallah 'Azzam was assassinated in Peshawar,[222] though the MAK and especially its Sada training camp would continue to pursue the distinct organizational objective of servicing the classical jihad in Afghanistan and, after 1992, the series of similar classical jihad hotspots in Bosnia, Chechnya and Southeast Asia.[223]

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[219] On bin Ladin's focus on the Arab world at this early stage, and on the Arabian Peninsula in particular, see the Harmony Document AFGP-2002-600086, translated and discussed in Brown (2007), 8-10. See also Faisal Devji's provocative contextualization of bin Ladin's focus on the "fantasy island" of Arabia. Faisal Devji, "The 'Arab' in Global Militancy," in al-Rasheed (2008), 283-99.

[220] At the time that these camps were established, Paktia was inclusive of Khost, which is now an independent province. In terms of the current administrative divisions of Afghanistan, al-Qa'ida's first camps were in the vicinity of Jaji, Paktia; Khost City, Khost Province; and the Zhawar valley of southeastern Khost Province.

[221] On the foundation of al-Qa'ida, see Tawil (2007a), 30f., the primary sources in Bergen (2006), 76-81, and Harmony Documents AFGP-2002-000078, AFGP-2002-000080, AFGP-2002-600175, and AFGP-2002-600178. On the competition between MAK and al-Qa'ida camps, see Faraj, 24f.; Hudhayfa 'Azzam, interview with Saad Silawi, "Liqa' Khass," *Al-Arabiya*, 26 July 2005, http://www.alarabiya.net/programs/2005/07/28/15351.html. The notion that the al-Qa'ida organization did not exist as such in the late 1980s or early 1990s and "was never intended to be called *al-Qaeda* by the original leaders of the group," (Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009], 169), but was first called this by the FBI, a notion that was first popularized by Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2003), 5f., and defended more recently by Flagg Miller, "*Al-Qa'ida* as a 'pragmatic base': Contributions of area studies to sociolinguistics," *Language and Communication* 28 (2008), 386-408, is simply incorrect and is belied by an abundance of documentary evidence. In addition to the sources cited in this note, see Harmony Document AFGP-2002-600104, an internal al-Qa'ida memo dated August 1994, which refers explicitly, repeatedly and unambiguously to the activities of "al-Qa'ida" *as an organization* in 1993 and 1994 in Peshawar, Khartoum and Somalia.

[222] 'Azzam's murder remains unsolved, and blame has been variously (and speculatively) assigned to the CIA, Mossad, the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, Zawahiri and bin Ladin himself, See Hegghammer (2005), 96; Bergen (2006), 92ff.

[223] The Sada camp was located near the town of Sada in the Kurram Tribal Agency of Pakistan. On Sada trainers in Bosnia and MAK/Benevolence International Foundation support for Bosnian and Chechen jihads, see *U.S.A. v. Enaam M. Arnaout*, 02 CR 892, N.D. Ill., Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Coconspirator Statements, January 2003, 22-25; on Sada trainees sent to Chechnya and the Philippines, see Fazul, 499; on the central role of Sada and other MAK camps in the Southeast Asian jihadi conflicts, see Ken Conboy, *The Second Front: Inside Asia's Most Dangerous Terrorist Network*

The factionalism and internecine conflicts among the Peshawar émigrés were by no means limited to the differences between Bin Ladin and 'Azzam, and the often bitter disputes ran along many of the same fault lines explored in other chapters of this volume. On this battlefield of polarization, groups associated with the Muslim Brotherhood were pitted against anti-regime revolutionaries, mainstream Sunnis against hard-line Salafis, non-Arabs against perceived Arab dominance and supporters of particular Afghan mujahidin parties against supporters of rival Afghan leaders.[224] Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) were the most notorious for their contentious activities.[225] In 1988, Zawahiri issued his book *Bitter Harvest*, a sweeping attack on the Muslim Brotherhood and everything it stood for, at a time when the Brotherhood and its proponents, including 'Azzam and 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani,[226] were responsible for the lion's share of the international recruitment efforts.[227] But *Bitter Harvest* was not simply an anti-Brotherhood diatribe; it also posed a direct challenge to the logic and religious legitimacy of the classical jihadism enunciated by 'Azzam.[228] Zawahiri argued that "fighting against the apostate rulers that govern Muslim lands

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(Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006), 45-57 and *passim*. Bin Ladin remained financially invested in these MAK enterprises, but al-Qa'ida's main operations were focused elsewhere, as discussed further below.

[224] The "battlefield of polarization" (*ma'arakatu'l-istiqtab*) is from Tawil (2007a), 43ff. See also Mishari al-Dhaydi, "Matbakh bishawar wa tabkha ghranata," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 15 May 2003 (thanks to Thomas Hegghammer for this reference).

[225] Algerian revolutionary jihadis earned a similar reputation during this period, and in 1988 a number of Algerians who would later help to form the GIA (one of whom—Qari Sa'id—would also later sit on al-Qa'ida's advisory council) issued an "indictment" against Afghan mujahidin leader Ahmad Shah Massoud for a list of alleged sins, including building special guesthouses at his base in Panjshir where he cavorted with European women. Their accusations even led to a "trial" of Massoud in Peshawar, in which 'Abdallah Anas represented Massoud in the latter's defense. See Tawil (2007a), 20-30, 151.

[226] Zindani led the Muslim Brotherhood organization in Yemen in the 1960s and 1970s, and went on in the 1990s and 2000s to become a leader of Yemen's Islah Party. Though not a Muslim Brotherhood party in the strict sense, Islah's "organizational and political backbone" is drawn from the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood. See Amr Hamzawy, "Between Government and Opposition: The Case of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform," *Carnegie Papers* 18 (2009), 3; Jillian Schwedler, "The Islah Party in Yemen: Political Opportunities and Coalition Building in a Transnational Party," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 211.

[227] See Tawil (2007a), 46f. The Muslim Brotherhood organization in Algeria—the *Harakat al-mujtama'a al-islami*—was, according to its own leaders, "responsible for the recruitment of the Algerian youth for the jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s." Muhammad Muqaddam, *al-Afghan al-Jaza'iriyun: min al-jama'a ila'l-qa'ida* (Rouiba: Mu'assasa al-wataniyya li'l-itisal wa'l-nashr wa'l-ishhar, 2002), 65.

[228] According to his son Hudhayfa, 'Abdallah 'Azzam was also the target of personal attacks from the EIJ leadership, including Zawahiri and Dr. Fadl (also known as "Imam al-Sharif" and 'Abd al-Qadir bin 'Abd al-'Aziz), who circulated leaflets in Peshawar accusing the MAK leader of being a stooge of the CIA and of misappropriating funds raised for the jihad. They refused to pray behind 'Azzam, and gathered with their supporters in a separate mosque in Peshawar. See Hudhayfa 'Azzam; Tawil (2007a), 48f.

takes precedence over fighting any others," including infidel aggressors, and that jihad against these governments until they were deposed was *fard 'ayn*, an individual duty incumbent upon all Muslims.[229] This represented a complete inversion of the argument put forward by 'Azzam in the mid-1980s, supported by mainstream shaykhs, that Muslims' first duty was to defend Afghanistan.[230]

The ideological and strategic rifts between 'Azzam on the one hand and Bin Ladin and Zawahiri on the other are extremely important to understanding the fault lines and pitfalls in al-Qa'ida's aggregation strategy. 'Azzam framed the anti-Soviet struggle as a religiously sanctioned war between Muslims and non-Muslim aggressors, and he did so in terms very much in line with the orthodox, traditional understanding of the concept of jihad.[231] This classical jihadism championed by 'Azzam resonated deeply among his global Muslim audience, and was key to the support that the MAK received from throughout the Muslim world, but especially from Saudi Arabia.[232] This support amounted to billions of dollars in direct aid to the Afghan mujahidin, but also took less-quantifiable if not equally important social forms in the Muslim world, the most significant of which being the clerical sanction of the Afghan jihad by the Sunni religious establishment.[233] Supporting 'Azzam's classical jihad buttressed the Islamic legitimacy of the Arab Muslim regimes that gave aid to the Afghan mujahidin, while at the same time raising the international stature and local political clout of the religious leaders that gave the Afghan jihad their imprimatur. Without these factors, the scale and success of the international mobilization for the anti-Soviet fight in Afghanistan would have been simply impossible.

'Azzam's model of jihadi activism was centrist, in that it built on mainstream Sunni religious discourse, was supported by the leading Sunni Muslim states, and had the backing of internationally renowned, mainstream religious scholars. In contrast, the global jihadism that Bin Ladin began to articulate in the early 1990s, deeply influenced by the radical Egyptian revolutionaries in his orbit, was fundamentally marginal: it was opposed to orthodox formulations of legitimate jihad, was antagonistic to the very regimes whose support made 'Azzam's classical jihad possible, and would prove to be

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[229] Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Hisad al-murr: al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi sittin 'aman* ("Jihad Group Editions," n.d.), 9, 14, 133, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=1259.

[230] See 'Abdallah 'Azzam, "The Defense of Muslim Territories Constitutes the First Individual Duty," trans. Thomas Hegghammer, in Kepel and Milelli, 102-9.

[231] This is not to say that 'Azzam did not utilize or refine the classical concept of jihad in sometimes innovative ways. On this, see Gerges, 136; Hegghammer (2005), 99-101.

[232] See Hegghammer (2010a)), Introduction.

[233] Ibid., ch. 1. Shaykh 'Abdu'l-'Aziz bin Baz, Yusuf al-Qaradawi and 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani all endorsed 'Azzam's argument on the duty to support the jihad in Afghanistan, and these endorsements were given prominence—and an international audience—in 'Azzam's *al-Jihad* magazine.

religiously repugnant (and politically untenable) to the most prominent Sunni clerics who supported the Afghan cause. This specific marginality of the al-Qa'ida project is among its greatest weaknesses and, as will be seen below, has seriously constrained its vanguardist ambitions.

The Legacy of the Afghan Jihad: Shifting Scales of Contention

As noted by Sidney Tarrow, the Afghan jihad produced a dramatic shift in the scale of contention for militant Islamism, offering "thousands of Islamist militants the chance to travel outside their own countries, meet others like themselves, and theorize the concept of jihad from the varieties of forms of action familiar from their home countries to a model for transnational military struggle."[234] This shift, however, was from the local/national to the international, *not* the global scale in terms of which al-Qa'ida, beginning in the early 1990s, would aggressively frame its version of jihad. Despite the anti-communist rhetoric of some of the Sunni Arab regimes and clerics that supported it, the Afghan jihad was not a global war between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* (the lands of faith and unbelief, respectively), but rather took place within a space of contention geographically circumscribed by the borders of Afghanistan. The internationalization of the Afghanistan conflict did produce a global constituency of militant Islamists—what I term the Peshawar diaspora—but al-Qa'ida's efforts to rally this constituency behind a further shift in the scale of contention, from the international to the global, would prove only marginally successful in subsequent years.

The trajectory of transnational Islamist militancy immediately after the Afghan jihad closely followed the paradigm of internationalization established in Peshawar. In this connection, it is important to distinguish between the national-revolutionary jihadis who participated in the Afghan jihad (primarily Egyptians and North Africans), and the classical jihadis who came to Peshawar without any prior connection to anti-regime violence in their home countries (e.g., the Gulf Arab volunteers). Saudi, Yemeni and other classical jihadis were responsible for much of the material and ideological resource mobilization for the Afghan jihad, a mobilization which their home-country regimes were happy to sponsor, as it provided these regimes a means of exporting Islamist violence, while at the same time raising their stature in the Muslim world as defenders of the Umma.[235] Anti-regime revolutionary jihadis, facing severe repression at

[234] Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 126.

[235] On Saudi "exportation" of jihadi activism, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihad, Yes, But Not Revolution: Explaining the Extraversion of Islamist Violence in Saudi Arabia," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 3 (2009), 395-416; Madawi al-Rasheed, "The Minaret and the Palace: Obedience at Home and Rebellion Abroad," in al-Rasheed (2008), 199-219.

home, found in Peshawar both a safe haven for their organizational leadership and direct access to the massive resource mobilization orchestrated by the classical jihadis.[236] Egypt's Jama'at al-Islamiyya (the Egyptian Islamic Group, or EIG) and Jama'at al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad, or EIJ) sought to harness what they could siphon off from this jihadi boomtown—money, recruits, weapons and military training—in order to reinvigorate their revolutionary struggle at home.[237] Both types of jihadi activism would continue along the same intertwined tracks of internationalization and instrumentalization into the 1990s, dominating the scene of transnational Islamist militancy, while al-Qa'ida's early efforts at global jihad fell largely below the radar.

After Peshawar: Bosnia, Algeria and Egypt

The jihadi *causes célèbres* of the early 1990s were Bosnia and Algeria. Besieged by Bosnian Serb and Croat forces after Bosnia declared independence in March 1992, the defense of the Muslims of Bosnia emerged as the next classical jihad after Afghanistan. In Algeria, the cancellation of elections in January 1992 that appeared to be favoring the Islamic Salvation Front party (FIS), and the subsequent Algerian military coup, sparked a violent rebellion by a number of revolutionary jihadi groups that would continue, at varying levels of intensity, into the present day. The massive resource mobilization infrastructure that Gulf Arab states had erected to support the Afghan jihad was now put to the service of the Bosnian jihad, while the Sunni clerical elites whose fatwas had legitimized pan-Islamic involvement in the Afghan conflict gave their highly-publicized sanction to Arab mujahidin volunteerism for the Bosnian war.[238] The Algerian struggle,

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[236] Leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Group and Egyptian Islamic Jihad were explicit about their instrumental intent with regard to participating in the Afghan jihad. See Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Fursan taht al-rayah al-nabi* ("Knights Under the Prophet's Banner") (n.p., 2001), ch. 6 ("Afghanistan: Emigration and Preparation"); Hani al-Siba'i's recollections, *apud* Tawil (2007a), 40f.; and AFGP-2002-600086, translated in Brown (2007), 8-10.

[237] The EIG and EIJ were by no means the first underground militant groups to exploit distant conflicts in this way; European and Latin American revolutionary groups representing many shades of ideology forged relationships with the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the late 1960s and 1970s in a similarly parasitic fashion. See Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univesity Press, 1995), ch. 4; Uri Ra'anan, ed., *Hydra of Carnage: International Linkages of Terrorism* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986), part 2, ch. 5.

[238] Thomas Hegghammer notes that the Saudi "High Commission" created in 1992 to raise funds for Bosnia had, in less than six years, "collected an astonishing SAR 1.4 billion (USD 373 million) from public and private donors. No other international cause has ever solicited a similar level of popular Saudi donations in such a short space of time." Hegghammer (2010a)), ch. 1. The Saudi shaykhs Nasir al-Din al-Albani, 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz and Muhammad b. 'Uthaymin all gave clerical backing to the Bosnian jihad, as did leading Muslim Brotherhood shaykhs Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Muhammad al-Ghazali. See Alison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 35, 41.

meanwhile, emerged as the great hope of revolutionary jihadism, drawing an unprecedented level of propaganda, recruitment and fundraising support for Algeria's Armed Islamic Group from Islamist activists in several European cities, most notably London.[239]

The conflicts in Bosnia and Algeria were intertwined by shared logistics networks, through which these two jihadi hotspots were also linked to another node of jihadi violence: Egypt. The Egyptian revolutionary groups—the EIG and EIJ—quickly established their presence in Bosnia, and their cadres were predominant among the leadership of the foreign mujahidin in Bosnia, as well as of the aid groups established to distribute and administer the influx of material support.[240] The GIA was also prominently represented in Bosnia, especially among the rank-and-file volunteers.[241] Anwar Sha'ban's EIG center in Milan recruited Algerians and other North Africans for the Bosnian conflict, where they received training that would later be put to use in the GIA's campaign of violence in Algeria and France.[242] The Egyptian groups, bolstered by their integration into the resource mobilization effort on behalf of Bosnia, decided that the time was ripe for a vast expansion of their campaigns of violence at home. Thus, 1992 saw the inter-related emergence not only of a well-funded classical jihad front, but also of simultaneous campaigns of anti-regime revolutionary jihadism in Egypt and Algeria, both of which were parasitically dependent on the instrumentalization opportunities afforded by the Bosnian jihad.[243]

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[239] See Pargeter, chs. 3, 4, 6; Lia (2008), chs. 5, 6; Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony Roberts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 303f.

[240] See Evan Kohlmann, *al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004). While Kohlmann's book documents the leading role of the EIG and GIA among the foreign mujahidin in Bosnia, his analysis is marred by a persistent and erroneous conflation of these and other groups with al-Qa'ida. This conflation error is nearly ubiquitous in English-language treatments of Arab fighters in the Bosnian war. See Marko Hoare's review article "Three Books on al-Qaeda in Bosnia," *Demokratiya* 13 (2008), 55-70, and the same author's *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 131-5.

[241] As noted by Pargeter, the foreign-fighter Mujahidin Brigade "consisted mainly of North African fighters," while the EIG leadership provided "the real theoriticians and political strategists of the Bosnian jihad." Pargeter, 35.

[242] With regard to the GIA's bombings in France in the early 1990s, Kohlmann, quoting a Western intelligence source, notes that a "significant number of conspirators deemed responsible for the GIA terror campaign 'came through Bosnia.'" Kohlmann, 143. On the GIA's responsibility for these attacks, see Kepel, 308f. A faction of the GIA known as *al-baqun 'ala'l-ahd*—"the covenant keepers"—was led during the mid-1990s by a veteran of the Bosnian war. See Muqaddam, 52.

[243] See Mohammed Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003). Hafez does not link the Algerian or Egyptian conflicts to Bosnia, but the data he presents support this connection. See in particular the tabulation of violent incidents committed by Islamist activists in Algeria and Egypt, on 36, figure 2.1; both countries saw a dramatic rise in such violence in 1992, and a precipitous decline in such indicents between 1995 and 1996, when the war in Bosnia was ended by the Dayton Accords. I am

These three conflicts thus extended the processes of internationalization of jihad that had begun in Peshawar in the late 1980s, and became the central focus of most of the Peshawar diaspora. Yet they remained peripheral concerns to al-Qa'ida, which instead maintained a focus on the Arabian Peninsula and Horn of Africa while developing its distinctive ideological platform of global jihad. Bin Ladin did send emissaries to Bosnia to explore al-Qa'ida's options there, but once it was learned that the Egyptian groups were dominating the situation, al-Qa'ida opted not to get further involved.[244] Al-Qa'ida also made early overtures to the Algerian groups, including the provision of material support, but the ideological riders attached to this support exacerbated the factionalism within the Algerian jihadis' ranks.[245] Bin Ladin provided financial support to the Egyptian groups as well, especially the EIJ under Ayman al-Zawahiri.[246] The Egyptian jihad would face serious setbacks and worsening financial problems in the mid-1990s, causing Zawahiri and the EIJ members loyal to him to move ever closer to al-Qa'ida's global jihad, but in the early 1990s, these groups remained focused on their anti-regime struggle in Egypt. For al-Qa'ida during this period, these fights were viewed as local struggles adhering to a too-limited jihadi logic. What jihadism needed was a grander vision, one that could unite a broader spectrum of militant activists—classical jihadis,

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not suggesting that the Dayton Accords were a causal factor sufficient to explain the collapse of the campaigns of violence in Egypt and Algeria, simply that the three cycles of violence were clearly inter-related.

[244] See Pargeter, 45; Khalid al-Hammadi's interview with "Abu Jandal" Nasir al-Bahri, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 19 March 2005. After 1998, however, some of the nodes of the Bosnian logistical network began working with al-Qa'ida and were implicated by European investigators in the so-called "Millennium Plot." See Muqaddam, 153ff.

[245] On al-Qa'ida's early support for the GIA, see Muqaddam, 80ff. Bin Ladin offered support to Mansur al-Miliyani, a founder of one of the first GIA units in Algeria, on the condition that Miliyani disavow his connection to the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), a rival opposition group with origins in the FIS; Miliyani did break with MIA and its leaders in 1991. See Lia (2008), 127. In this sense, bin Ladin was instrumental in creating one of the splits that would prove disastrous for the armed Islamist opposition, as the GIA's extreme ideological rigidity developed by the mid-1990s into an all-out war against all other jihadi factions operating in the country, eventuating in the withdrawal of support for the Algerian jihad from the international Islamist scene.

[246] See Wright, 185f. Bin Ladin's support in the early 1990s was a highly contentious issue among the Egyptian jihadis, who feared that bin Ladin's support would entail ideological influence that could divert attention away from the struggle in Egypt. There was also widespread mistrust of bin Ladin's reliability, and there are a number of references to unfulfilled promises of material support in the divisive correspondence between Zawahiri and other Egyptian leaders over Zawahiri's ties to bin Ladin. This correspondence was found on a computer that had belonged to Zawahiri, which was recovered by journalists in Kabul in 2001. On the discovery of the computer, see Alan Cullison, "Inside al-Qaeda's Hard Drive," *Atlantic* (September 2004). Muhammad al-Shafi'i published a series of correspondence from these files detailing the Egyptian jihadi groups' internal disputes and suspicions of Bin Ladin in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 13-19 December 2002, seven-part series entitled "Awraq al-Zawahiri al-sirriyya" ("Zawahiri's Secret Papers"). These are also discussed in Gerges, 122ff. and *passim*.

statist revolutionaries, irredentist rebels—under a single global strategy. What was needed, in other words, was a common enemy.

The Global Shift, Take One: Communism in Yemen

Ironically, the first global enemy identified by al-Qa'ida was one that it shared at the time with the United States: communism. Yet even in this form and at this early date, the al-Qa'ida project would suffer from the double-bind problem. As attested by the Harmony documents and other primary sources, in 1989 Bin Ladin's initial vision for al-Qa'ida's post-Afghanistan development was to establish and arm a jihadi movement in South Yemen in order to overthrow the South's communist regime.[247] Bin Ladin began pouring money into the country in the hopes of amassing arms and winning allies from among the leadership of Yemen's Islamists in the North, but this effort proved to be an unmitigated failure. 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, with whom Bin Ladin had enjoyed close relations as a fellow elite among the Peshawar émigrés, rebuffed Bin Ladin's appeals for support and refused to lend his clerical sanction or considerable political clout to Bin Ladin's plan for revolutionary violence in the South.[248] With the unification of the two Yemens into the Republic of Yemen in 1990, Yemen's politically-engaged Islamists, including Zindani's Islah Party, founded in the same year, pursued a path of political accommodation and eventually formed a unity government alongside Yemeni socialists, Ba'athists and Arab nationalists, further alienating them from Bin Ladin.[249]

Bin Ladin refocused his efforts at this time on instigating violent opposition to Yemen's unification transition government, but again he failed to win significant allies.[250] Most

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[247] See AFGP-2002-600086, in Brown (2007), 8-10; Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 774. It is important to note that even at this earliest stage, al-Qa'ida's strategy mingled anti-regime revolutionary violence with a globalist frame of contention.

[248] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 775. Zindani's and Muqbil's rejections of bin Ladin's overtures should not be taken to mean they totally eschewed violence against Yemeni communists during this period. See François Burgat and Muhammad Sbitli, "Les Salafis au Yémen . . . la Modernisation malgré tout," *Chroniques Yéménites* 10 (2002), ¶ 51, http://cy.revues.org/document137.html.

[249] See Sharif Ismail, *Unification in Yemen: Dynamics of Political Integration, 1978-2000* (MPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2007), 25.

[250] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 775, notes that several jihadi figures in Yemen who were close to bin Ladin—including Abu 'Umar al-Sayf, who went on to play a prominent role in the second Chechen jihad—did sign a declaration of excommunication (*takfir*) against the unity government, but he concludes that ultimately these would-be challengers were successfully co-opted by the Salih regime. On bin Ladin's relationship with Tariq al-Fadli, who briefly led a jihadi movement centered in Abyan in the early 1990s, see Bernard Rougier, "Yémen 1990-94: La logique du pacte politique mise en échec," in *Le Yémen contemporain*, ed. R. Leveau, et al. (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 112-14. Fadli also joined the Salih government after 1994. See Arafat Mudabish, "al-Fadli li'l-'Sharq al-Awsat': Lastu min 'al-Qa'ida," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 5 February 2010.

notably, Bin Ladin's attempt to garner support for revolutionary jihadism in Yemen from one of Yemen's leading Salafi shaykhs and "the fiercest critic of the Islamists' coming to power by way of unification with the 'atheists',"[251] Muqbil al-Wadi'i (d. 2001), was not only met with outright rejection, but drew acerbic denunciations of Bin Ladin from the famous scholar that continue to be circulated on Salafi and jihadist internet forums to this day.[252] Writing in 1996 about recent jihadi bombings in Saudi Arabia, Muqbil al-Wadi'i condemned those who deliver fatwas without knowledge or proper religious education to instigate revolution and anti-government sedition, and then writes:

> An example of such sedition is the sedition in Yemen that was planned and nearly accomplished by Usama bin Ladin, whom if told "we need twenty thousand riyals to build a mosque in such-and-such a country," would answer "I do not have such resources, but God willing I will give what I can within the limits of my capacities," yet if told "we need cannon, machine guns, etc.," would answer "take this hundred thousand or more riyals, and God willing there will be yet more." Later his machinations caught up with him, when he used his money in Sudan on farms and projects for al-Turabi (may God soil his face) who thus played him [Bin Ladin] for a fool…[253] I counsel all Sunnis to bear patiently their poverty and their injuries, even if from their governments, and to beware deceiving yourselves by saying "we will start a revolution and an uprising"; [in that] you shed the blood of Muslims, and the exalted Lord said in His noble Book, "*and he who slays a believer intentionally, then his abode is in hell eternally*."[254]

Muqbil's attacks on Bin Ladin's religious legitimacy also featured in popular audio cassettes of Muqbil's lectures, in one of which the Salafi shaykh addresses the wealthy

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[251] Burgat and Sbitli.

[252] An online search of the Arabic passage in question (see note to translation, below) yielded more than 20,000 hits, most of which appear to be forum postings. See, e.g, the Ana al-Muslim forum, posting dated 22 November 2006, http://www.muslm.net/vb/archive/index.php/t-176265.html; al-Jazeera Talk forum, posting dated 8 November 2007, http://www.aljazeeratalk.net/forum/archive/index.php/t-61676.html; Sahab Salafi Network, posting dated 6 July 2009, http://www.sahab.net/forums/showthread.php?t=369675.

[253] Muqbil's insult here involves a play on the Arabic word "taraba," to soil or make dusty, from which the name of the Sudanese Islamist leader is also derived, *turabi* meaning "of the soil," "the earthy," "the dust-covered," etc.

[254] Muqbil al-Wadi'i, *Tuhfat al-mujib 'ala as'ilat al-hadir wa'l-gharib*, chapter entitled "*man wara' tafjir fi ard al-haramayn?*," http://www.muqbel.net/files.php?file_id=5&item_index=15. The quote at the end of the passage is from Qur'an, 4:93.

jihadi pretender directly: "O bankrupt one—I mean to say, Usama bin Ladin—you're surrounded by none but qat-chewers, smokers and stinkers."[255] Bin Ladin was stung by these attacks, and is reported to have said to a gathering of guests that even if he were to forgive everyone who had harmed him during his entire life, he would still not forgive Muqbil al-Wadi'i.[256]

Al-Qa'ida's double-bind clearly frustrated its first attempt to take the lead in globalizing post-Peshawar jihadism. In terms of the global/local dichotomy, the political opportunities available to local Islamist leaders in Yemen trumped whatever value Bin Ladin's wider ideological struggle could claim to represent. On the level of the global/classical crux, Bin Ladin's entrepreneurial appeals to the religious legitimacy of his global jihad were vigorously contested by a clerical elite with unassailable Salafi credentials.[257] Failing to establish an operational foothold in Yemen, al-Qa'ida's leadership relocated to Khartoum, Sudan, and redirected its operational attention to Somalia. Meanwhile, events unfolding in the broader region caused al-Qa'ida to reframe its shift to a global scale of contention around a confrontation with the United States. This shift in the strategic logic of jihad would increasingly distinguish al-Qa'ida from other actors in the post-Peshawar transnational jihadi environment. It would also serve as the platform for al-Qa'ida's vanguardist ambitions, which from the mid-1990s began to take the form of direct appeals to other jihadi groups to unite their efforts behind al-Qa'ida's jihad against the Zionist-Crusader alliance.

The Global Shift, Take Two: America the Crusader

While there is disagreement in the sources and among historians as to the precise causes and personalities responsible for al-Qa'ida's transformation into a primarily anti-American jihadi organization, there is no question that a critical catalyst for this transformation was the first Gulf War.[258] Bin Ladin approached the Saudi regime in

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[255] From a lecture recorded in the early 1990s, quoted in Burgat and Sbitli. In a Salafi frame of reference, these are extremely serious criticisms, and are tantamount to a charge of impiety.

[256] This is reported by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 776, who claims to have been present when these sentiments were expressed.

[257] It should be noted, however, that Muqbil al-Wadi'i, while "classical" in his views of jihad, was not a proponent of 'Abdallah 'Azzam's "classical jihadism." In the 1980s, "Muqbil called for support for the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan, but asserted that fighting abroad is not a priority. Yemenis should rather focus on fighting the Marxist regime of South Yemen." Laurent Bonnefoy, "Salafism in Yemen: A 'Saudisation'?," in al-Rasheed (2008), 254.

[258] It is not possible here to comprehensively survey the different interpretations of al-Qa'ida's anti-American turn, but cf., for instance, Wright, 170ff., which emphasizes the role of Abu Hajar al-'Iraqi (Mamdouh Salim); Gerges, ch. 3, which explains the shift in terms of the evolving relationship between bin Ladin and Zawahiri; and, for an insider's perspective, Fazul, 145f., which claims that the "architect of the strategy" of al-Qa'ida's anti-American jihad was Mustafa Hamid Abu'l-Walid al-Masri, "whose great

1990 with an offer to deploy his transnational jihadi trainees in defense of the kingdom, but his offer was rebuffed and instead the United States was alloyed to deploy the forces of "Operation Desert Shield," which soon became "Operation Desert Storm."[259] From this point until 1997, al-Qa'ida focused its efforts and its rhetoric on attacking American interests in the Gulf region. Through the Advice and Reform Committee established in London, Bin Ladin voiced an increasingly hostile opposition to the Saudi regime and its alliance with the United States.[260] At the same time, al-Qa'ida embarked on clandestine military activities against what it viewed as American efforts to encircle the Arabian Peninsula, dispatching a team to Somalia that was to liaise with Somali Islamist insurgents and seek a means of countering the American deployment there under the aegis of "Operation Restore Hope."[261] According to Bin Ladin's former bodyguard Abu Jandal Nasir al-Bahri, after finding that the Bosnian front was being monopolized by the EIG in 1993, "Shaykh Usama decided to unite his efforts and focus on the U.S. forces in Somalia. This is because his expectations were based on the existence of a U.S. desire to turn Somalia into a rear U.S. base that parallels its presence in the Arabian Gulf."[262]

Al-Qa'ida's double bind continued to pose challenges to the organization's efforts on these fronts.[263] Most significantly, al-Qa'ida's anti-American turn would progressively alienate the organization from the authoritative sources of religious legitimacy that had been critical to the jihadi mobilizations of the 1980s. The Saudi clerical establishment, including grand mufti Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz, issued fatwas in 1990 authorizing the presence of American and other foreign troops to defend Saudi territory from Saddam Hussein.[264] This marked a critical break between the Saudi religious elites who had supported the Afghan jihad—and who would continue to support classical jihads such as Bosnia and Chechnya throughout the 1990s—and the jihadi current represented

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merit it was to have convinced the al-Qa'ida leadership to confront the United States of America" during secret meetings in Peshawar in 1991. All of these sources agree, however, that the Gulf War and the presence of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia provided the backdrop against which the anti-U.S. turn was made.

[259] On bin Ladin's offer, made to both Prince Sultan and Prince Turki, see Wright, 157f.; Coll, 221ff.

[260] On the Advice and Reform Committee, see Fandy, ch. 6.

[261] On al-Qa'ida's early operations is Somalia, see Combating Terrorism Center, ed., *Al-Qa'ida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2007); Fazul.

[262] Khalid al-Hammadi, "Former Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Discusses 'Jihad' in Bosnia, Somalia, Later Stage," *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 19 March 2005 (FBIS translation).

[263] Al-Qa'ida's frustrated attempts to forge enduring alliances with Islamist militants in Somalia during this period are documented in Combating Terrorism Center (2007).

[264] See Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 168.

by al-Qa'ida, which could no longer turn to such mainstream Salafi authorities in support of its cause. Instead, Bin Ladin would seek to make common cause with the Sawhist movement, the Saudi Islamist opposition that began during the Gulf War to denounce the Saudi regime's "betrayal" of Islam in allowing American forces on the sacred soil of *Bilad al-Haramayn*, "the Land of the Two Holy Sanctuaries."[265] The two most prominent leaders of the Sahwa, Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-'Awda, are mentioned frequently in al-Qa'ida communications during the 1990s, and are cited in the 1996 communiqué "Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula," Bin Ladin's first public declaration of jihad against the Zionist-Crusader alliance.[266] Yet, at the time that al-Qa'ida formally declared its jihad against U.S. forces in the Gulf, the Sahwist leadership was silenced by imprisonment in Saudi Arabia, and upon their release in 1999, al-Hawali and al-'Awda emerged as two of the most effective clerical critics of al-Qa'ida, declaring that violence carried out under the aegis of "Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula" was illegitimate.[267] Following the 9/11 attacks, the Saudi Sahwist leadership increased the scope and frequency of its opposition to al-Qa'ida, and has continued to routinely issue condemnations of al-Qa'ida attacks in the Arabian Peninsula and abroad.[268]

Qa'idat al-Jihad and the Global Jihad

While the global/classical crux increasingly narrowed the field of al-Qa'ida's potential sources for religious legitimization by the mid-1990s, Bin Ladin's deepening alliance with Ayman al-Zawahiri during the same period opened new horizons—and challenges—for the global/local expansion of the jihad. The EIJ's underground infrastructure in Egypt was decimated in 1993 after the failed assassination attempt on Egypt's prime minister Atef Sidqi, and the EIJ's leadership-in-exile was forced to abandon its sanctuary in Yemen and relocate to Khartoum.[269] Lacking financial resources and facing the prospect of being completely overshadowed in Egypt by the EIG's escalating campaign of revolutionary violence, Zawahiri and his EIJ cadres became financially dependent on al-Qa'ida.[270] Though initially Zawahiri viewed this merger as a temporary measure to keep EIJ afloat and ultimately carry on with its revolutionary struggle, his organization had effectively lost its capacity to sustain a

[265] On the Sahwa movement and its opposition to the Saudi regime during the Gulf War, see Madawi al-Rasheed, *Contesting the Saudi State: Islamic Voices from a New Generation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[266] See Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), 23-30, at 26.
[267] See al-Rasheed (2007), 83ff.
[268] Ibid.
[269] See Montasser al-Zayyat, *The Road to Al-Qaeda*, trans. Ahmed Fekry (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 57f.
[270] See Wright, 184ff.

campaign of violence within Egypt, and by 1997, the historical leaders of the EIG and EIJ had announced ceasefire initiatives from their prison cells in Egypt.[271] Under pressure from both the United States and Saudi Arabia, Sudan expelled Bin Ladin in May of 1996, and he was accompanied in his relocation to Afghanistan by Zawahiri and the remnants of the latter's EIJ.

Though the merger between Zawahiri's faction of the EIJ and al-Qa'ida was not publicly announced until the summer of 2001—when the hybrid organization changed its name to Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad, the official name of what is commonly called "al-Qa'ida Central"—the two groups had functionally and ideologically united by the mid-1990s.[272] Zawahiri's influence on the course of al-Qa'ida and its aggregation efforts from this point would prove decisive.[273] With the collapse of his *Vanguards of Conquest* EIJ cells in Egypt, Zawahiri sought to transform al-Qa'ida into the vanguard of the Umma. As noted by Fawaz Gerges, once Zawahiri had joined Bin Ladin's caravan, he "pressured the leaders of the religious nationalist jihadis to defect to Al Qaida" and "led a putsch within the religious nationalist camp and attempted to redirect the entire jihadist movement toward Bin Ladin's transnationalist path."[274] Three aspects of Zawahiri's enduring influence on al-Qa'ida would prove particularly consequential for the group's aggregation efforts: the expansion of the anti-U.S. battlefield beyond the Gulf region; the central importance attached to media efforts; and the "glocalization" of the jihad, in which local/national militant groups would be lobbied to reframe their anti-regime struggles in terms of the jihad against the Zionist-Crusader alliance.[275]

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[271] Indeed, in 1995, Zawahiri distributed an internal memo to the EIJ membership within Egypt and abroad calling for a suspension of violent operations due to a lack of sufficient resources. See Gerges, 129; Muhammad al-Shafi'i, "Awraq al-Zawahiri al-sirriyya," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 14 December 2002, part 2. On the ceasefire initiatives, see Hafez (2003), 131ff.; Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), ch. 5. Throughout the 2000s, these leaders issued lengthy "revisions" of their earlier jihadi positions, in the course of which they also took aim at al-Qa'ida and its doctrine and practice of jihad. This would prove particularly damaging to al-Qa'ida's legitimacy, as these Egyptian jihadis represent the leadership of the oldest organized jihadi revolutionary movements, and their earlier writings provided the ideological foundations for al-Qa'ida.

[272] On the official 2001 merger, see Tawil (2007a), 35; al-Shafi'i (2002c), part 4. Zawahiri had also publicly signalled his alliance with bin Ladin in February of 1998 with their joint declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders. See Lawrence, 58-62.

[273] For a discussion of the role of the Zawahiri/Bin Ladin relationship in the evolution of al-Qa'ida, see Gerges, ch. 3.

[274] Gerges, 120.

[275] In this sense, the "ideological hybridization" analyzed by Heggehammer, whereby al-Qa'ida's targeting strategies represent a hybrid focus on both the "far enemy" (i.e. against Western targets) and the "near enemy" (i.e. against regimes in the Muslim world), can arguably be dated to the latter half of the 1990s. Hegghammer dates this shift to the post-9/11 period. See Thomas Hegghammer, "The

A number of sources reveal that Zawahiri was committed to the pursuit of these objectives as early as 1995, the same year in which he called on the EIJ to cease operations within Egypt on account of incapacity. In his essay "The Road to Jerusalem passes through Cairo," which is often cited as evidence of his near enemy focus at this stage, Zawahiri actually situates the anti-regime struggle in Egypt in the context of a global jihad against the forces of infidelity. After criticizing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) for trying Islamist youth in security courts in Gaza, an act which Zawahiri claims revealed that the secularist Yasir Arafat was in alliance with the external enemy (*al-'adu al-khariji*), Zawahiri writes:

> In such wise have the battle lines been clearly drawn between the parties of infidelity—Western, Russian, Zionist and nationalist—and the mujahidin, the vanguard of the *umma*, and this is the reality that God Almighty commands us to grasp when He says in His book *fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together*.[276] The battles in Palestine, Algeria, Bosnia and Chechnya are all one war being waged on different fronts. As for the battle in Palestine…in consideration of the circumstances, the matter will not be settled and Jerusalem will not be liberated until the battles in Egypt and Algeria are settled…and not until Cairo is liberated.[277]

As shown by Steven Brooke elsewhere in this volume, these sentiments are largely consistent with al-Qa'ida's post-9/11 rhetoric and strategy.

Two other themes that would figure prominently in al-Qa'ida's relations with franchise groups after 9/11—the importance of media warfare and the need to reframe local fights as fronts against the Zionist-Crusader alliance—appear in a letter written by Zawahiri in 1995 and addressed to the infamous amir of the GIA at that time, Jamal Zitouni. Zawahiri's letter provided an outline of the ideology of Egyptian jihadism, emphasizing the importance of the writings of Sayyid Qutb and Dr. Fadl, and offered a series of strategic recommendations for the jihad in Algeria. In the course of his advice to the GIA leader, Zawahiri writes:

> The media war against the regime is no less important than the military war, especially as the regime is thoroughly embroiled in all manner of corruption—ideologically, ethically, politically and financially—leaving it

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Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 9 (November 2009). See also the chapter in this volume by Steven Brooke.

[276] Qur'anic verse 9:36.

[277] "The Road to Jerusalem Passes through Cairo" (originally published in *al-Mujahidun,* April 1995), http://www.tawhed.ws/dl?i=4wwr6wa8. The ellipses are in the original.

> vulnerable on these grounds to media assaults. Thus it is necessary that the mujahidin's operations have a media orientation toward issues of concern to the people. The effects of the operations in this regard must therefore be carefully studied before they are carried out… Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that the Islamist movements must adopt the confrontation with Israel and America, so that they attract the masses to the fight and to the critical strike against the regime.[278]

Zawahiri's appeals were flatly rejected by Zitouni, who responded with a scathing letter that denounced the ideological foundations of the Egyptian jihadi groups as un-Islamic and contrary to true Salafi teaching.[279] Ironically, given that Zawahiri is often described as having been a champion of the near enemy at this point in time, Zitouni rejects Zawahiri's advice to "adopt the confrontation with Israel and America" by referencing the near enemy argument, writing: "We counsel you that your opening of the gates of war against Israel and America is like our opening [of hostilities] against France."[280] Additionally, after citing Qur'anic references regarding the need to fight the near enemy, Zitouni writes: "since we have been commanded to fight the nearest, as they pose the greatest danger to us, we fight France…while you fight Israel or America, because they are the nearest threat to you."[281]

Al-Qa'ida's Glocalization Failures, 1995-2000

Under Zitouni's leadership (1994 to 1996), the GIA descended into such indiscriminate savagery as to alienate the entire international jihadi movement, and "what happened in Algeria in the mid-1990s" has become a euphemism in jihadi discourse for complete abandonment of any vestige of religious or ideological coherence in the nihilistic pursuit of violence.[282] Beginning in early 1996, progressively larger segments of the Algerian population were declared *kuffar* (infidels) in GIA communiqués and marked for death, until finally all non-GIA Algerians were declared "apostates who deserve to die."[283] Within the GIA itself, Zitouni initiated a campaign to liquidate Algerian veterans

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[278] Zawahiri letter dated 4 February 1995, printed in Muqaddam, 251.

[279] According to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, *Mukhtasar shahadati 'ala'l-jihad al-Jaza'ir* (n.p.: 2004), 22, Zitouni subsequently ordered that the books of Sayyid Qutb and the EIJ be gathered and burned.

[280] Zitouni letter, dated 10 January 1996, printed in Muqaddam, 258-66.

[281] Ibid. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri also mentions this correspondence and Zitouni's rejection of Zawahiri's advice. See Lia (2008), 128.

[282] On the scope of the carnage, see Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War: 1990-1998* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1998), ch. 4. To cite but one example, according to the Algerian interior ministry, 2,048 women were raped by the GIA during these two years. Muqaddam, 101. On the infamy of the GIA's late-1990s campaign in jihadi literature, see, e.g., Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004b); Fazul, 400-2.

[283] Wright, 190.

of the Afghan jihad, viewing them as potential challengers to his leadership and spies of Usama bin Ladin.[284] Any who had trained in al-Qa'ida camps in Sudan or Afghanistan were ordered killed, and a number of non-Algerian jihadis who had come to Algeria to support the fight, including members of al-Qa'ida and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), were killed on Zitouni's orders.[285] In June of 1996, the GIA's supporters in London, including Abu Qatada al-Filistini, the GIA's chief religious ideologue, and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who had been publishing the GIA newsletter *al-Ansar*, announced their withdrawal of support for the group. In the same month, the LIFG and the EIJ made similar declarations of disavowal, and Zawahiri told Camille al-Tawil in an interview that "it has been demonstrated to us that the GIA has committed grave errors and deviated from *shari'a*."[286] Bin Ladin abandoned plans to establish an al-Qa'ida training camp in Algeria and cut his ties with the GIA.[287]

Algeria was not the only North African jihad front that al-Qa'ida failed to "glocalize" during the mid-1990s. The LIFG, the bulk of which had relocated to Sudan in the face of a massive crackdown by the Libyan regime in 1995, briefly benefited from al-Qa'ida's training resources in Sudan and some of its leaders joined the advisory council of Khartoum-based jihadi leaders that Bin Ladin had established in the hopes of furthering inter-jihadi cooperation.[288] Relations between the two groups were irrevocably soured, however, when Bin Ladin acquiesced to Sudanese government pressure to facilitate the expulsion of the Libyan jihadis from Sudan. According to the court testimony of L'Houssaine Kherchtou:

> There was a pressure from the Libyan government on the Sudanese government that all the Libyans must leave the country, and they informed Usama Bin Laden that if you have some Libyans you have to let them get out from the country. And Usama Bin Laden informed these guys and he told them that you have to leave, because if you don't leave, you will be responsible for yourselves, and if somebody caught you, I am not responsible. What I can do for you is I can give you twenty-four hundred bucks, plus a ticket with you and your wife if you want to live somewhere, but the Libyans, most of them, they refused the offer of Usama Bin Laden. They were very upset and angry because they couldn't

[284] Muqaddam, 97ff.
[285] Ibid.; Noman Benotman, in Maha Abedin, "From Mujahid to Activist: an Interview with a Libyan Veteran of the Afghan Jihad," *Jamestown Foundation "Spotlight on Terror"* 3, no. 2 (2005), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=178. See also Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004b), 21ff.
[286] Muqaddam, 99.
[287] Ibid.
[288] This is referred to as the "Islamic Army Shura" in the *9/11 Commission Report*, 58.

> protect them, and they had a meeting…[and] they gave a letter to Usama Bin Laden that they are leaving al Qaeda, and they took that money and tickets and some of them they left. Some of them [went to Libya].[289]

This experience, described by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri as a "betrayal of the mujahidin by turning on the Libyan brothers," produced enduring bitterness toward al-Qa'ida on the part of the LIFG, which would later reject Bin Ladin's overtures to join his anti-American alliance in Afghanistan.[290] More recently, the imprisoned leadership of the LIFG in Libya has published a lengthy renunciation of its former jihadi ideology and denounced the platform of al-Qa'ida.[291]

Al-Qa'ida was confronted with similar failures in its aggregation efforts beyond the Arab world, as well. For example, there is evidence that al-Qa'ida provided significant funding and training to both the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines in the early 1990s; both of these groups were founded by veterans of the Afghan jihad who had trained in the MAK and al-Qa'ida camps.[292] Yet, the ASG lost its al-Qa'ida support between 1996 and 1998, having descended from an Islamist revolutionary movement into a criminal gang specializing in kidnapping for ransom.[293] The MILF maintained a rather extensive collaboration with the MAK in the area of training throughout the 1990s, but in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the MILF leadership distanced itself from al-Qa'ida, recognizing that the global and anti-American aims of al-Qa'ida were at cross purposes with the MILF's local objectives.[294] The MILF's efforts to gain concessions from the Philippine government proved it to be reconcilable to a process of engagement with the infidel Philippine state, making it ideologically incompatible with al-Qa'ida and its universal jihad. Lacking

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[289] *U.S.A. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al*., S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (SDNY), trial transcript, 22 February 2001, 1280-82. See also Fazul, 400, mentioning that "many of the Libyan youth broke with al-Qa'ida and joined the LIFG" over this incident.

[290] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 739. Libyan al-Qa'ida members formerly associated with the LIFG announced in Afghanistan in 2007 that the LIFG was formally merging with al-Qa'ida, a claim which was publicly refuted by the LIFG leadership in Libya. See Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling: The Jihadist Revolt against bin Laden," *New Republic* (11 June 2008).

[291] In the *Kitab al-dirasat al-tashihiyya*, on which see Vahid Brown, "A First Look at the LIFG Revisions," http://www.jihadica.com/a-first-look-at-the-lifg-revisions/.

[292] On these links, see Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Maria Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

[293] See Zachary Abuza, "The Demise of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Southern Philippines," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 7 (2008), 10-12.

[294] On the ongoing negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF, see International Crisis Group, "The Philippines: Running in Place in Mindanao," 16 February 2009, and the sources cited in Abuza (2008), note 1.

sufficient leverage, al-Qa'ida was unable to overcome the ideological and strategic divergence between itself and these groups, and though Southeast Asia was an important staging ground for the 9/11 attacks, al-Qa'ida can no longer claim to have an active stake in a Southeast Asian front for its global jihad. In fact, the region has been dropped altogether in recent messaging from al-Qa'ida.

Chechnya, which had replaced Bosnia in the second half of the 1990s as the most prominent field of classical jihad, also proved frustrating to al-Qa'ida in its quest for influence. Hegghammer notes that "in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Chechnya was a more attractive destination than Afghanistan for Saudi volunteer fighters, because as a classical jihad it was considered a less controversial struggle than Bin Ladin's global jihad against America."[295] The Chechen resistance to Russian aggression, declared a legitimate jihad by mainstream Saudi clerics and generously supported by Gulf patrons, offered all the opportunities for instrumentalization that Bosnia had afforded in previous years. Noting that "conditions there were excellent," Zawahiri attempted to travel to Chechnya in 1996, but was detained by Russian authorities for entering the country illegally. He and two EIJ companions spent several months in jail, but managed to keep their identities secret and were ultimately able to return to Afghanistan.[296]

Bin Ladin's efforts to co-opt the Chechen jihad, while less dramatic than Zawahiri's, were no less unsuccessful. Bin Ladin had a complicated relationship with Ibn Khattab (Samir al-Suwaylim), the celebrated Saudi jihadi who led the foreign mujahidin in Chechnya from 1995 until his death in 2002. According to the memoirs of 'Abdallah Muhammad Fazul, a Comoran national who joined al-Qa'ida in 1991 who is currently a leader of al-Qa'ida in East Africa, Khattab had come to Afghanistan in the late 1980s and trained briefly at an al-Qa'ida camp at the Zhawar Kili complex in Khost.[297] Impatient with the training process, Khattab argued with the camp administrators and was eventually expelled for insubordination. His training incomplete, Khattab went directly to the front lines in Ghazni where he earned a reputation for bravery and facility with heavy weaponry. He established his own independent group of Arab mujahidin and a training center near Jalalabad, which attracted other young volunteers who balked at the strict routines of the al-Qa'ida training camps, and thus became a competitor with al-Qa'ida for recruits.[298] At the battle of Jalalabad in 1989, Khattab clashed with the al-Qa'ida field leadership and, using his own resources, set up a separate front of largely Algerian fighters that bypassed the al-Qa'ida chain of

[295] Hegghammer (2010a)), ch. 2.
[296] See Wright, 249f.
[297] Fazul, 77f. See also my profile of Fazul in Combating Terrorism Center (2007), 89-105, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/profile_pdf/Fazul.pdf.
[298] Fazul, 77f.; Hami, 686.

command by working directly with Afghan commanders. According to Fazul, this disunity in the ranks at the front lines had a deleterious effect on the course of the battle, which ended in a rout of the mujahidin.

In 1997 and 1998, Bin Ladin appealed to Khattab to join the jihad against the Zionist-Crusader alliance, but Khattab refused. According to Abu'l-Walid al-Masri, who had a close relationship with the al-Qa'ida leadership in Afghanistan at the time:

> Khattab had succeeded in establishing a strong economic investment base in the Gulf states and he totally controlled the Arab movement in Chechnya. He had his own special media apparatus connecting him to the outside world. In sum, his position in Chechnya until the beginning of the second Russian campaign in 1999 was stronger than Bin Ladin's position in Afghanistan.[299] Contact was initiated between the two sides, with both Khattab and Bin Ladin trying to attract the other to their plan. Bin Ladin felt that it was a religious duty for Khattab to join the program of jihad against the American occupiers of the Arabian Peninsula, as Khattab was from the Hijaz and because Khattab was just a mujahid beginner in Jalalabad in 1988 [sic], at a time when Bin Ladin was general commander of the Arab forces there… Khattab responded with extreme aversion to Bin Ladin's offers to join the program of jihad against the Americans.[300]

Commanding all the material and ideological resources that came with leading a classical jihad front, Khattab had little to gain from al-Qa'ida, which had long since marginalized itself with respect to the bases of mainstream jihadi legitimacy and resource mobilization. After Khattab's death in 2002, the Saudi classical jihadis in Chechnya continued to represent a threat to the legitimacy and appeal of al-Qa'ida's global jihad in the Gulf, and Khattab's successor, Abu 'Umar al-Sayf, issued a statement in 2003 denouncing the al-Qa'ida campaign in Saudi Arabia, engendering a split in the Saudi jihadi community which "greatly undermined the support for and recruitment to" al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula.[301]

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[299] Khattab's position was also stronger in the Gulf. According to Hegghammer, "Saudi sources have described the jihadist community in the kingdom as being divided between the 'Khattabists' and the 'Bin Ladinists', with the former being more numerous." Hegghammer (2010a)), 57.

[300] Abu'l-Walid al-Masri, *Tharthara fawq saqf al-'alam* 6 (*Salib fi sama' Qandahar*), 80f.

[301] Hegghammer (2010a)), Conclusion. The English-language secondary literature on the Chechen conflict suffers from the same conflation errors noted above with regard to the Bosnian jihad. Thus, Yossef Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Gordon Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); James Hughes, *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Paul Murphy, *The Wolves of Islam* (Washington, DC:

Growing on the Margins: Afghanistan, 1998-2001

Al-Qa'ida's final pre-9/11 attempts to achieve vanguard status within the transnational jihad movement occurred in Afghanistan during the last years of the Taliban regime. In a number of respects, the conditions for success were more favorable than they had ever been in al-Qa'ida's history. With the bombings of the two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, al-Qa'ida had achieved worldwide notoriety as the only jihadi group that not only dared but also succeeded in directly confronting American hegemony in the heartlands of the Arab world. Its training camps in Afghanistan, while having to compete with similar training operations being run by more than a dozen other organizations, had a number of crucial advantages: al-Qa'ida's camps were older, larger and more sophisticated than those of many of its rivals, and were staffed by some of the best instructors.[302] While al-Qa'ida drew recruits from throughout the world, most other jihadi groups only recruited from their countries of origin.[303] Most importantly, the active fronts of international jihadism were becoming severely limited at the end of the 1990s, allowing al-Qa'ida to grow parasitically by absorbing jihadis from the margins of militant organizations in decline. The ceasefires in Egypt and the violent chaos in Algeria left the Afghanistan-based leadership of the revolutionary jihadi organizations in these countries little to offer their followers in terms of active jihadi enterprises. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group was also decimated inside Libya during the late 1990s, and "stopped being a credible fighting force in 1998," leaving its training operations in Afghanistan the last vestige of its organizational existence.[304] Some of the people in these various camps began to shift their allegiance to the alternative jihad program offered by al-Qa'ida. [305] The popular classical jihad in Chechnya had become extremely difficult to access by 1999 to 2000, and many of the young men mobilized from the Gulf to fight for Khattab made it no further than Afghanistan, where many were recruited into al-Qa'ida.[306] The increase in

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Brassey's, 2004), all erroneously describe Khattab as a lieutenant of Bin Ladin and Khattab's Chechen operations as an al-Qa'ida enterprise.

[302] On the many organizations running training camps in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, see Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (2004a), 727ff.; Lia (2008), 247ff.; Fazul, 64f., Tawil (2007a), 334ff.; Shadi 'Abdallah, "German Bundeskriminalamt interrogation report," 31 October 2002. Fazul lists sixteen different camps run by ten different groups between 1989 and 1991; collating Shadi 'Abdallah's account with al-Suri, *circa* 2000, there were not fewer than eighten organizations operating more than two dozen training camps.

[303] This point is stressed by both Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Shadi 'Abdallah (see above note).

[304] According to Noman Benotman, a former LIFG leader, *apud* Abedin.

[305] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004), Supplement, 159-77, 161.

[306] See Hegghammer (2010a)), ch. 2, ch. 6, subsection "Classical jihad exploited." Included among the men whom al-Qa'ida siphoned off of the "classical jihad" mobilization for Chechnya at this time were several of the future 9/11 hijackers, including Muhammad Atta, Ahmad al-Ghamidi and Sa'id al-Ghamidi. The

the pool of trainees was such as to allow al-Qa'ida to construct several new training camps in Logar Province devoted exclusively to preparing a new generation of operational cadres for the organization.[307]

Yet, despite these favorable conditions, al-Qa'ida was still unable to overcome its enduring marginality or emerge as a vanguard in the late-1990s jihadi milieu. The 1998 declaration of the "World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders," issued with much fanfare and meant to establish al-Qa'ida at the forefront of the global jihad, was a disaster. Of the nearly twenty jihadi groups operating in Afghanistan at the time, representatives of only three signed on: the EIG's Rifa'i Ahmad Taha, the EIJ's Zawahiri and the Harakat-ul Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh's Fazlur Rahman. The EIG immediately repudiated the Front and its anti-American agenda, and Taha, who was summarily dismissed from the EIG shura council, later issued a retraction.[308] The EIJ split after the declaration of the Front. Abu al-Samh Salah Shehata broke with Zawahiri, as did Salim Marjan, the religious leader of the group, and Shehata declared himself the new leader-in-exile of the EIJ.[309] Both the EIG and the EIJ suffered significant personnel losses after the Front was announced, as American security concerns led to the arrest of many of the leading members of these organizations that had found asylum in Europe.[310] All of the foreign jihadis operating in Afghanistan were directly threatened by the announcement of the Front, as it contravened explicit restrictions that the Taliban leadership had imposed on Bin Ladin, led to the closure of a number of jihadi training camps and created widespread fears that Mullah Omar would expel the foreign organizations.[311] When Bin Ladin convened a gathering of the leaders of the Arab jihadi groups in Kandahar in the summer of 2000 in a further attempt to bring them on board with the global jihad, his appeal was unanimously rejected amid sharp criticism of al-

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scope of the "classical jihad" mobilization for Chechnya from the Gulf probably accounts for much of the growth in camp recruits, as well as for the predominance of Gulf Arab trainees in al-Qa'ida camps during this period. Shadi 'Abdallah, a Jordanian follower of Zarqawi who trained in an al-Qa'ida camp, observed that the trainees at the al-Qa'ida camps in Kandahar "were almost exlusively people from the Arab Peninsula countries." 'Abdallah.

[307] Fazul, 397ff.

[308] See Steven Brooke's chapter in this volume and al-Shafi'i (2002c).

[309] Al-Shafi'i (2002c).

[310] Ibid.

[311] See Anne Stenerson, "Blood Brothers or a Marriage of Convenience? The ideological relationship between al-Qa'ida and the Taliban," paper presented at International Studies Association convention, New York, 15-18 February 2009, http://sites.google.com/site/jihadismstudiesnet/publications; Lia (2008), 284ff.; Vahid Brown, "The Façade of Allegiance: Bin Ladin's Dubious Pledge to Mullah Omar," *CTC Sentinel* 3, no. 1 (2010), 3.

Qa'ida's perilous strategic direction and Bin Ladin's disregard for the Taliban's authority.[312]

Several months after the failed Kandahar summit, Bin Ladin admitted to journalist Ahmad Zaydan that he regretting announcing the World Islamic Front. Zaydan writes:

> After meeting Bin Ladin, who talked about this [the Front], I gathered it had become a burden on him and his companions, which Abu Hafs al-Masri admitted to me. Bin Ladin said remorsefully: "We thought it might form the basis of global jihad against Jews and Christians, particularly the Americans. We thought it might push Muslim movements, groups, and individuals to join this movement. However, it seems we overestimated its ability and resources. It might have been better not to declare it, but what has happened has happened."[313]

The final pre-9/11 challenge to al-Qa'ida's unfulfilled vanguardist ambitions was the appearance in Afghanistan of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad group, which established camps in Herat in western Afghanistan. Zarqawi's group distinguished itself from al-Qa'ida through its much more uncompromising *takfiri* ideological position and a clear strategic focus on the Levant.[314] Like Khattab's classical jihad front in Chechnya, al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad enjoyed the advantage of a significant resource mobilization infrastructure, based primarily in Europe; had the backing of renowned Salafi shaykhs; and, unlike al-Qa'ida, pursued a regional strategy directly keyed to the classical jihad of confronting Israel. According to Fazul, beginning in late 1999, large numbers of would-be jihadis from Europe, Lebanon and Syria began arriving in Afghanistan:

> Many of them joined the Levantine bloc led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Our thinking was not like theirs, as they declared *takfir* on all of the governments, and said that once you were in parliament you were an infidel. Al-Qa'ida's *shari'a* committee did not see it this way, and I was not obliged to accept this view…. They sought Bin Ladin's acceptance of their ideology, but he refused, informing them that it was not al-Qa'ida's platform (*manhaj*) to declare people infidels on superficial grounds, nor

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[312] Tawil (2007a), 334-36; Bergen and Cruickshank.

[313] Ahmad Zaydan, *Bin Ladin bi-la qina'* (Beirut: al-Sharaka al-'alamiyya li'l-kitab, 2003) (FBIS translation).

[314] On *takfirism* and the problematics of its usage, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London and New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2009), 246f.

> did [al-Qa'ida] have any interest in dividing one segment of Muslims from others…. So they went to Herat and took their ideology with them.[315]

Over the course of the following year, al-Qa'ida made a number of unsuccessful attempts to hitch Zarqawi's rising star to the project of global jihad.[316] Al-Qa'ida hoped that an alliance with Zarqawi would enable the organization to achieve its long-desired goal of establishing a more-than-symbolic stake in the fight against Israel. According to Sayf al-'Adl, the head of al-Qa'ida's military committee:

> The information we had said that al-Qa'ida and its tenets did not have many supporters in Palestine or Jordan. The plan that the [al-Qa'ida leadership] agreed on underlined the importance of the presence of al-Qa'ida in Jordan and Palestine since the Palestinian question is the bleeding heart of the nation…. How could we abandon such an opportunity to be in Palestine and Jordan? How could we waste a chance to work with Abu-Mus'ab and similar men in other countries?[317]

To this end, Sayf was deputized by Bin Ladin and Zawahiri to meet with Zarqawi and seek "coordination and cooperation to achieve our joint objectives."[318] Al-Qa'ida provided al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad with financial support for its Herat operations, yet Zarqawi maintained his ideological and organizational independence from his patrons. As in so many previous attempts at buying allegiance with material support and training, al-Qa'ida was once again unable to redirect the fundamental outlook or strategic objectives of Zarqawi's group, a failure that would prove particularly disastrous for al-Qa'ida's reputation in the context of the Iraq war.

Post-9/11 Dynamics: Has Al-Qa'ida Overcome the Double Bind?

As this account has shown, in the pre-9/11 period al-Qa'ida was unable to achieve the elite vanguard status that it sought, and that is commonly attributed to it. Rather, in the history of post-Peshawar transnational jihadism, it was the theory and practice of classical jihad, not al-Qa'ida's Gulf-focused, anti-American global jihad, that proved to be the central and driving force in mobilizing Islamist violence. The fortunes of the socio-revolutionary jihadis waging campaigns against specific regimes rose or fell in part on their ability to successfully capitalize on the popularity, religious legitimacy and

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[315] Fazul, 397. Fazul emerges in his memoirs as a staunch anti-*takfiri*, though he acknowledges that there are *takfiris* among al-Qa'ida's ranks. See Fazul, 2, 491ff.

[316] See Brooke, in this volume; Hami, 444; Lia (2008), 268f.; Fu'ad Husayn, *al-Zarqawi: al-jil al-thani li'l-Qa'ida* (Beirut: Dar al-Khayyal, 2005), serialized in *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, May 2005.

[317] *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 21-22 May 2005 (adapted from FBIS translation).

[318] Ibid.

abundant resource mobilizations of the classical jihads. Al-Qa'ida, however, failed to obtain significant traction on either front, and its appeals for a global shift in the scale of jihadi contention were rejected by the leaders of both classical and revolutionary jihadi movements, with the one notable exception of Zawahiri's faction of the EIJ. To account for this persistent failure, this study has identified the underlying tensions between al-Qa'ida's doctrine of global jihad and the local and classical dynamics that have had far greater influence in shaping the landscapes of transnational jihad.

It could be argued, however, that al-Qa'ida has more recently overcome its pre-9/11 limitations and moved much closer to achieving its vanguardist ambitions. Indeed, while the 1990s knew only one al-Qa'ida organization, frustrated in its efforts to co-opt militant Islamist groups throughout the world, the 2000s have seen the emergence of four new "al-Qa'idas"—in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Maghreb and Yemen—and the forging of tactical alliances between al-Qa'ida and Islamist insurgents in Somalia and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.[319] While on the face of things, these developments may suggest a radical departure from the trajectory of the organization analyzed in this chapter, a closer examination indicates that the dynamic tensions between global, local and classical jihad remain just as relevant—and frustrating—to al-Qa'ida's career in the new millennium as they were in the last.

In the post-9/11 period, classical jihad has remained the most powerful engine of jihadi mobilization, and in many ways the political economy of transnational violent Islamism has retained the same structural features that had come to define it in the 1990s. The cases of Iraq and Algeria are particularly illustrative of this structural continuity and of the problems it continues to pose to al-Qa'ida's more recent aggregation efforts. The American military invasion of Iraq gave rise to a transnational mobilization infrastructure in support of the Iraqi resistance, the likes of which had not been seen since the war in Bosnia or the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan.[320] The Iraq war also elicited support from the same Sunni clerical elites that had earlier branded the Afghan, Bosnian and Chechen struggles as legitimate classical jihads.[321] As with the instrumentalization triangle of Bosnia-Algeria-Egypt discussed above, the classical jihad in Iraq also gave revolutionary jihadi organizations in decline the opportunity to reinvigorate their flagging campaigns of anti-regime violence by parasitically hitching

[319] Though the Yemeni chapter of al-Qa'ida (2008 to the present) uses the same name as the now-defunct Saudi branch (2002 to 2006)—al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP—they are in fact two separate organizations with distinct historical evolutions. See Thomas Hegghammer, *The Failure of Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, Occasional Paper (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 25 February 2010), 25-27.

[320] On this mobilization, see Fishman (2008a).

[321] See, e.g., Marc Lynch's discussion of the Iraq war in his chapter in this volume.

themselves to the Iraq-focused resource mobilization networks. The most notable case of this type of instrumentalization occurred with the Algerian Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat, which re-branded itself al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb after linking up with Zarqawi's al-Qa'ida in Iraq.

Zarqawi's decision to lead the classical jihad resistance in Iraq in the name of the al-Qa'ida brand should have been a boon for al-Qa'ida, but it turned out to be an unmitigated disaster for the organization. Having a nominal presence at the forefront of that Iraqi jihad opened a window of opportunity for al-Qa'ida to reframe its anti-American struggle in popular and explicitly classical jihadi terms, something that the American military presence in Somalia and the Gulf in the 1990s had not allowed it to do. Yet al-Qa'ida proved no more successful in influencing Zarqawi than it did with its would-be allies during the 1990s, a failure with much graver consequences in Zarqawi's case, as he claimed to be acting in al-Qa'ida's name. In presiding over the "Algerianization" of the Iraqi conflict—undermining the legitimacy of his anti-invader fight by transforming it into a gruesome bloodbath of sectarian violence—Zarqawi's disastrous leadership sowed the seeds of AQI's own collapse in 2007. But it also did incalculable damage to the al-Qa'ida brand, which came to represent not just resistance to American imperialism in the Muslim world, but also the mass murder of (Shi'a) Muslim civilians. Al-Qa'ida's attempts to redirect Zarqawi from his disastrous path were strikingly reminiscent of its mid-1990s efforts to intervene with the GIA's Zitouni, and indeed the central themes of Zawahiri's letters to Zitouni (1995) and Zarqawi (2005) are identical.[322] However, al-Qa'ida's influence over the course of events in Iraq proved to be no greater than it had been in Algeria, an indication that the post-9/11 phenomenon of al-Qa'ida branding has not fundamentally altered the conditions that limit al-Qa'ida's ability to affect the ideological or strategic direction of other jihadi groups. If anything, the rise of the franchises has rendered al-Qa'ida more vulnerable to losses in its appeal by the strategic and ideological aberrations of its new partners.

The perils of this brand drift can also be seen in the case of another of the post-9/11 franchises, AQIM. As already noted, this North African jihadi group's re-branding was directly connected to the resource mobilization boom of the Iraq war, and in this sense AQIM is more of an AQI franchise than an al-Qa'ida Central affiliate.[323] As with the GIA's instrumentalization of the Bosnian conflict in the 1990s, the campaign of violence waged by GSPC/AQIM in Algeria and the Sahel in the 2000s can be directly correlated with the life cycle of AQI's production of violence in Iraq. As a major supplier of foreign fighter insurgents for Iraq, AQIM's ability to raise material and human resources mushroomed during the years of its partnership with AQI, simultaneously increasing

[322] See Zawahiri (2005).

[323] See Filiu (2009), 221ff.

AQIM's capacity to produce and deliver revolutionary violence at home. As Hanna Rogan has shown, attacks by GSPC had been in steady decline during the 1990s and early 2000s, but saw a dramatic upturn during the period of the GSPC's merger with AQI.[324] That spike in the production of violence peaked in 2007, after which AQIM, mirroring the declining fortunes of AQI, has proven less capable of delivering lethal force in support of its local jihad. Facing a dwindling resource stream in the aftermath of the AQI downturn, AQIM has come to rely more heavily on criminal enterprises—drug and tobacco smuggling, kidnapping for ransom—in order to fund its operations. As Jean-Pierre Filiu observes, "AQIM has partnered throughout the Sahel with criminals, not Salafi movements, limiting its appeal and preventing it from becoming a revolutionary challenger."[325] As with Zarqawi's mass casualty attacks on Muslim civilians, AQIM's turn to crime has served to further tarnish the al-Qa'ida brand, linking it to pursuits very much in conflict with the rhetoric of al-Qa'ida's historical leadership.

As these examples show, al-Qa'ida's double-bind continues to limit its influence over the landscape of transnational jihadism, despite the post-9/11 appropriation of the "al-Qa'ida" brand by several disparate organizations. In some ways, al-Qa'ida has become even *more* vulnerable to being marginalized by the double bind in the past eight years, as wayward affiliates pursuing divergent and unpopular policies have muddled in what the al-Qa'ida project means to its global audiences. Evidence of this increased vulnerability can be seen in the large and growing corpus of anti-al-Qa'ida jihadi literature penned by erstwhile fellow-travelers who have recently emerged as vocal critics of al-Qa'ida's aims and methods.[326]

Throughout the years of al-Qa'ida's existence, transnational Islamist political violence has emerged as one of the most critical threats to international security. Yet al-Qa'ida's ambition of seizing the reins of this emergent threat and directing it towards globalized inter-civilizational conflict has not been realized. As this chapter has shown, the very nature of al-Qa'ida's project has served to marginalize it with respect to the central drivers of transnational Islamist violence. The policy and counterterrorism communities need to better understand this marginality and the dynamics which have brought it about, and not simply for the sake of historical accuracy. To exaggerate al-Qa'ida's influence and reach over the landscape of Islamist militancy is to serve its purposes, echo its narrative and foster the perception that al-Qa'ida is strong in the very areas where it is weakest. When we equate Islamist violence with al-Qa'ida, we are not only

[324] Hanna Rogan, "Violent Trends in Algeria since 9/11," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 12 (November 2008), 16-19.
[325] Jean-Pierre Filiu, "Could al-Qaeda turn African in the Sahel?," *Carnegie Papers, Middle East Program*, paper no. 112 (June 2010), 1.
[326] See Ashour (2009).

misunderstanding the forces that drive political violence in the Muslim world, we are bolstering al-Qa'ida's hollow claims to be the vanguard of Islamist resistance.

Chapter 5: Jihadi Strategists and Doctrinarians

Brynjar Lia

Introduction

The scholarly literature on al-Qa'ida has recently begun to pay more attention to internal divisions and ideological schisms in the jihadi current.[327] This literature has uncovered important fault lines with regard to al-Qa'ida's priorities on issues such as media and propaganda efforts versus military organization (or "brand" versus "bureaucracy," as Vahid Brown has aptly dubbed it).[328] Differences over the primacy of religious-theological purity versus military-strategic effectiveness have also come to light.[329] As al-Qa'ida and the global jihadi movement have become more diverse and more embedded in a number of local insurgencies from North Africa to South Asia, fundamental differences over strategic issues (such as who is the main enemy) are also more apparent than was previously the case.[330]

This chapter aims at contributing to this literature by discussing a key dispute within the jihadi salafi community, namely the clash between ideological purists and military strategists in al-Qa'ida.[331] This fault line will be explored through the prism of the writings of Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar, better known by his pen names Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Umar Abd al-Hakim.[332] As one of al-Qa'ida's most articulate and prolific writers, with more than twenty-five years of field experience, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri is a very senior intellectual figure in al-Qa'ida, and his legacy as a theoretician and in-house critic continues to influence new generations of jihadis.[333]

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[327] See especially Brown (2007); Gerges.

[328] Brown (2007), 1-2.

[329] Brynjar Lia, "'Destructive Doctrinairians': Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Critique of the Salafis in the Jihadi Current," in Meijer (2009), 249-68.

[330] See the chapter by Steven Brooke in this volume. In addition, I have elaborated on some of these differences in Lia (2009a).

[331] "Strategy" is defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary as follows: "[1:] the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war (2): the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions b: a variety of or instance of the use of strategy. 2 a: a careful plan or method: a clever stratagem b: the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal. 3: an adaptation or complex of adaptations (as of behavior, metabolism, or structure) that serves or appears to serve an important function in achieving evolutionary success."

[332] For his biography, see Lia (2008). This chapter borrows heavily from my book on Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

[333] For a discussion of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's legacy, see Lia (2008), 5-28.

In order to highlight the continued importance of the internal divide in the jihadi movement between strategists and doctrinarians, this chapter will discuss several other examples of this rift as well. These include the internal debate over al-Qa'ida's alliance with the Taliban during the late 1990s and the Zawahiri-Zarqawi conflict over al-Qa'ida's strategy in Iraq in 2005. As this chapter will demonstrate, a common denominator in these disputes, of which Abu Mus'ab al-Suri is emblematic, is the general dilemma of how to strike a balance between ideological purity and political utility. To be sure, al-Qa'ida has struggled with a host of other rifts and internal conflicts during its more than twenty years of existence, as the other chapters of this report show. The strategist-doctrinairian divide, however appears to have remained a recurrent phenomenon in the organization's history. It will probably become more salient if al-Qa'ida continues its present evolution towards more regional networks and branches, as its ideological-theological strictures are bound to clash with the need for local adaptation and flexibility.

The present chapter is divided into three parts. The first traces the evolution and composition of Salafism as a religious-ideological current in Islam and presents its internal divides. The second part discusses Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's writings on the impact of Salafism on al-Qa'ida and the jihadi current, from London to Afghanistan, during the 1990s. The last part explores more recent manifestations of the strategist-doctrinarian divide, focusing in particular on the Zawahiri-Zarqawi correspondence in 2005 and Salafi criticism of the al-Qa'ida-led insurgent alliance "The Islamic State of Iraq."

To appreciate the salience of the strategist-doctrinarian divide, it may be useful to reflect on the underlying tension between religious and political imperatives in jihadi movements. When reading jihadi literature, one cannot avoid noticing the complete absence of any precise articulation of a *political* vision for the future Islamic state and the global caliphate. The reason for this is probably that jihadi purists interpret a focus on concrete worldly goals and benefits as a form of disobedience to God, a profane preoccupation with the mundane world and lack of longing for the hereafter. Even jihadi writers well-versed in strategic thinking and political commentary feel the need to remind their audiences from time to time that "strategy is a Western word" and that "the only strategic goal of the Prophet's Companions was 'to please God and Paradise'...."[334] Another reason for al-Qa'ida's vague political articulation is that its

[334] Mahmud bin Husayn, an important jihadi "Internet shaykh," writing for the Global Islamic Media Front, for example, has expanded on the essential differences between the terms "strategy" and "strategic goal" in Western and Islamic (here obviously jihadi) discourse. The term is a Western word, basically a military one, meaning a long-term plan, bin Husayn explains. He notes that Islamic groups appear, at the first glance, to have different strategic aims which, in turn, influence the way they deal with current events, i.e. their tactics: "Some would like to revive the Caliphate; some would like to call people to God.

ideology is to a significant extent rooted in Salafi thought which, in most respects, is apolitical and anti-rationalist in its origin.

What is Salafism?

The term Salafi or Salafist requires an explanation. It literally means "those who look to our forefathers." The term Salafism was historically associated with a late 19th and early 20th century Islamic reformist current, which at the time was seen as an effort to modernize Islam. Today's Salafis are still in principle preoccupied with reforming Islam, but their reform efforts are geared towards purging Islam of syncretism and what they perceive as illegal innovation, which entered Islam during the long decline following the era of the Prophet and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, who led the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. The Salafis believe that only by ridding Islam of these superstitions, and by returning to the pristine Islam of these forefathers (in Arabic, *salaf*, *aslaf*), can Islam rise up from centuries of colonial humiliation and regain its strength and hegemonic position in the world. Mainstream Salafism originally was, and to some extent still is, apolitical and non-violent in many countries. It has often concerned itself with outward forms of religious practice such as dress codes, beards for men, etc. Although Salafis often reject the label "Wahhabism," they are very influenced by Saudi Wahhabist theology and often benefit from Saudi financial support.

Salafism's main characteristic is a strict emulation of the practices of the Prophet and his Companions at the pristine Islamic age, and hence, an abhorrence of any later innovation (*bid'ah*) in belief and religious practice. Additional Salafi traits include an obsession with God's oneness (tawhid), a rejection of human rationality and an extreme exclusiveness, and even hatred, towards other Islamic schools and tendencies.[335] Even if only a small segment of today's Salafis support al-Qa'ida, the term "Salafi jihadism" has nevertheless been latched to al-Qa'ida both by outsiders and by jihadi ideologues themselves.

There are groups who want to slaughter God's enemies, and destroy their forces. And there are those who would liberate Jerusalem, Palestine or other occupied territories. And there are also groups who combine more of these aims. And these aims are then termed the strategic goals of these groups." [CITE?] Reflecting on the words and deeds the Prophet's Companions, bin Husayn laments that Islamic groups of today do not follow the example of the Noble Companions. The only strategic goal of the Prophet's Companions was "to please God and Paradise." [CITE?] All other aims such as the conquest of the Persian and Roman empire was merely a short-term temporary and tactical in nature, in order to bring them towards the more lofty aim of God's blessing and salvation. This was indeed the secret to their persistence, determination and their numerous victories, bin Husayn explains. Cited in Mahmud bin Husayn, "The Strategic Aim," August 2008. The essay is part of a series of articles by bin Husayn entitled: "Reflections on the Reality," dated 8 Sha'ban 1429 / 9 August 2008, http://al-shouraa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=15736.

[335] See Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in Meijer (2009), 1-25.

A common categorization of Salafism is Quintan Wictorowicz's typology, which divides Salafism into three currents: purists, politicos and jihadis. Each current is united by a common Salafi creed, but they are sharply divided on how to interpret the context and reality in which that Salafi creed should be implemented.[336] While a useful starting point, the typology provides little guidance in terms of understanding doctrinal disputes and conflicts *within* the jihadi current.[337] Furthermore, it may mislead us to think of contemporary jihadis as simply radicalized elements within—or as by-products of—a broader Salafi phenomenon. Instead, as this chapter will show, it may be more fruitful to speak of a spectrum, or a continuum, of positions within contemporary Salafi jihadism, defined by two extreme positions. On the one extreme are hard-line Salafi purists for whom doctrinal purity is of quintessential importance, even if it means fighting side-battles, alienating allies and shattering any semblance of a common front against the Zionist-Crusader enemy. At the other extreme are hard-line jihadis who are primarily military strategists, and whose main preoccupation is political outcome, not doctrinal purity. This divide is far from the only fault line in the landscape of militant Islamism, and it is most visible when disagreements arise over the permissibility of alliances and cooperation with groups or individuals outside the immediate circle of al-Qa'ida and the global jihadi movement.

In many respects, the strategist-doctrinarian divide in the jihadi current corresponds to one of the most important fault lines in *mainstream* Islamism today, namely, the Salafi-Ikhwani divide addressed in more detail by Marc Lynch in Chapter 7 of this volume. The fundamental differences between these two trends have been apparent since the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB, or in Arabic: *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) in the late 1920s and 1930s in Egypt.[338] During this period, when the Muslim Brotherhood became heavily involved in the political campaign to support the Palestinian revolt, its members' Salafi counterparts mostly shunned politics and devoted their energies to

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[336] Quintan Wictorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (April-May 2006), 207-39.

[337] For the purpose of this article, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's own definition will suffice. He defined the jihadi current rather comprehensively, determined partly by ideology and partly by its main enemies: "It comprises organizations, groups, assemblies, scholars, intellectuals, symbolic figures, and the individuals who have adopted the ideology of armed jihad against the existing regimes in the Arab-Islamic world on the basis that these are apostate regimes ruling by not what Allah said (*bi-ghayr ma anzala Allah*), by legislating without Allah, and by giving their loyalty and assistance to the various infidel enemies of the Islamic Nation. The jihadi current has also adopted the program of armed jihad against the colonialist forces which attack Muslim lands on the basis that those regimes are allies fighting Islam and Muslims." See Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus'ab al-Suri), *The Global Islamic Resistance Call. Part I: The Roots, History, and Experiences. Part II: The Call, Program and Method* (Arabic) (n.p., December 2004), 685.

[338] See Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, 1928-42* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 22, 59-60, 116.

fighting unlawful religious practices and spreading Salafi religious interpretations. This basic difference in priorities—upholding and enforcing a specific religious orthodoxy first versus giving primacy to politics and the struggle for an Islamic state—has made the Ikhwani-Salafi divide a defining characteristic of Islamist politics in the 20th century.[339] Given the importance of this divide, one should not be surprised to find cleavages within al-Qa'ida and the global jihadi current, which by and large are rooted in Ikhwani-Salafi cleavages.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and the Salafi Current

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri belongs to a category of al-Qa'ida thinkers and strategists whose main preoccupation is strategy, not doctrinal purity for its own sake. At present, al-Qa'ida's most important strategist is probably Ayman al-Zawahiri. Other important al-Qa'ida writers on strategic issues include people like Abu 'Ubayd al-Qurashi (a pen name), Sayf al-Adel, Abu Bakr Naji (a pen name), Yusuf al-'Ayiri, Muhammad Khalil al-Hukayma and others.[340] As such, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and other al-Qa'ida strategists essentially ask the question: how can the jihadi current fight its enemy most effectively? The writings of these strategists bear some resemblance with Western strategic studies, political commentaries and analyses, and rely less on Salafi methodology of proofs and refutation than on the use of secular rationalist arguments.[341]

As opposed to many al-Qa'ida ideologues, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri styled himself as a writer, theorist and strategist, and he consistently refused to be called a scholar or a cleric. Until his arrest—presumably in Quetta, Pakistan—in late 2005, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was one of the most outspoken voices in the jihadi current. His critical analysis of previous jihadi experiences, especially in Algeria, provoked strong responses and debates. Furthermore, his ambitions to integrate Marxist guerrilla warfare theory into the jihadi war fighting doctrine, to introduce self-criticism as an accepted genre and method in jihadi thinking and his attempts to critically analyze the jihadi current

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[339] For an excellent study of the origin and evolution of Salafi thought, see Haykel, 1-25.

[340] Brachman has identified the following strategists in al-Qaida: Abu 'Ubayd al-Qurashi, Abu Bakr Naji, Yusuf al-'Ayiri, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Ayman al-Hilali, Abu Sa'd al-'Amili, Muhammad Khalil al-Hukayma, 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Rashid al-'Anzi, Luwis 'Atiyat Allah, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi and others. To this list we may also add the author of the famous policy document "Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Risks," which called for strikes against Spain in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in Spain three months before the Madrid train bombings occurred. See Jarret Brachman, *Global Jihadism* (London & NY: Routledge, 2009), 81; Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaeda Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (September-October 2004), 355-75.

[341] An indication of their discomfort with Salafi metholodogy is the fact that the terms "Salaf" and "Salafi" are hardly ever encountered in their writings.

objectively, inevitably led to numerous clashes with orthodox and conservative elements, especially the strong Salafi current within al-Qa'ida.

Even though he himself was born into a Syrian Sufi family (the *Rifa'iyyah* order in Aleppo), Abu Mus'ab al-Suri came to adopt and defend Salafi doctrines in his writings. From his writings, one gets the sense that had he been born twenty years earlier, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri would have fought equally hard under Marxist or pan-Arab slogans, which were the most popular revolutionary ideologies in the Middle East at that time. By the 1970s, however, these ideologies had been discredited, and militant Islamism was on the rise. During Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's last years at the Faculty of Engineering at Aleppo University, the Syrian Islamist movement had emerged as the major opposition force to the Ba'athist regime of Hafiz al-Asad. Through his friends, he joined the Combatant Vanguard group, a radical offshoot of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which was in the forefront among the armed groups confronting the Syrian regime. Later, after the Syrian Islamist movement had been crushed, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri moved to Europe. In 1987, he went to Peshawar to join the growing contingent of Arab volunteers, who had gone there to fight the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. There, he quickly rose to become a military instructor and distinguished himself as an articulate Islamist writer.

Like many other veterans of the Arab-Afghan camps on the Pakistani frontier with Afghanistan during the late 1980s, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had been active in Muslim Brotherhood-related organizations. Despite his fierce criticism of the Brotherhood, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's *Ikhwani* background and his previous involvement with revolutionary Islamist groups set him apart from the large segment of religious youth from the Gulf countries. The latter were mostly trained at educational institutions and mosques where apolitical Salafi trends were predominant, and viewed the Afghan liberation war as merely a pan-Islamic struggle against communism. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri himself later lamented the lack of "political-ideological awareness" among Arab-Afghan youth from Saudi-Arabia and Yemen, and their "superficial understanding" of the nature of the struggle.[342] In order to disabuse them of their blind loyalty to the official Saudi religious hierarchy and the Saudi Royal family, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and his colleagues made sure that Saudi youth "received small arms training by firing shots at figures of King Fahd and senior Saudi princes."[343]

While a general discussion of the architecture of the Salafi ideological landscape is outside the scope of this chapter, it may be useful to recapture why jihadi ideologues like Abu Mus'ab al-Suri came to use such vitriolic and harsh words about leading Salafi

[342] Lia (2008), 86.
[343] Ibid., 94.

clerics. Al-Qa'ida's struggle against the United States and its Western and Arab allies—Saudi-Arabia in particular—has always depended on a minimum of political-religious legitimation, which explains why there is far more literature on jihadi websites dealing with the question "why jihad?" rather than "how jihad?"[344]

Since the mid-1990s, leading Salafi clerics from Saudi Arabia and Yemen have refuted Bin Ladin's message and defended the regimes against jihadi propaganda, earning them derogatory labels such as the Sultan's clerics (*ulama' al-sultan*), and worse. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri took considerable interest in these disputes, and he authored a long study, detailing and analyzing Bin Ladin's and the London-based Saudi dissident leader Saad al-Faqih's criticism of Shaykh bin Baz and Shaykh bin 'Uthaymin, two of Saudi-Arabia's most famous scholars.[345] Seeing himself not as a religious cleric, who could challenge the clerics on their turf, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri found it most useful to launch his attack through the words of the two most well-known Saudi dissidents, one from the reformist camp and the other from the jihadi camp. The intended audience was clearly jihadi sympathizers and recruits who were hesitant to join al-Qa'ida without the necessary religious legitimation. This is also what concerned Abu Mus'ab al-Suri the most with regard to the negative role played by the purist Salafis. Their clerics supposedly mislead the mujahidin and turn them away from the battlefield by preaching loyalty to corrupt rulers who had allied themselves with the infidels.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's account of Bin Ladin's little known jihadi experience in Yemen from 1989 onwards may be helpful to illustrate why revolutionary jihadis like Abu Mus'ab al-Suri faced such a formidable challenge from both purist and politically minded Salafis. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988 and the foundation of al-Qa'ida, Bin Ladin attempted unsuccessfully to establish a jihadi base in Yemen, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri recalls. This attempt was Bin Ladin's first military adventure outside Afghanistan.[346] The conflict over the new constitution for the unified Yemen between Islamists and secularists had offered a window of opportunity for the jihadi current in a country that, in Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's assessment, had all the preconditions for a successful jihadi uprising.

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[344] See Brynjar Lia, "Al-Qaeda Online: Understanding Jihadist Internet infrastructure," *Jane's Intelligence Online* (January 2006).

[345] Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus'ab al-Suri), *The Testimony of the Leaders of the Mujahidun and the Reform [Current] about the Sultan's Clerics in the Land of the Two Holy Places, Called Saudi Arabia: A Reading and Commentary of the Letters and Communiques by Shaykh Osama bin Laden and Doctor Saad al-Faqih to Shaykh bin Baz, Shaykh bin 'Uthaymin and the Clerics of the Land of the Two Holy Places* (Arabic) (Kabul: The Ghuraba Center for Islamic Studies and Media, 31 January 2001, Issues for the Triumphant in Righteousness no. 5).

[346] Al-Hakim (2004a), 775.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri lay parts of the responsibility for the failure of Bin Ladin's efforts in Yemen at the door of leading Salafi scholars. Bin Ladin had gone to great lengths, sparing no efforts or money, to sway them to his side, believing that any uprising in Yemen must have their support to succeed. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and other radicals around him had egged him on, saying that he should push ahead even without their support, but Bin Ladin hesitated. As it turned out, key leaders in Yemeni society, from the tribal leaders to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi scholars, sided with Ali Abdallah Salih's government. Even Yemeni veterans of the Afghanistan liberation war who had trained and fought with Bin Ladin were bought over by the new regime and accepted government posts.[347] The prominent Yemeni Salafi scholar Shaykh Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i had played a particularly "damaging and destructive" role vis-à-vis Bin Ladin. In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's recollection, al-Wadi'i:

> had written a book in which he described al-Shaykh Usamah Bin Laden as the root of all civil strife (*ra's al-fitnah*) in Yemen. He put out recordings to sell on street corners to the people as they left the mosques after their Friday prayers. In those recordings he severely attacked Bin Laden, and made false claims that the latter had given him money to recruit him to a jihad that aimed to cause civil strife in the country…. I had heard Shaykh Usamah speak with some of his guests once about this and he said that if he were to forgive everyone who had ever harmed him in his life, he would never forgive al-Wadi'i.[348]

What incensed Abu Mus'ab al-Suri the most was the fact that the Salafi anti-Bin Ladin rhetoric seemed to find fertile ground among al-Qa'ida's key support base in Yemen. For instance, he lamented that "Certain young Yemeni mujahidin had claimed that al-Wadi'i was *shaykh al-salafiyyah* [the principal cleric of the Salafist creed]!!"[349] Clearly, Salafi rhetoric, in its purist and anti-revolutionary form, had such an important impact on the jihadi current and its recruitment base that it could not be overlooked by writers and theorists like Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.[350] The Salafi attacks on Bin Ladin were an ongoing problem for al-Qa'ida recruiters during the 1990s. Indeed, in the post-9/11 era, and especially after al-Qa'ida launched a terrorist campaign inside Saudi Arabia in 2003, the Salafi movement worldwide mobilized to refute and delegitimize Bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida, forcing the jihadis on the defensive. Pro al-Qa'ida ideologues composed

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[347] Ibid., 76.

[348] Ibid., 775-76.

[349] Ibid., 775.

[350] Hence, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri dealt extensively with the ideological component of the jihadi current in general and the Salafi "problem," as he put it, in particular. Ibid., 1060.

a steady stream of tracts attempting to refute these "doubts about jihad" (*shubuhat hawl al-jihad*), but failed to regain the initiative.[351]

The reason why anti-Bin Ladin rhetoric by leading Salafi scholars had such resonance among al-Qa'ida's core recruitment base was that the jihadi movement did not have a well-established and unified ideological foundation, separate from the Salafi school; its ideological character was multifaceted, evolving and open to new influences. In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's analysis, the jihadi current's ideology derived from a variety sources, among which doctrinal Salafism was a latecomer. Its ideological impact began in earnest during the Arab participation in the Afghan liberation war during the 1980s, and its influence on the jihadi current had grown ever since.

In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's view, the main sources of the jihadi current's ideology included:

- the organizational program of Sayyid Qutb, especially his principles of *al-hakimiyyah* [God's sovereignty on earth]
- The legal-political doctrine of Ibn Taymiyah and the Salafiyya school, especially the basis of loyalty and innocence (Al Wala' Wal Bara')
- the jurisprudential and doctrinal heritage of the Wahhabite call
- "some basic elements" from the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology.[352]

The MB legacy was important, even though its embrace of so-called democratic Islamism towards the end of the 20th century created a huge cleavage between MB and the jihadi current. Yet, despite his emphasis on Qutb and the MB legacy, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri did not underestimate the strong Salafi component in the jihadi current, and he often used the term "Salafi-Jihadi School."[353] In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's opinion, this had

[351] Consult the Minbar al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad website (http://www.tawhed.ws/) for this literature.
[352] True to his pedagogical, tutorial style of writing, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri summed up the basic components and elements of the jihadi current into this neat mathematical equation: "Some basic elements from the Muslim Brotherhood ideology + The organisational program of Sayyid Qutb + The legal-political doctrine of Imam Ibn Taymiyah and the Salafiyya school + The jurisprudential and doctrinal heritage of the Wahhabite call ---> The political legal organisational program for the Jihadi Current." Al-Hakim (2004a), 698.
[353] He defined it as "a mixture of jihadi Qutbist organisational ideology (*al-fikr al-haraki al-jihadi al-qutbi*), the Salafi creed and the Wahhabite call." Ibid., 697.

become "the main ideological programmatic identity which characterised the Jihadi Current during the 1980s and 1990s."[354]

Salafism as a Source of Internal Discord and Conflict

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri witnessed the growing influence of Salafi hard-line ideologues in al-Qa'ida with much unease. Historically, doctrinal disputes within the Sunni faith had bred "partisan fanaticism" and caused "bloodshed, conspiracies, and internecine fighting" on a grand scale.[355] While these schismatic battles were somewhat contained during the anti-colonialist struggles in the 18th and 19th centuries, they had now reemerged with full force, according to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, due to the growing power of the "Salafi trend."[356] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri depicts the Salafis as the most conflict-prone of all, saying they are a sect at war with "nearly every other revivalist school,…in particular the reformist schools, the Sufis, the *tablighi* movement, most official clerics and imams, as well as the clerics of the four schools of jurisprudence."[357] It seems clear that Abu Mus'ab al-Suri conceives of the Salafis as a pain in the neck for the jihadis, who would be better off without them and their hapless doctrinal feuds. Unfortunately, however, this is not an option, because, as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri points out, "most of the jihadis chose the Salafi doctrine, jurisprudence and program." [358] In this way, he laments, "the problem came to us, eventually."[359] A main reason for this was the growing influx of militants from the Gulf countries, especially Saudi youth, into the Afghan Arab movement. They were steeped in Salafi religious thought, and tended to view the politicized, revolutionary Islamist discourse by the Egyptian, Algerian and Syrian jihadis as some kind of *Ikhwani* deviation.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri viewed the various conflicts emanating from the disputes over the Salafi doctrine as a significant security hazard for the jihadi movement and a considerable threat to the movement as a whole:

> It causes internal strife among Muslims and within the Resistance movement itself at a time when we are being invaded by the American and Zionist Mongols and their war machines, and at a time when their

[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid., 1060.
[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Ibid.

> satellites are eavesdropping on our ideological murmurs and monitoring our daily movements….[360]

Furthermore, the arrogant exclusiveness propagated by Salafi doctrinarians has led to the inability of the jihadi current to form alliances and cooperative relationships with other Islamic militants. According to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, "numerous relationships were ended and disputes started" as a result of the Salafis.[361] In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's view, their presence in the jihadi current created an incompatibility of strategic proportions by provoking conflicts with everyone, even though "the resistance has to be popular, meaning a complete participation of all sects of the population, inclusive of all of its multiple diverse groups," if it is to succeed.[362]

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri also found that the Salafis share the responsibility for the spread of *takfiri* (expiatory) ideas and practices within the jihadi current. Although he struggles to refute the notion that the mainstream jihadi ideology has merged with *takfirism*, as is often argued by jihadi opponents, he does concede that "some prominent men from the Salafi-Jihadi current, or at least those scholars and students who followed them, offered interpretations which were either extremist, or were articulated in such a general manner that some ignorant jihadis took a step further and widen[ened] the concept of expiating others (*takfir*)."[363] This, and the fact that "those actually belonging to the *takfiri* trend relied on these texts..., led in turn to a narrowing of the margin between the jihadi and the takfiri trend," a weakness that Abu Mus'ab al-Suri laments has been amply exploited by the enemy.[364] Since the rise of modern political Islamism in the first half of the 20th century, with its numerous factions of offshoots, the issue of *takfir* has probably been the most divisive issue of all. Hence, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's criticism here is indeed very significant.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri provides a number of examples where the adoption of hard-line Salafi positions by leading members of jihadi groups have negatively affected their movement. In the following two sections, we will discuss two cases: one from London/Algeria and the other from Afghanistan.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Conflict with Abu Qatada

The first example involves the media cell of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (better known by its French acronym, GIA) in London, which published the well-known *al-*

[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid., 846.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid., 842.
[364] Ibid.

Ansar newsletter (*nashrat al-ansar*) between 1993 and 1998.[365] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was a leading member of this cell from 1994 until mid-1996 and he worked closely with its chief editor, Shaykh Umar Mahmud Uthman Abu Umar, better known as Abu Qatada al-Filistini. Abu Qatada was a well-known Palestinian cleric residing in London who had started to preach in a prayer hall in London in 1994 and had adopted the Algerian jihad as his core issue. By then, he had already attracted many followers after several years of preaching in Peshawar, and by the end of the decade, he had emerged as a key Salafi jihadi cleric and spiritual leader for al-Qa'ida sympathizers in Europe.[366]

Abu Qatada and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's relationship was characterized by many ups and downs. A former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group member in London described it as "a love-hate relationship," saying it was "a headache for everyone."[367] Gradually, the relationship consisted more of hate than love, and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri came to reserve some of his harshest words of criticism for Abu Qatada.[368] The latter had a much stricter and rigid Salafi orientation than the hard-line, but pragmatic, militarily oriented jihadism of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. When he abandoned London in 1997, one of the first objectives Abu Mus'ab al-Suri set for himself was to write his memoirs of his involvement in the GIA media cell in order to expose Abu Qatada and reveal his "catastrophic influence" on the jihadi current in Algeria, a project many of his fellow Afghan Arabs strongly discouraged him from fulfilling.[369]

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[365] This section draws heavily from Lia (2008), 182-88.

[366] Abu Qatada has been repeatedly taken into custody by British authorities who have called him "the most significant extremist Islamic preacher" in the country. Philip Johnston and Joshua Rozenberg, "Reid Wins Battle to Deport Cleric," Telegraph (UK), 26 February 2007. In October 2001, the UN's Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee listed him as an "individual belonging to or associated with Al-Qaida organisation." See Ministracion de Justicia, "Juzgado Central de Instruccion no.005, Madrid, Sumario (Proc.Ordinario) 0000035 /2001 E," 17 September 2003 (indictment against the Abu Dahdah network), 27, http://news.lp.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/terrorism/espbinldn91703cmp.pdf (accessed February 2004); "Profile: Abu Qatada," *BBC News*, 9 May 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4141594.stm (accessed October 2006); United Nations Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee, "The list of individuals belonging to or associated with Al-Qaida organisation/Last updated on 25 July 2006," 28 www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1267/pdflist.pdf (accessed July 2006).

[367] Noman Benotman, in interview with author, London, 15 September 2006.

[368] Their conflict was not only over ideology, but also personal. The sociable, highly articulate and charismatic Abu Qatada had overshadowed Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and won over to his camp many of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's followers. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had simply failed to establish himself as a leader and gather a large crowd of followers, even though he was respected for his knowledge and expertise. Camille Tawil, in interview with author, London, 14 September 2006; Saad al-Faqih, in telephone interview with author, 17 September 2006.

[369] Cited in Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus'ab al-Suri), *A Summary of My Testimony on Jihad in Algeria, 1988-1996* (Arabic) (n.p.: 1 June 2004, Issues for the Triumphant in Righteousness Series no. 6), 27.

Like Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Abu Qatada had also been in Peshawar, but only since 1990, and he went inside Afghanistan only after Kabul had been re-conquered in 1992.[370] After they fell out with each other, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri began reminding his readers that Abu Qatada only came to the Afghanistan scene "after the Afghan jihad had ended" and was not a proper jihadi with field experience.[371] This point is also illustrative of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's criticism of the Salafis. The Salafis had not earned their credentials on the battlefield, and they were ill-equipped to guide the jihadi movement in the increasingly more inhospitable and complicated security environment confronting the jihadis from the mid 1990s onwards.[372]

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's description of Abu Qatada's rise to prominence is revealing:

> His prayer hall became a place where bulletins were distributed, donations were collected, and a place where jihadis and zealots gathered. It also became a spot where the British security service and other secret services monitored the Islamists. With his simplicity and easy manners, Abu Qutadah became the religious reference point for these Algerian youth, Arab-Afghans and others in London who joined his school. After a period of time, he became the reference point for many others in European capitals.... This happened in spite of the fact that Abu Qutadah himself was not a jihadi and had no history in that field. However, his Salafi background, his oratory zeal, and his adoption of the jihadis' ideas together with the thirst in jihadi circles for any scholar or student of knowledge, who would support their program and cover their needs, made him into a shaykh and a jihadi reference point for this circle.[373]

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri recalls how Abu Qatada attracted a crowd in a way he found disconcerting due to his own constant security alertness:

> He had been a supporter of the Tabligh group, before he converted to the Salafi ideology. He inherited these oratory qualities, the open, unsnobbish and sociable manners. He loved extensive meetings. He opened his house and subsequently his mosque to every visitor, where every issue was discussed with each and everyone in a spontaneous and unsnobbish

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[370] "Q&A with Muslim cleric Abu Qatada," *CNN.com*, 29 November 2001, http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/11/27/gen.qatada.transcript.cnna/ (accessed October 2006).
[371] Al-Hakim (2004b), 29.
[372] For more on the struggle over authority in jihadi groups, see E. Alshech, "The Emergence of the 'Infallible Jihad Fighter' – The Salafi Jihadists' Quest for Religious Legitimacy," *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis*, no. 446 (3 June 2008), www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA44608.
[373] Ibid., 21.

> manner. Secret houses were opened, where dinner parties were held for the group. In spite of what this style [of activism] brought in terms of a warm atmosphere and many followers, its security complications were an inescapable issue, especially in the climate of London and among the supporters of jihad in Algeria.[374]

When the headquarters of the *al-Ansar* newsletter were raided by British police in 1995, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had called upon Abu Qatada and his followers to see this as a wake-up call. After all, they were behind enemy lines and should start thinking of applying guerrilla warfare tactics to their media work:

> I made them understand that we were in a hit and run war. I presented to them a plan for how to continue: work on the publication of a new journal, change the place of issuing it to one of the Scandinavian countries, and spread the activities to more than one place. I warned them that "the security storm" was coming, and that we were forced to deal with it in the manner of a guerrilla war of hit and run, even in the field of our media activities.[375]

This warning fell on deaf ears, however. Instead, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri says, he was ridiculed by Abu Qatada's supporters, who called him "James Bond." More importantly, underneath the disagreement over the practical organization of the media cell lay a more profound clash between Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's pragmatic, military-oriented jihadism and Abu Qatada's strict, purist, Salafist orientation. As Abu Mus'ab al-Suri writes:

> Abu Qutada was extreme in his support of Salafism and the Ahl al-Sunnah school and the ideas of the Wahhabite Call. He was strongly opposed to other schools within the broader circle of Ahl al-Sunnah. He vehemently fought sectarianism (*madhhabiyyah*); he was aggressive in his discussions, stern in his expressions, issued bold fatwas and rulings, had excessive confidence in himself, and was not tolerant of other opinions.... He had a list of heresies, (lit. "innovativism," *al-mubtadi'ah*) in Islam. He dubbed it "the school of straying from the right path and heretic tendencies" (*ahl al-dalal wa'l-ahwa'*), and it included most of the Islamic

[374] Ibid., 28.
[375] Ibid., 32.

> doctrinal, legal and missionary, reformist and political schools, even a number of the jihadi schools, new as old, their programs and their men.[376]

Their ideological differences went so far that Abu Qatada's followers began accusing Abu Mus'ab al-Suri of being a heretic. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri claims he attempted to dissuade Abu Qatada from adopting hard-line positions on doctrinal issues since they were useless or even counterproductive to the struggle. Abu Qatada and his followers did not listen:

> In their eyes, we were only activists (*harakiyyun*), who theorized in politics. We were not clean of the Muslim Brotherhood virus, despite the fact that we were among the jihadis. We did not understand the issues of Islamic doctrine!!… It did not last long before his followers, especially Abu Walid al-Filastini [one of Abu Qutadah's closest aides], began issuing fatwas saying that I was an heretic (lit. "innovator," *min al-mubtadi'ah*).[377]

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri came to blame Abu Qatada for the growing popularity of hard-line Salafi doctrines among the GIA supporters in London and beyond. There is little doubt that this type of hard-line Salafi rhetoric was present in GIA publications in Europe in the subsequent period, and had become the language by which the GIA's bloody purges of opponents from 1995 onwards were justified.[378] In Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's view, this had a tremendously destructive effect on the jihadi movement:

> [Shaykh Abu Qutadah al-Filastini's influences] also had consequences for the "salafi-jihadi excessiveness" school (*minhaj 'ghulat al-salafiyyah al-jihadiyyah'*), which gradually became more prominent in the shadow of this cause. Abu Qutadah should be considered—in my view—among the most prominent theoreticians of this school. Together with a few others, Abu Qutadah threw himself into its chairmanship role in the period that followed. He seduced them to his side and they issued fatwas on whatever the extremist listeners in Algeria and followers in London and elsewhere in Europe requested from them.[379]

Not being a recognized religious cleric himself, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had no way to confront Abu Qatada on religious grounds. He witnessed with growing bitterness how his former Algerian disciples and trainees from the Peshawar period now joined Abu

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[376] Ibid., 28.
[377] Ibid., 31.
[378] For an illustrative example, see "The Ruling of Fighting the Innovators" (Arabic), *Majallat al-Jama'ah*, no. 10 (September 1996).
[379] Al-Hakim (2004b), 29.

Qatada's circle: "they were Salafis who were inclined to extremism like him [Abu Qatada]. The youth adhere faithfully to their shaykhs, and attach a holiness and infallibility to them."[380]

For a period of time, there was a mutual boycott between Abu Qatada and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. Violent quarrels occurred between them during the crisis following the GIA's execution of two leading mujahidin leaders from the "Algerianist" (or *al-Jaz'arah*) current.[381] The *al-Ansar* newsletter was completely taken over by Abu Qatada followers, and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri says he had to purchase the bulletin at the entrance of Abu Qutada's prayer hall, where he was treated like "a stranger."[382] He was especially incensed by the fact that his name remained so closely associated with Abu Qatada's writings in *al-Ansar*, while the latter bestowed legitimacy on the bloody purges in Algeria after the jihad had deviated under Jamal Zaytuni's emirate. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri portrayed Abu Qatada as someone who whitewashed the GIA, rather than as the GIA's primary religious reference point:

> The GIA leadership in Algeria were a group of deviants already and the Algerian intelligence completed their deviance and employed them, but Abu Qutadah's role was that of a mufti who bestowed legitimacy on the deviancy after it had occurred for the audiences in exile. He had no role internally in Algeria as far as I know.… Abu Qutadah and Abu Walid played for Abd al-Rahman Amin [Zaytuni], and his group of criminals and supporters in exile the same role as Ibn Baz and Ibn Uthaymin play for the ruling Saudi family. This was their crime.[383]

Upon arriving in Afghanistan in 1997, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri isolated himself in a desert guesthouse near Kandahar, where he wrote a 130 page manuscript in order to tell the true story about Abu Qatada. Facing strong opposition from other leading jihadis, however, he decided to postpone its publication. Only in 2004 did his book on Algeria and Abu Qatada appear on the jihadi web, and it remains the most biographical of all his written publications.

Few jihadi writers have used stronger words against a cherished jihadi ideologue like Abu Qatada. It is not known whether Abu Qatada responded directly to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's attack. He was clearly reluctant to engage publicly in polemics against other al-Qa'ida ideologues. Although egotism, personality clashes and rivalries clearly played

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[380] Ibid.

[381] Ibid., 36.

[382] Ibid., 35; "Meeting with the Kuwaiti Newspaper," audiofile no. 4, 3.

[383] Al-Hakim (2004b), 37.

an important part in Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's conflict with Abu Qatada, this conflict highlights not only the presence of a significant ideological divide at the very core of the jihadi current, but also the depth of this ideological chasm. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's critique also provides insight into what kind of policy dilemmas and negative operative implications a rigid application of doctrinaire Salafism may create for the jihadi current, since it implies that religious learning and observance of strict religious doctrines are prioritized to the detriment of skills such as organizational experience, military training and strategic expertise.

The Controversy over the Taliban's (Lack of) Islamic Legitimacy

The policy dilemmas resulting from the rise of a doctrinarian Salafi subcurrent within the jihadi movement were also very visible in Afghanistan, the main playing field for the jihadis since the late 1980s.[384] There were significant differences in religious observance and practices between the Arab volunteer fighters, many of whom were observant Salafis, and the Afghan resistance, who by and large observed the Hanafi school and were tolerant of Sufi shrines and other practices that Salafis regarded as godless innovatism in Islam. This had been a problem during the first Arab Afghan experience from the mid-1980s until around 1992, and was no less so during the second round, following the Taliban's seizure of power in 1996 and until their downfall in late 2001.

A significant segment of the Arab Afghan community in Afghanistan mistrusted the Taliban, as they mistrusted and despised the Afghan population for its superstitious and deviant religious observance, which came on top of their contempt for Afghanistan's perceived general backwardness and primitiveness. Partly due to the prevalence of hard-line Salafi attitudes among them, the Arab-Afghans soon became embroiled in tense ideological disputes over whether the Taliban regime should be considered an Islamic emirate worth fighting for and to which emigration was obligatory. Many Arab militants who had moved to Afghanistan simply considered the Islamic emirate just another temporary safe haven from which they might be able to train their members and reorganize their forces in preparation for an armed campaign in their home countries. For them, the Taliban regime was not a kernel or a starting point for the coming Islamic caliphate. Hence, fighting alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance was not a religious duty. Among the hard-line Salafis in the Arab Afghan community, the criticism of the Taliban went much further: they argued that it

[384] This section draws heavily on my book. See Lia (2008), 239-45.

was utterly impermissible to fight alongside the Taliban regime because it meant fighting under an infidel banner.[385]

In his books, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri described at length the destructive role played by the Salafi hardliners in Afghanistan, who seized any occasion to reprimand and correct purportedly deviant behaviour among those Arab fighters who adapted to local customs, for example by praying in the manner in which the Afghans prayed. The Salafis' contempt for the Taliban and other non-Salafi mujahidin fighters knew few boundaries:

> One of the astonishing things I must mention in this context is a statement made by one of those extremist Salafi Jihadis. He told me in one of our conversations that *"jihad must be under the Salafi banner; its leadership, program, and religious rulings must also be Salafi; and everything should be subjected to proof [in accordance with Salafi methodology]. If we should accept that non-Salafis participate with us in Jihad, we do only do so because we need them. However, they should not have any leadership role at all. We should lead them like a herd of cows to perform their duty of jihad."* I couldn't really understand how we are going to participate in Jihad with our brethrens in religion and faith if we should deal with them as a herd of cows...![386]

Obviously, such contemptuous attitudes opened up serious cleavages in the Arab Afghan diaspora regarding the future course of action, especially with regard to the Arab Afghans' position on the Taliban.

In Afghanistan, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri became known as one of the Taliban's most faithful defenders against the Salafis. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had always displayed pragmatism and leniency vis-à-vis non-adherence to the strict Salafi code of conduct as long as the zeal and determination to fight a jihad was beyond doubt. This, he found among the Taliban.[387] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri became spokesman for a current of thinking that advocated paying allegiance to Mullah Omar, the Taliban's supreme leader, and

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[385] See the discussion in "Are the Taliban from Ahl as-Sunnah?," At-Tibyaan Publications website, http://tibyaan.atspace.com/tibyaan/articlef7c9.html?id=1116 (accessed February 2007). The article contains extensive quotes from Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's book *Afghanistan, the Taliban, and the Battle of Islam Today* (1998) (Arabic).

[386] Al-Hakim (2004a), 844-45.

[387] Due to his conflict with Bin Ladin, he could obviously not afford also to be on bad terms with the Afghan government, but there was clearly a strong ideological component behind his decision. Abdel Bari Atwan, the Arab news editor who met with Abu Mus'ab al-Suri several times during the mid- and late 1990s, recalls that Abu Mus'ab al-Suri telephoned him in 1997 or 1998, saying that he had stopped working for al-Qa'ida, and that instead he now served as media adviser for the Taliban. Abdel Bari Atwan, in discussion with the author, London, 28 April 2006.

working directly with the Taliban authorities.[388] He vigorously defended the emirate in his publications and during his lectures and travelling inside Afghanistan. Indeed, his first published work in Afghanistan after his return to the country was a long epistle primarily dedicated to refuting hard-line Salafi charges against the Taliban regime that the conditions for the Abode of Islam (*dar al-islam*), to which true Muslim believers should emigrate, were not yet present in Afghanistan. According to these charges, the Taliban government was not a legitimate government, and its war against the Northern Alliance was not a jihad ("in this war both the killer and the killed will go to hell").[389]

Judging by letters and documents uncovered in Afghanistan after the U.S.-led invasion, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was clearly seen as an important Taliban advocate. His book on the Taliban remains one of his most cited books, and was referred to by trainees in al-Qa'ida's training camps.[390] In one letter discussing the "Taliban's infidelity," he was accused of having written a long research paper stating that "it is permissible to fight under the banner of infidelity, supporting his opinion with quotes from here and there."[391] In other correspondence, his name arose when the Taliban's request for United

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[388] However, his relationship with the Taliban expanded gradually. At the time of an interview by the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Ra'y al-'Amm* in April 1999, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri had not yet met with Mullah Omar. It was only in early 2000 that he met with Mullah Omar and swore an oath of allegiance to him. From then on, he "maintained extensive relations with Mullah Umar," according to Spanish court documents. According to one source, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri used to spend many hours sitting with the Taliban leader at the latter's office in Qandahar. See "Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's Communiqué to the British and Europeans regarding the London Bombings in July 2006," Middle East Transparent website, 23 December 2005, www.metransparent.com/texts/abu_massab_assuri_communique_calling_for_terror_in_europe.htm (accessed October 2006); "Meeting with the Kuwaiti Newspaper (al-Ra'i al-'Amm) in Kabul," transcript of audiofile no. 2, 18 March 1999, 5 (Arabic); "Communiqué from the Office of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri," 22 December 2004 (Arabic), 7; "Juzgado Central de Instruccion Nº 005, Madrid, Sumario," 17 September 2003, 28; José María Irujo, "El hombre de Bin Laden en Madrid," *El Pais*, 2 March 2005, 18, www.elpais.es/comunes/2005/11m/08_comision/libro_electronico_red_islam/red_islamista_01%20doc.pdf (accessed July 2006).

[389] Umar Abd al-Hakim (1998), 2-3. This criticism has also been referred to on later occasions on jihadi web forum discussions about the Taliban. See "An Interpretation of Imam Mullah Umar, May God Protect him" (Arabic), *Muntada al-Safinet*, 10 November 2005, www.al-saf.net/vb/showthread.php?t=18448&highlight=%E3%D5%DA%C8+%C7%E1%D3%E6%D1%ED (accessed November 2005).

[390] See Harmony Document AFGP-2002-801138, "Various Admin Documents and Questions," 45, www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-801138-Trans.pdf, and www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-801138-Orig.pdf, 50 (accessed April 2006) (translation).

[391] Harmony Document AFGP-2002-601693, "Status of Jihad," Combating Terrorism Center website (West Point), www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-601693-Trans.pdf and www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-601693-Orig.pdf (accessed April 2006).

Nations (UN) membership was condemned. (The hard-line Salafis viewed the UN as an infidel organisation.)[392]

The Salafi problem was not simply a disturbing factor in the Arab Afghan community's relationship with the Taliban. It also threatened al-Qa'ida's legitimacy as Bin Ladin moved to solidify his alliance with Mullah Omar. According to memoirs by an Arab Afghan veteran who attended the Khalden training camp from 1996 onwards, the ideological conflict over the Taliban's Islamic legitimacy had been particularly strong at that camp, especially at the Institute for the Faith Brigades (*ma'had kata'ib al-iman*), located next to the camp.[393] The students at the Institute, who were mostly North African jihadis, began publicizing bin Ladin's "misguided errors," especially the fact that he fought with the Taliban, many of whom were "immersed in the greatest of sins."[394] Their criticism of bin Ladin also included his relationship with Sudan and leading politicians in Pakistan. They also accused a leading figure in al-Qa'ida's juridical committee, Abu Hafs al-Mawritani, of being a follower of the *mu'tazilah*, an unorthodox school in early Sunni Islam most known for denying that the Qur'an was eternal and insisting upon free will.

This hard-line Salafi agitation against the Taliban and al-Qa'ida led to heavy pressure being placed on the Khalden camp administration to discipline the radicals. While some of the radicals chose to leave the camp, others began changing their views about the Taliban. This shift came partly as a result of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's efforts in propagating the case for the Taliban. Together with other leading jihadis, such as Abu Laith al-Libi, then a leading member of LIFG, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was instrumental in persuading many radicals to accept al-Qa'ida's policy of fighting for the Taliban.[395]

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[392] The letter stated: "We saw, through the story of the Syrian brother Abi-Mos'ab and others, how they were making insignificant excuses in order to continue requesting a seat at the United Nations. Once they declare, 'We only need the seat to prompt the countries of the world to acknowledge us,' they consider that as a license to have rights. Meanwhile, they say 'This is a rotten organization; let's send a bad man.' Where can we find people who are able to challenge the world [to recognize that] destroying the idols that were left behind is not as great a sin as joining the United Nations?." Cited in Harmony Document AFGP-2002-602181, "Political Speculation," Combating Terrorism Center website (West Point), www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-602181-Trans.pdf and www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/AFGP-2002-602181-Original.pdf (accessed April 2006).

[393] See "The Truth of Abu Abdallah Muhajir who led al-Zarqawi astray and enabled the latter to shed blood," *Muntadayat al-Mahdi,* 14 July 2005 (Arabic), www.almahdy.name/vb/showthread.php?t=3354 (accessed August 2006). I am indebted to my colleague Truls Hallberg Tønnessen for this information and for locating these memoirs on the web.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Ibid

Judging by his writings after his arrival in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri appears to have grown increasingly disappointed by the inability of the jihadi organizations to rally the Islamic nation, the Umma, in defense of the Taliban. When he looked back at the Afghan experience of 2004, he lamented the fact that so few had decided to settle in the Islamic emirate and defend it. His disenchantment with the scholars is evident: "none of the Muslim scholars, particularly renowned clerics, and none of the symbols of Islamic call (*da'wah*) who deafened the world with empty slogans about jihad, emigrated there."[396] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and those Arab Afghans who wished to make the Taliban a pillar of their jihadi project had clearly failed, not only because they fought an uphill battle against the Taliban's external enemies, but perhaps even more so because of the sizeable anti-Taliban opposition *within* the jihadi currents themselves, let alone the general condescending Arab attitude towards the Islamic emirate. After Usama bin Ladin had succeeded in launching the 9/11 attacks on the United States, thus provoking a U.S. military intervention that ended Taliban rule, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (and many other leading figures in the Arab Afghan community in Afghanistan) deplored the "catastrophic effect" of the 9/11 attacks for the jihadi current.[397]

Fighting Innovations or the Occupiers in Iraq? Salafi Criticism of Al-Qa'ida in Iraq

Given the strong Salafi subcurrent among the volunteers in al-Qa'ida's training camps in Afghanistan, it is perhaps not surprising that similar criticism surfaced following the opening of a new front in 2003 against the so-called Crusaders in Iraq. One such example is found in the writings of Sadiq al-Karkhi. Little is known about al-Karkhi, but his articles were deemed sufficiently authoritative to be included on the *Minbar al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad* website, the most important Salafi jihadi library on the web.[398] Al-Karkhi had authored an interesting piece on al-Qa'ida's ideology back in 2003, launching the catchy slogan "Salafi in doctrine and Jihadi in methodology."[399] As

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[396] Al-Hakim (2004a), 40. This excerpt can also be found in "Thirteenth Part of Serialized Book on Al-Zarqawi and Al-Qa'ida Published Part 13 of serialized book: 'Al-Zarqawi... The Second Generation of Al-Qa'ida' by Fu'ad Husayn, Jordanian writer and journalist," *Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* (London), 11 July 2005 (FBIS translation).

[397] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri wrote, for example, that: "The outcome [of the 9/11 attacks] as I see it, was to put a catastrophic end to the jihadi current, and end to the period which started back in the beginning of the 1960s of the past century and has lasted up until September 11th. The jihadis entered the tribulations of the current maelstrom which swallowed most of its cadres over the subsequent three years." Cited in al-Hakim (2004a), 760.

[398] See Minbar al-Tawhid website, http://www.tawhed.ws

[399] In his essay entitled "Why 'Salafi-Jihadism'?," which has circulated on various jihadi websites since 2003, al-Karkhi wrote: "Facing these different and opposing schools and doctrines...the Muslim is confused. Where to go? Should I follow the Ikhwan path? Or the al-Jamiya? Or the al-Sururiyyah school? Or? Or? The answer to this important question is: Join and follow the path of the Salafi-Jihadis. Be Salafi

becomes clear in his subsequent writings, al-Karkhi was clearly more preoccupied with adherence to the Salafi part of Salafi jihadism, than with the politico-military imperatives of a jihadi insurgency. In April 2007, he published an article containing thinly veiled criticisms of al-Qa'ida in Iraq for its failure to live up to its religious obligations, from a Salafi viewpoint. According to al-Karkhi, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, the amir of the "Islamic State of Iraq," had made a pledge to "destroy and remove all manifestations of Polytheism (*shirk*) and ban their means."[400] After a lengthy elaboration on the proofs in the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunna on the importance of fighting such sinful practices, al-Karkhi warns that anyone who dares to violate the mujahidin's laws prohibiting "visits to the tombs" (i.e. Sufi shrines), is an infidel.[401] Furthermore, in al-Karkhi's view, "it is not permissible [for the mujahidin] to leave these tombs and shrines in place as long as they have the capability to destroy them."[402] Al-Karkhi rejects the idea that such matters should be postponed and dealt with at later stages:

> It is not as some people say that it is permissible to leave them in place in order to avoid pitting the people against the mujahidin and deprive the mujahidin from popular support. [One should not] wait until belief and knowledge of Islam enter the hearts of people, assuming that they will then destroy these shrines themselves.[403]

Al-Karkhi implicitly assails al-Baghdadi and the Islamic State in Iraq ("those who claim an interest in fighting polytheism") for failing to move forward and carry out their pledges on the ground: "If you were sincere in your calls...you would have started to act, not only with words and theorizing."[404]

A rather different view is spelled out in *The Management of Savagery* by Abu Bakr Naji, an important strategic studies document. The book was first published by a prominent al-Qa'ida media outlet, the *Sawt al-Jihad* magazine, in 2005, and was widely distributed within the jihadist community.[405] Naji's work analyzes the challenge of building an

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in doctrine and Jihadi in methodology. This is the program of the Virtuous Forefathers, May God be pleased with them." Cited in Sadiq al-Karkhi, "Why 'Salafi-Jihadism'?" (Arabic), 30 January 2003. The essay has appeared on numerous jihadi websites, including the *Global Islamic Media Centre* message board on 5 September 2003 (groups.yahoo.com/group/globalislamicmedia), and is currently available at http://www.aljazeeratalk.org/forum/showthread.php?p=283999.

[400] Sadiq al-Karkhi, "Notes on the Fundamentals of an Islamic State: The Duty to Demolish and Remove Manifestations of Polytheism" (Arabic), Minbar al-Tawhid wa'l-Jihad website, 25 April 2007, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=f37990sv.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid.

[403] Cited in al-Karkhi (2007).

[404] Ibid.

[405] Naji.

Islamic state on territory controlled by jihadi organizations, with clear references to the evolving situation in Iraq. His study devotes marginal attention to Salafi proofs and refutations. He offers an overwhelmingly rationalist analysis, based on cost-benefit calculations, of the challenges facing the jihadi movement, offering detailed and often practical recommendations on the way forward. In most cases, pragmatism takes precedence over doctrinal purity. For example, among the recommendations Naji presents in his study is that the jihadis "must understand how to live with all classes of people."[406] In particular, Naji writes, jihadis must learn to deal pragmatically with people who "commit a heretical act or crime" and search for solutions to the overwhelming social problems among the Muslim masses.[407] Naji cites 'Abdullah 'Azzam extensively on the need to live among the people, instead of emulating "the Islamic missionaries [who] live in elite clean societies where they do not have to interact with most classes of believing people except in gatherings, conferences, sermons, and meetings."[408]

Naji also addresses the problem of "heresy" in the ranks of the mujahidin, calling for raising "the intellectual level" of the youth and imbuing them with more knowledge to defeat this problem.[409] Again, security concerns, more than religious doctrines, are the underlying factor. In fact, excessive respect for shaykhs and clerics may well cause harm to the mujahidin. Below is an example from Naji's study of such "errant conduct"—one that has been retold in several other jihadi studies on security awareness:

> And once, one of them was told to read some specific documents and letters and then burn them immediately but instead of burning them, he had hid them very well. And when his house was searched, during random searches by the intelligence agencies, they found those documents. Those allowed the opening of a case—and in reality—an enormous investigation. And when he was asked—in prison—of why he didn't destroy the documents as he was told to, he replied saying, "I couldn't allow myself to burn papers with the hand-writing of the Noble Scholars and the Commanders."[410]

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[406] Ibid.
[407] Cited in Naji, 63-64.
[408] Ibid., 63.
[409] Ibid., 71.
[410] Ibid., 72. The story also appears in Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Precaution, Secrecy and Concealment: Balancing Between Negligene and Paranoia" (Tenth Chapter of *From The Fruits of Jihad*) (Tibyan Publications, n.d.), 17.

Zawahiri vs. Zarqawi

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Naji are not the only strategists in al-Qa'ida who have warned against doctrinarian elements in al-Qa'ida and advocated a path that also offered political returns in this life, not only rewards in the hereafter. The clash between politico-military strategists and religious doctrinarians is also evident in the 2005 correspondence between al-Qa'ida's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri and the former amir of al-Qa'ida's Iraqi branch, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, especially as it related to the question of popular mobilization, the goal of an Islamic state and the importance of utilising the political channel.[411] Most analyses of the Zawahiri-Zarqawi correspondence have considered it a dispute over strategy rather than a conflict between military strategists and religious doctrinarians. However, as will be seen in the following, their differences go beyond disagreements over specific strategies and reveal a fundamental disagreement over the very nature of the struggle, bearing strong semblance to Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's clash with hard-line Salafis.

Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi was made public by U.S. authorities in October 2005. By then, Zawahiri had long been al-Qa'ida's most important strategist, but might have felt a certain unease about the meteoric rise of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born jihadi commander in Iraq who by 2005 had risen to become a figure of iconic proportions among global jihadi supporters. Yet, by mid-2005, the latter had also begun to incur a steady stream of criticism from his allies in the Iraqi insurgency as well as well-known jihadi ideologues in exile, including his former ideological mentor in Jordan, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the Syrian Abu Basir al-Tartusi in London and others. A key factor behind this was Zarqawi's controversial tactics of video-taping and publicizing decapitation of hostages as well as his mass killings of Shi'a civilians in Iraq. These criticisms of Zarqawi's tactics betrayed a more fundamental doctrinal cleavage than simply a dispute over specific means of warfare.

Zarqawi's extremist views were well known to the al-Qa'ida leadership already during the pre-9/11 period, when Zarqawi was allowed to establish his camp near Herat in 1999. According to one account, "there was no agreement between Abu Mus'ab and the brothers" on a variety of doctrinal issues; in particular, Zarqawi's position on the principles of loyalty and disavowal (Al Wala' Wal Bara'), a cornerstone in Salafi

[411] See Zawahiri (2005). For the Arabic original of Zawahiri's letter, see http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-Zawahiri-Letter-Arabic-10-05.pdf. For a discussion on the authenticity of the letter, see Stephen Ulph, "Is al-Zawahiri's Letter to al-Zarqawi a Fake?," *Terrorism Focus*, 2, 19 (21 October 2005), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=589&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=238&no_cache=1.

teachings, was considered extreme.[412] Even after Zarqawi finally pledged official allegiance to the al-Qa'ida leadership in late 2004, the doctrinal differences persisted, as is evident from Zawahiri's letter.

The establishment of an Islamic state in the heart of the Arab world lies at the core of Zawahiri's strategy, a point he reiterated in his 2005 letter.[413] Hence, ensuring the success of Zarqawi's insurgent organisation, not only in the military field, but also on the political arena, was of utmost importance to Zawahiri. However, any significant involvement in politics would necessarily involve negotiations, compromises and concessions, all of which were inimical to Zarqawi's puritanical concepts of jihad.

More than any other jihadi commander, Zarqawi had proved his ability to exact bloody revenge on his Western enemies through his gory audio-visual executions of Western hostages. A rising star in the the global jihadi current, Zarqawi was widely celebrated as the "Prince of the Slaughterers" (*amir al-dhabbahin*) by thousands of ecstatic supporters worldwide. This popularity among jihadi supporters was not matched with a similar approval among more mainstream Muslims, and certainly not among Iraqis in general. Still, his iconic status made him less receptive to warnings that the long-term consequences of his tactics were self-destructive. Zarqawi increasingly saw the nature of his campaign of violence as a global epic struggle, heroic, devout and pure, devoid of petty politics and dishonorable compromises.

In his 2005 letter of advice, Zawahiri did not question Zarqawi's right to kill Shi'a or execute Western hostages. Rather, Zawahiri's main argument was that such acts did not serve the greater cause and that political utility had to come first. Hence, he urged Zarqawi to avoid any action that "the masses do not understand or approve."[414] Indiscriminate murder of Shi'a civilians was clearly one example of such action. Zawahiri pointed out that "the sectarian factor (i.e. the targeting of the Shi'a) is

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[412] See a biography on Zarqawi, written by Muhammad Ibrahim Makkawi, better known as Sayf al-'Adl or Sayf al-Din al-Ansari al-'Adl, former colonel in the Egyptian Special Forces, who joined the Egyptian Islamic Jihad in the 1980s and later became a top security official in al-Qa'ida, and published, *inter alia*, as "The Jihadi Life Story of Commander 'the Slaughter' Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi: Sayf al-Adel (the security official in the Global Army of Qa'idat al-Islam) writes down the history of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi" (Arabic), *Muntadayat al-Hikma*, 25 May 2005, http://www.hkmah.net/showthread.php?t=8118. Document on file with author.

[413] "It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt, and the neighbouring states of the Peninsula and Iraq.... As for the battles that are going on in the far-flung regions of the Islamic world, such as Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Bosnia, they are just the groundwork and the vanguard for the major battles which have begun in the heart of the Islamic world." Zawahiri (2005).

[414] Ibid.

secondary in importance to outside aggression" in terms of mobilizing people.[415] In fact, the Muslim masses "do not rally except against an outside occupying enemy, especially if the enemy is firstly Jewish, and secondly American."[416] Zawahiri proposed that Zarqawi proceed quickly to prepare the ground for a "political endeavor" that would be broadly based, centered on a nucleus of mujahideen leaders and include "all leaders of opinion and influence" who had not cooperated with the occupation.[417] Particular attention, according to Zawahiri, should be given to forging unity between the insurgent groups and avoiding criticizing and disparaging Islamic clerics on heresy issues, etc., as long as they are not "in allegiance with the Crusaders."[418] In Zawahiri's view the jihadi movement would incur greater harm than benefit if it waged a war against the clerics. Again, the concern about mass support was decisive.[419] Indeed, Zawahiri stressed that, to preserve mass support, the jihadis should not highlight "the doctrinal differences which the masses do not understand, such as this one is Matridi or this one is Ashari or this one is Salafi."[420] Pragmatism, inclusiveness and forbearance were key qualities. Even among "the active mujahideen clerics...there may be some heresy or fault in them," Zawahiri conceded, but he urged that "we must find a means to include them and to benefit from their energy."[421] In the midst of al-Qa'ida's struggle, there was simply no time and place for sorting out and rectifying religious doctrinal differences: it would "require generations of *da'wa*," Zawahiri argued.[422]

As mentioned above, Zawahiri was not the only leading al-Qa'ida strategist to raise these issues with Zarqawi. Similar concerns were voiced by Shaykh Atiyat Allah, a key member of al-Qa'ida's High Command whose letters to Zarqawi were captured and

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[415] Ibid.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

[419] "The ulema among the general public are, as well, the symbol of Islam and its emblem. Their disparagement may lead to the general public deeming religion and its adherents as being unimportant. This is a greater injury than the benefit of criticizing a theologian on a heresy or an issue." Ibid.

[420] Ibid.

[421] Ibid.

[422] "If you take into account the fact that most of the Umma's ulema are Ashari or Matridi, and if you take into consideration as well the fact that the issue of correcting the mistakes of ideology is an issue that will require generations of the call to Islam and modifying the educational curricula, and that the mujahedeen are not able to undertake this burden, rather they are in need of those who will help them with the difficulties and problems they face; if you take all this into consideration, and add to it the fact that all Muslims are speaking of jihad, whether they are Salafi or non-Salafi, then you would understand that it is a duty of the mujahed movement to include the energies of the Umma and in its wisdom and prudence to fill the role of leader, trailblazer, and exploiter of all the capabilities of the Umma for the sake of achieving our aims: a caliphate along the lines of the Prophet's, with God's permission." Ibid.

subsequently made public by U.S. authorities in 2006.[423] Shaykh Atiyat Allah was concerned that Zarqawi failed to attract mass support for the mujahidin in Iraq, and that his military operations increasingly clashed with al-Qa'ida's overall strategy.[424] In general, "policy must be dominant over militarism," Shaykh Atiyat argued. More importantly in this regard is Shaykh Atiyat's repetition of Zawahiri's call to cooperate with religious and tribal Sunni leaders, despite disagreements over religious doctrines.[425] Zarqawi was instructed to consult with "good people who are not mujahidin[,]...even if they are religiously unorthdox at times, or even hypocritical, as long as they are Muslims who agree with us in the resistance and jihad."[426] Shaykh Atiyat Allah's letter seemed to confirm the existence of a serious rift between the al-Qa'ida leadership in Waziristan and that of Zarqawi's group in Iraq.

We do not know the exact response by Zarqawi to Zawahiri's advice. After the U.S. publication of the letter, Zarqawi rejected it as "without foundation, except in the imagination of the leaders of the Black House and its servants."[427] Nevertheless, judging by Zarqawi's speeches at the time, it is reasonable to assume that he might have regarded Zawahiri's recommendations as misguided and even deviant. For instance, Zawahiri seems to portray the mujahidin's struggle as just another nationalist liberation struggle for a piece of land, not a battle for Islam's soul and the salvage of the Islamic nation. He had gone as far as to describe "popular support" as the mujahidin's "strongest weapon" in achieving success.[428] In Zarqawi's opinion, this must have sounded like outright blasphemy. After all, Zawahiri suggested that someone other than God, acting through his faithful vanguard, held the key to victory. To be sure, Zawahiri does add the obligatory phrase "after the help and granting of success by God," but the overall thrust of his arguments detracts from the centrality of the jihadi vanguard and the strength in their belief in God.[429]

This impression is further reinforced when Zawahiri teaches Zarqawi that: "You know well that purity of faith and the correct way of living are not connected necessarily to

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[423] "Letter Exposes New Leader in al-Qa'ida High Command," Combating Terrorism Center website, 25 September 2006, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/CTC-AtiyahLetter.pdf. For Arabic original, see http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/pdf/3OO31006-arabic25639-05.pdf.

[424] For more on Atiyat Allah, see "Between the past, the present and the future ... with Shaykh Attiya Allah. Biography, dialogue, and opinion" (Arabic), posted by "rida ahmad samadi," 29 June 2005, *shabakat ana al-muslim lil-hiwar al-islami*, www.muslm.net. Document on file with the Norwegian Defence Research Establishmnet (FFI).

[425] "Letter Exposes New Leader in al-Qa'ida High Command."

[426] Ibid.

[427] Cited in Ulph.

[428] Zawahiri (2005).

[429] Ibid.

success in the field...."[430] Political astuteness, shrewdness and acumen are indispensable to victory, not pure and unadulterated faith, according to Zawahiri. The jihadis will not succeed if they fail to "take into consideration the reasons and practices which events are guided by."[431] In other words, the jihadis must learn to practice the dirty game of politics. Ironically, this was precisely what jihadis had accused the "mercurial" Muslim Brotherhood of practising since their turn to parliamentarian politics in the 1970s.[432]

The tone of Zarqawi's speeches is very different from Zawahiri's letter. They are all about the need to avenge the crimes of the enemies, the battlefield sacrifices, the purity of the struggle and the heroism and virtues of the true believers. Victory can only be attained through the strength of the individual's belief and collective effort of a small jihadi vanguard, not mass mobilization or political engineering. The masses are either ignored or described in derogatory terms. Consider the following two excerpts, the first from a speech by Zarqawi in May 2005 and the second a letter, purportedly written by him in early 2004:

> Take it to them (the enemy), and if you fight them while your intentions are purely for Allah, and you seek nothing but Allah's pleasure, there will be no way that they (the enemy) can take it for even one hour.... O you Mujahideen! You are this Ummah's chosen few, its first line of defense, its safety valve, and its well-constructed fence. You are the vigilant, guardian rock upon which the American arrogance has crumbled into pieces. With your determination to fight the cross worshippers and their collaborators

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[430] Ibid.

[431] Ibid.

[432] Zarqawi himself described the Muslim Brothers as follows: "As you have observed, they make a profession of trading in the blood of martyrs and build their counterfeit glory on the skulls of the faithful. They have debased the horse, put aside arms, said 'no jihad'…and lied. Their whole effort is to extend political control and seize the posts of Sunni representation in the government cake whose creation has been decided, while taking care in secret to get control of the mujahidin groups through financial support for two purposes. The first is for propaganda and media work abroad to attract money and sympathy, exactly as they did during the events in Syria, and the second is to control the situation and dissolve these groups when the party ends and the gifts are distributed. They are now intent on creating a Sunni shura body to speak in the name of the Sunnis. It is their habit to grab the stick in the middle and change as the political climate changes. Their religion is mercurial. They have no firm principles, and they do not start from enduring legal bases. God is the one from whom we have sought help." Cited in "Feb 12: Full Text of Zarqawi Letter," Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq website, http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040212_zarqawi_full.html.

> from our own skin, not only do you defend the land of the Two Rivers, but you also defend the entire Ummah.[433]
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> These masses are the silent majority, absent even though present. "The hooligans following everyone and his brother hungered. They did not seek enlightenment from the light of science and did not take refuge in a safe corner." These, even if in general they hate the Americans, wish them to vanish and to have their black cloud dissolve. But, despite that, they look forward to a sunny tomorrow, a prosperous future, a carefree life, comfort, and favor. They look ahead to that day and are thus easy prey for cunning information [media] and political enticement whose hiss rings out. In any event, they are people of Iraq.[434]

In Zarqawi's writings and speeches, there is very little emphasis on the need for unity, broad-based alliances, mobilizing tribal leaders, clerics or ways to prepare for a state-like entity. Indeed, his 2004 letter is pervaded by visceral racist hatred for the Shi'a, ("the lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion, the spying enemy, and the penetrating venom...a sect of treachery and betrayal throughout history").[435] Sunni religious leaders are disparagingly dismissed as "Sufis doomed to perdition" and "narcotic opiates and deceitful guides," bereft of any spirit of resistance.[436] Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups are derided as cunning, manipulative and corrupt politicians, deftly "trading in the blood of martyrs."[437]

It seems clear that Zarqawi's war-fighting strategy was about the art of dying heroically on the battlefield, and that this vision clashed with that of the local Iraqi insurgents:

> The Iraqi brothers still prefer safety and returning to the arms of their wives, where nothing frightens them. Sometimes the groups have boasted among themselves that not one of them has been killed or captured. We have told them in our many sessions with them that safety and victory are incompatible, that the tree of triumph and empowerment cannot grow tall

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[433] Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, "O People Of Islam! Strength, Strength!," speech dated 3 May 2005, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ansar_alMujahideen/.

[434] Cited in "Feb 12: Full Text of Zarqawi Letter." The letter was made public by the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq on 12 February 2004. The authenticity of the letter has been questioned. See, e.g., Brian Bennett and Vivienne Walt, "Fields of Jihad," *TIME Magazine* (23 February 2004), www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101040223-590685,00.html; "U.S. Says Files Seek Qaeda Aid in Iraq Conflict," *New York Times*, 9 February 2004, A1.

[435] Cited in "Feb 12: Full Text of Zarqawi Letter."

[436] Ibid.

[437] Cited in "Feb 12: Full Text of Zarqawi Letter."

> and lofty without blood and defiance of death, that the [Islamic] nation cannot live without the aroma of martyrdom and the perfume of fragrant blood spilled on behalf of God, and that people cannot awaken from their stupor unless talk of martyrdom and martyrs fills their days and nights. The matter needs more patience and conviction. [Our] hope in God is great.[438]

As opposed to Zawahiri's proposed strategy of mobilizing mass support through alliances, cooperation, pragmatism and avoidance of violent action that alienated the masses, Zarqawi's vision seems to be entirely based on doctrinal righteousness, coupled with the belief in the utility of brute force.

Conclusion

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's critique of the Salafi doctrinarians and his conflicts with Abu Qatada in London, as well as the Salafi hardliners in Afghanistan, highlight interesting ideological cleavages inside al-Qa'ida and contemporary jihadism, in which religious doctrinairians confront pragmatic strategists. For jihadists, the overall issue in dispute is how, or rather if, one should strike a balance between ideological purity and political utility. More recent examples of this strategist-doctrinairian divide, such as the Salafi criticism of the Islamic State in Iraq for failing to properly enforce Islamic laws in its emirate in Iraq and the Zawahiri-Zarqawi dispute over strategy in 2005, appear to confirm that this divide is a recurrent manifestation in the jihadi movement. To some extent, the divide also reflects the deeply entrenched ikhwani-Salafi divide in modern Islamist movements.

It is often hard to locate and identify cleavages within the jihadi movement with precision. Such divisions often tend to be overlooked since most jihadi writers avoid the topic or couch it in such obfuscated language that it becomes unintelligible for outsiders. The internal disputes discussed in this chapter suggest that the spread of purist Salafi doctrines in the jihadi current from the 1980s onwards, rather than being a source of strength and renewal, has instead constituted an obstacle to mass mobilisation and has more often than not served to handicap and cripple jihadi groups by embroiling them in schisms and internal conflicts, preventing their transition to mass movements.

There is little doubt that doctrinarian Salafi influences have profoundly altered the ideological character of the jihadi current since the early 1990s, following decades of Qutbist dominance in militant Islamic rhetoric. The rise of Salafi discourses and

[438] Ibid.

doctrines has in many ways reduced the *political* content in contemporary jihadi ideology, and weakened its ability to provide formulas for alliances with other political forces. Indeed, perhaps the most important element in Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's critique of the Salafis are the latter's exclusiveness and eagerness to engage in side-battles with deviancy and un-Islamic sects. By the very presence of these ideological elements at the heart of the jihadi current, this global insurgent movement is bound to have limited popular appeal and is destined to remain what Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Zawahiri did not want it to be, namely, elitist, marginal and doomed to failure.

The current growth of Salafi movements worldwide and its remarkable growth among Muslim diaspora communities in the West will probably continue to enhance Salafi influences on extremist fringe groups such as al-Qa'ida. Salafi doctrines offer the comforts of certainty and unity for Muslim communities living outside their areas of origin, divested from the cultural context of their native Islam.[439] However, Salafi tenets may also be ideological straitjackets for al-Qa'ida's ideologues, as they always need a certain flexibility to adapt their extremist message in a rapidly changing world.

As for the role of Western policymakers in exploiting the ideological divisions inside al-Qa'ida and influencing the outcome of ideological battles involving more mainstream Muslim communities, such as non-violent Salafi movements, there is probably not much they can, or should, do, beyond what they are already doing to encourage defection and offer alternatives to violent jihad.[440] As this chapter has shown, al-Qa'ida and the global jihadi movement recruit followers and ideologues of both Salafi and non-Salafi persuasion. Any external attempts at strengthening fundamentalist Salafi groups as a counterweight to al-Qa'ida are not likely to be productive, and are instead likely to have negative consequences for other Western policy goals in the Muslim majority countries, such as the promotion of good governance, human rights and democracy.[441] External meddling in intra-jihadi conflicts is likely to close ranks and foster unity, instead of inflicting harm. Western policymakers are probably best off allowing internal differences and divisions over ideology and strategy to fester undisrupted, while

[439] For the worldwide Salafi movement, see Meijer (2009). For a discussion on Salafism in the West, see Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.)
[440] Examples of this are the successful U.S. efforts in mobilising the Sahwa Councils in Iraq against al-Qa'ida, which greatly decimated the organization and the ongoing project of identifying Afghan tribal elements that may wish to work with the Coalition Forces in Afghanistan.
[441] This strategy has been employed in a number of Arab countries, albeit primarily as a counterweight to political Islamist opposition groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

working hard and innovatively to identify exit strategies and avenues for defection for those who wish to leave violent Islamism behind.[442]

[442] For more on exit strategies, see Tore Bjørgo and John Horgan, eds., *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Disengagement from Political Violence* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Chapter 6: Arab and Non-Arab Jihadis

Anne Stenersen

Introduction

Lacking a reliable geographical base of their own, al-Qa'ida's leaders have traditionally been dependent on other, locally based militants for refuge and logistical support.[443] Al-Qa'ida is a predominantly Arab organization, but prior to 2001, its bases were located mainly in non-Arab countries—Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan. After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Qa'ida attempted to establish a stronger presence in the heart of the Arabian peninsula, notably in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. By 2006, however, these campaigns seem to have largely failed. Although al-Qa'ida remnants continue to be active in the area, and despite a massive propaganda effort on the part of online jihadists to promote al-Qa'ida's Islamic State of Iraq, al-Qa'ida's vision of establishing an Islamic emirate in the Middle East has yet to be fulfilled.[444] Al-Qa'ida's leaders are still largely based at the fringes of the Muslim world, namely, the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan, while relying on non-Arab allies for sanctuary.[445]

Al-Qa'ida's presence in these non-Arab areas begs an important question: was the relationship between the predominantly Arab Salafi jihadists and non-Arab locals ever marred by ethnic and cultural differences? Previous literature has hinted that such tensions existed, but the topic has not yet been the subject of extensive research.[446] Indeed, in the terrorism literature there seems to be a gap regarding the scope of these tensions, their nature and their importance relative to other types of fissures within and around the al-Qa'ida network.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the role of ethnic and cultural tensions within the global jihad current. To narrow down the topic, the analysis will focus exclusively on the relationships between Arabs and non-Arabs. Tensions most likely

[443] The author would like to thank Thomas Hegghammer, Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman for their useful comments to earlier drafts of this chapter.

[444] In a letter dated 9 July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri stressed the importance of establishing a base in the Middle East: "It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt, and the neighboring states of the Peninsula and Iraq; however, the center would be in the Levant and Egypt." Zawahiri (2005), 2.

[445] See Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[446] For some examples of ethnic tensions within the jihadi movements, see, e.g., Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story Of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 182; Coll, 152-53.

existed between other ethnic groups as well, but have not been examined here due to space limitations.[447] The analysis is based on two case studies. First, we will examine al-Qa'ida's efforts at establishing a presence in Somalia in the early 1990s; second, its relationship to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. The crux of this chapter is the discussion of the al-Qa'ida-Taliban relationship, since the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area continues to function as a sanctuary for al-Qa'ida leaders to this day. Understanding the historical roots of this relationship is important in order to assess the current state of affairs. The Somalia case makes for an interesting comparative study because it shows that some of the fault lines identified in this chapter are not unique to the Afghan context.

Through the case studies, the chapter addresses two core questions. First, what were the main causes of tensions between Arab and non-Arab members of the global jihad current? Second, to what extent were these tensions caused by ethnic issues? Analyzing these fault lines is not a straightforward task, since neither "Arabs" nor "non-Arabs" are homogenous groups. Numerous fissures existed *within* as well as between these groups. To properly analyze the nature and role of ethnic tensions, it is essential to be aware of other possible fault lines as well. The analysis will therefore make a distinction between "al-Qa'ida," understood here as the organization around Usama bin Ladin, and other strands of Salafi jihadist militancy. In particular, this chapter will make references to the so-called "Salafi purists," i.e., clerics or militants for whom doctrinal purity is essential (see Chapter 5).[448] As we shall see, the attitudes of these purists towards the Taliban regime differed considerably from those of the more pragmatic al-Qa'ida leaders. The chapter also distinguishes between al-Qa'ida and the broader community of Arab militants who trained or fought in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime.[449]

The chapter argues that there were mainly three types of tensions in the relationships between Arabs and their non-Arab allies, namely: a) disputes over religious doctrines; b) ethnic tensions; and c) disagreements over strategy. The case studies show that doctrinal disputes were raised by the more purist strands of the Salafi jihadist current, while ethnic tensions were typically reported among foot soldiers in the field. Al-

[447] For example, some of the Indonesian militants who trained in Afghanistan expressed strong contempt for their Afghan counterparts. Ken Ward, in email to author, June 2009.

[448] Lia (2009b).

[449] The Syrian theoretician Abu Mus'ab al-Suri estimated that there were fourteen jihadi groups in Afghanistan by 2000 that were recognized by the Taliban—three of which were "non-Arab" and eleven that were "Arab." He described bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida organization as one of the Arab groups. It is also worth pointing out that the organization around bin Ladin was relatively small (300 to 500 people), compared to the total number of militants who are believed to have frequented the training camps in this period (10,000 to 20,000 people). Lia (2008), 247-50; Thomas Hegghammer,"Global Jihadism after the Iraq War," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 1 (2006), 14.

Qa'ida's leaders appear to have stayed clear of these disputes, due to their relatively pragmatic approach to local allies and tolerance of ethnic and cultural differences. The most decisive fault lines in their relationship with local allies were therefore not caused by ethnic or cultural differences, but rather by disagreements over politics and strategy.

Al-Qa'ida in Somalia (1991-1995)

A few years after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, East Africa emerged as a new base of operations for al-Qa'ida. In 1992, Usama bin Ladin decided to move his headquarters to Sudan. Around the same time, al-Qa'ida also had ambitions to establish a presence in the Horn of Africa. Al-Qa'ida operatives went to the region in 1992 and established ties with local militant groups, in particular the Somali *al-Ittihad al-Islami* (AIAI), which had been established in the early 1980s as a union of several local Salafi groups.[450] AIAI's goals were to establish an Islamic state in Somalia and to liberate the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, which was largely inhabited by Somali Ethiopians. Al-Qa'ida initially sought to establish training camps in the country and to support AIAI's efforts to establish a sharia-based state. After U.S. forces entered Somalia in December 1992, however, al-Qa'ida's goals became more narrowly focused on fighting the U.S. presence in the country. By this time, bin Ladin had already expressed clear anti-American views, although his global jihadi ideology, as we know it today, had not yet been clearly formulated. Another, more immediate reason why al-Qa'ida wanted to fight the U.S. presence in Somalia was probably that it viewed it as a threat to its operational base in Sudan.[451]

Thus, the Horn of Africa became one of the first areas where al-Qa'ida sought to establish a presence outside Afghanistan/Pakistan and Sudan. Al-Qa'ida's "Africa Corps" was apparently coordinated by Muhammed Atef (aka Abu Hafs al-Masri), who began travelling to Somalia between 1992 and 1993 to make contact with local militant Islamists. Al-Qa'ida's operational activities began in early 1993 when Atef tasked a group of al-Qa'ida operatives led by Sayf al-Islam al-Masri to go from Peshawar to Somalia. By that time, an agreement had already been made with AIAI to establish

[450] Initially, AIAI's focus was on non-violent activities, but in the early 1990s, the organization became increasingly involved in violence. This was both due to the fall of the Somali regime in January 1991 and the spread of lawlessness and civil war, but probably also because Dahir Hassan Aweys emerged as the leader of AIAI's militant wing. Aweys was one of the leaders who established ties with al-Qa'ida. AIAI was at the height of its influence around 1992. However, from 1991 to 1992, it suffered several military setbacks that ultimately led to the demise of the organization. Today it is regarded as defunct, but some of its leaders contributed to the formation of the Islamic Courts Union, which is still active in Somalia today. Combating Terrorism Center (2007), 35-36.

[451] Ibid., 38-39.

three training camps in the area.[452] Al-Qa'ida also came to support other militant groups in Somalia, notably those associated with warlord Muhammad Farah 'Aidid, whose party had ousted the Somali regime in 1991 and who is believed to have been the main player in the infamous Battle of Mogadishu in 1993—a battle in which eighteen U.S. servicemen were killed.[453]

Al-Qa'ida's main contributions to AIAI were in the fields of training and financing, yet al-Qa'ida members also appear to have been involved as advisors on the political and strategic level, in particular with the "Ogaden branch" of AIAI. In 1993, internal discussions were held within the Ogaden branch to separate itself from AIAI due to disagreements with the leadership. Sayf al-Islam, however, claimed that he had convinced the branch to change its decision.[454] In another instance, Sayf al-Islam was involved in mediating a conflict between AIAI and local Sufi tribes.[455]

Al-Qa'ida's various challenges in the Horn of Africa have been partly documented in a series of letters sent between al-Qa'ida's Africa Corps and al-Qa'ida leaders in Afghanistan in the period from 1991 to 1995.[456] An eyewitness account of al-Qa'ida's activities in Somalia can also be found in a book allegedly written by Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (aka Fadil Harun), published online in 2009.[457] Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, a dual citizen of Kenya and Comoros, was later indicted for participating in the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. The CTC report, "Al-Qa'ida's (mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa," contains a thorough analysis of the letters from the Africa Corps and explains why al-Qa'ida ultimately failed to establish itself in this area.[458] Here, we will focus more specifically on what the available sources can tell us about the conflicts that occurred between al-Qa'ida's Arab members and their Somali counterparts.

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[452] "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," AFGP-2002-600104, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, 1-3, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[453] Combating Terrorism Center (2007), 78-79.
[454] "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 17.
[455] Ibid., 21.
[456] *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[457] Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, *War against Islam: The Story of Fadil Harun, Part One* (Arabic) (n.p., 2009) (downloaded via *Shabakat ansar al-mujahidin*, http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=1463) (accessed May 2009).
[458] See Combating Terrorism Center (2007).

The relationship between al-Qa'ida and AIAI seemed in some ways prosperous.[459] Clearly, however, al-Qa'ida also experienced a number of problems in its relationship with Somali militants. Some of these apparently stemmed from cultural differences. One al-Qa'ida account criticized the clan structure of Somali society, saying "each member of the movement is fanatically attached to his tribe."[460] In one report, Sayf al-Islam described the Somali people as "stingy and greedy."[461] But he also had positive encounters, such as with one of the commanders in Ogaden, whom he described as follows: "[He was] very physically fit and he loved his work. He had a strong personality, and for that reason, everyone was in awe of him at the time. He was very religious, a strict Salafist."[462]

The Arabs of al-Qa'ida were perhaps more frustrated with the organizational skills of the Somalis, who were described as being corrupt, ineffective and disorganized.[463] For example, Sayf al-Islam wrote:

> On the August 30th [1993] at camp Hanji, I met with Sheikh Abdullah Umar, who was representing the Islamic Union. I asked him for some written materials or documents about his organization, and I was surprised to see that he didn't have anything like that with him. The Revolutionary Council met, ended, and everyone went to their homes without making any political plans. And we had Abd al-Salam [in the Revolutionary Council], who had taken $20,000 from Abu Fatima (aka Abu Hafs) on behalf of the council! As for military affairs, they didn't even have any maps with enemy locations and movements.... Because of this, there were no good choices for locations or defense planning, and even worse, they had put all their ammunition in a tent in the middle of the camp.[464]

Another point of criticism towards AIAI's organization was that it was cut off from the Somali masses, something which al-Qa'ida viewed as a fatal mistake. "[A] movement that is isolated from its masses, that is suspicious of its people, and whose people are

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[459] For example, Sayf al-Islam al-Masri described the training of militants in Ogaden as going smooth, and that practical disagreements often were solved after some discussion. "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 7-9.

[460] "Abu Belal's report on jihad in Somalia," AFGP-2002-800640, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, 5, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).

[461] "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 5.

[462] Ibid., 9.

[463] See, for example, ibid., 19-21; "Abu Belal's report on jihad in Somalia," 17-19.

[464] "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 19-21.

suspicious of it, can achieve nothing but destroy itself."[465] Interestingly, these words were echoed by Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2005, when he wrote a letter to the leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. In the letter, he criticized Zarqawi for carrying out actions that alienated the Iraqi population, arguing that without popular support, "the Islamic mujahed movement would be crushed in the shadows, far from the masses who are distracted or fearful..."[466] This illustrates an important point, namely, that al-Qa'ida's critique of AIAI in many cases reflected the critiques it would level on Arab allies. The ethnic and cultural differences, therefore, appear to have been less significant.

There were also certain differences over ideology and strategy between the Arabs of al-Qa'ida and AIAI. AIAI's leadership was split over whether to fight the foreign presence in Somalia or not, and when the first group of al-Qa'ida trainers arrived in Somalia, "the issue had not yet been settled."[467] Nevertheless, the Arabs were determined to set up their training camps as planned. According to Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, al-Qa'ida was careful not to apply too much pressure on AIAI regarding the latter's political decisions.[468] At a later stage, however, conflicts apparently arose between Sayf al-Adel, the leader of al-Qa'ida's activities in Somalia at the time, and AIAI's leaders because "the Somalis felt that the Arabs wanted to interfere with their affairs."[469] After this, the Arabs agreed that they would continue to offer training to the Somalis but that they "should not interfere with any decision of *al-Ittihad* to fight against remote foreign forces."[470]

In 1993, AIAI decided to abandon terrorism for the sake of preaching and other non-violent social action. As mentioned previously, this prompted the Ogaden branch of AIAI to start discussing a separation from AIAI leadership in Somalia.[471] While the Arabs of al-Qa'ida found themselves in the middle of this strife, it does not appear as if they were the main reason for it. The Eritrea-based Ogaden branch of AIAI had a quite

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[465] "The five letters to the African Corps," AFGP-2002-600053, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, 1, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[466] Zawahiri (2005), 4.
[467] Mohammed, 153.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid., 174.
[470] Ibid., 175.
[471] Sayf al-Islam wrote in June 1993, "I was able to convince most of them, but there were still two men who didn't agree. One of them, Abdullah al-Rabi, was very angry. I think that the other one was Ali Jaz or Mohammed Ahmed. There was much discussion among them, and finally, we decided to call it off [announcing the split] for a time. After that, when they went to Jerisli and met a second time, they decided to cancel their decision..." "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 17.

different history and character than the Somali-based AIAI leadership, and this was probably the reason why the former refused to abandon jihad.[472]

However, al-Qa'ida also expressed frustration over AIAI's desicion, and even contemplated allying itself with secular groups, in the belief that the latter would be more effective in helping al-Qa'ida fight the Americans in Somalia. In September 1993, "Abu al-Walid" wrote a letter of advice from the Jihad Wal camp in Afghanistan to "Sayf," saying:

> The Somali leadership [i.e. AIAI] with whom you are dealing has recommended waiting for the arrival of the occupation forces and a misunderstanding to arise between them and the residents before intervening. Frankly, don't be angry, but only a coward or a scoundrel would say such a thing... Beware of them. You must find men you can deal with, even if they are not from our venerable forefathers... Look for a group that is effective with respect to goals that are achievable on behalf of Muslims in this country. I do not mind cooperating with Aideed [i.e. Muhammad Farah 'Aidid, the warlord who ousted the Somali government in 1991] if you have made sure that what he is doing with the Americans is not staged and agreed beforehand as was the case with Ataturk, Abd al-Nasir, Hikmatyar, etc.[473]

Finally, the Arab militants in Somalia encountered problems that stemmed from doctrinal disputes. This does not appear to have been a major issue in the direct relationship between al-Qa'ida and AIAI, but rather between the Arabs and AIAI on one hand, and the local Somali population on the other. Al-Qa'ida and AIAI belonged to a Salafi tradition, while Somalis were largely Sufis. Local religious practices, such as the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, were frowned upon by the more literalist Salafis. This was a potential cause for tension, especially when the Salafis would try to impose their religious beliefs on the locals.

Sayf al-Islam observed that the Salafi-Sufi divide presented a great challenge to AIAI's dealings with the local population. The Sufis, he said, "have a lot of hostility for the members of the Islamic Union, who they say are Wahabbis and agents for foreign countries."[474] It is not known whether the Arabs of al-Qa'ida played any role in aggravating these conflicts. According to Sayf al-Islam, the Arabs actually functioned as mediators in some of these disputes, encouraging AIAI to reconcile with local Sufi

[472] Combating Terrorism Center (2007), 43.
[473] "The five letters to the African Corps," 4.
[474] "The Ogaden file: Operation Holding (al-msk)," 21.

tribes.[475] This is an interesting point because, in several other areas, Arab jihadists have reportedly clashed directly with local populations when attempting to impose a Salafi lifestyle on them. For instance, in Afghanistan in the 1980s, some Arab fighters were attacked and even killed by Afghans because they had torn down local grave markers and decorations. While decorated graves are a common feature of Afghan culture, it is strictly forbidden according to the more purist strands of Salafism.[476] Case studies of Arab jihadists in Chechnya and East Africa tell of similar types of conflicts.[477]

Two things are worth pointing out here. First, clashes over doctrinal issues are not simply caused by the presence of Arabs in non-Arab areas. Rather, they seem to occur when Salafis (whether Arab or local) actively try to impose their religious beliefs in areas where Salafism is traditionally weak. Second, such clashes do not seem to be typical of al-Qa'ida, but rather, of individuals within the Salafi jihadist current who put doctrinal purity above any kind of practical concerns. It cannot be ruled out that al-Qa'ida had purist Salafis among its members, but as we shall see in the next case study, al-Qa'ida's policies in Afghanistan differed considerably from that of the purists.

While ethnic fissures probably existed on an individual level between the Arabs and Somalis, there is little evidence to suggest that such splits were a main cause of conflict between al-Qa'ida's Arab representatives and AIAI. Al-Qa'ida saw many flaws in AIAI as an organization, and described AIAI's members as corrupt, ineffective and out of touch with the Somali masses. However, similar criticisms have been leveled on al-Qa'ida's Arab allies, so it is unclear how important the ethnic divide between the Arabs of al-Qa'ida and AIAI really was. More serious fissures probably occurred as a result of differences in goals and strategy. In particular, al-Qa'ida ran into problems when trying to convince local militants to target the foreign coalition forces in Somalia. To some extent, the Arabs managed to find willing factions to work with, but failed in the end to to unite the various Somali militant groups behind their cause. They also failed to establish a strong presence in the Horn of Africa, but this was not due solely to the conflicts outlined above. Rather, a set of external factors contributed to this failure, such as the costs of operating in Somalia and the fact that the Arabs were unfamiliar with local culture and power structures, which made them prone to exploitation by local

[475] Ibid.
[476] Coll, 152-53.
[477] On Chechnya, see Murad Batal al-Shishani, "The Rise And Fall of Arab Fighters in Chechnya," *Jamestown Foundation*, Conference paper, 14 Sept 2006, http://www.jamestown.org/docs/Al-Shishani-14Sep06.pdf (accessed 2007); on East Africa, see Combating Terrorism Center (2007), 98.

groups. Also, the powerful role of local tribes and clans probably contributed to making the population less receptive of Salafi jihadist ideology.[478]

In 1996, Usama bin Ladin was forced to leave Sudan and, as a result, move al-Qa'ida's base of operations back to Afghanistan. Under the Taliban regime, al-Qa'ida would eventually find what Somalia lacked: a relatively well-functioning state that was willing to give the group protection and freedom to carry out its own, globally-oriented agenda. Despite these benefits, however, the relationship was not without problems.

Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban (1996-2001)

Usama bin Ladin returned to Afghanistan from Sudan in May 1996. During his absence, a religious movement known as the Taliban had swept across the southern and western parts of Afghanistan, and was now threatening to occupy Kabul. After years of civil war, the Taliban had finally brought some degree of stability to the country.

It was not the Taliban, however, that had invited bin Ladin to Afghanistan. When bin Ladin was forced to leave Sudan in 1996, his points of contact in Afghanistan were his former allies in the mujahidin movement, among them the Hizb-i-Islami leader Yunus Khalis. It was representatives of Khalis' Hizb-i-Islami who met bin Ladin at the airport in Jalalabad in May 1996, an area not yet under Taliban control.[479] As one source described it, bin Ladin "had no idea" who the Taliban was at the time of his arrival, and he initially viewed the group as a threat. Rumor had it that it was some kind of Communist army.[480]

In reality, the Taliban was made up of religious students (*taliban* in Pashto) who rose up in reaction to the widespread anarchy, corruption and civil war that had ravaged the country after the Soviet withdrawal, and who aimed to restore peace to reform the Afghan society morally. This would be done through disarming the population and enforcing a strict religious and moral code based on a literal interpretation of Islamic

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[478] Combating Terrorism Center (2007), iii-iv.

[479] Sources differ as to who exactly met Usama bin Ladin at Jalalabad airport, and who his most important Afghan contacts were in this period. According to Vahid Mojdeh (a Taliban foreign affairs official), bin Ladin was met by Haji Abdul Qadeer (Hizb-i-Islami Khalis member and governor of Nangarhar province, where Jalalabad is located). According to al-Hammadi (bin Ladin's former bodyguard), bin Ladin was met by Engineer Mahmud (a Hizb-i-Islami field commander in Jalalabad), and then taken to the headquarters of Yunus Khalis. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri recalls that bin Ladin was met by Yunus Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani. Other sources mention Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, as well as Abd ar-Rasul Sayyaf, as other important contacts in this period. See Bergen (2006), 158-59; *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 65; Camille Tawil, *Al-Qaida and Her Sisters* (Arabic) (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2007).

[480] The rumor was spread by northern Afghan tribesmen, according to Lawrence Wright. Bergen (2006), 158-59; Wright, 229.

texts mixed with local customs. The movement had emerged out of southern Afghanistan in 1994, and was led by Mullah Muhammad Omar, a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war who had worked as a village mullah in the southern province of Kandahar prior to his ascendance as Taliban leader.[481]

Jalalabad fell to the Taliban in July 1996, after Yunus Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani had decided to ally themselves with Mullah Omar. It was now up to the Taliban to decide what to do with bin Ladin and his followers, who were staying in the area at the time. Bin Ladin reportedly met with representatives of the Taliban, who assured him that he would be treated as an honorary guest of their regime. The context is worth noting: the Taliban's initial welcome of bin Ladin had little to do with the latter's position as the al-Qa'ida leader or his ideological standpoints. In Afghanistan in mid-1996, bin Ladin was first and foremost known as a Saudi millionaire who had assisted the Afghans in their fight against the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and for this he enjoyed great respect. Perhaps the Taliban also hoped that he would use his Saudi wealth to help rebuild the country after decades of war. Although bin Ladin's ties with the Afghan mujahidin go back to the 1980s, it was these events in mid-1996 that marked the beginning of bin Ladin's relationship with Mullah Omar's Taliban movement.

To fully understand the relationship between Arab militants and their Afghan hosts in this period, it is necessary to look not only at al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, but also to include the broader Salafi jihadist current and the debates that occurred within it. The following discussion is thus divided into two parts: a) the Taliban government's view of al-Qa'ida; and b) the debates within the Salafi jihadist current regarding the Taliban.

The Taliban Government's View of Al-Qa'ida

The Taliban government was split in its view of bin Ladin. Some of the resentment against bin Ladin probably developed over time, fueled by the al-Qa'ida leader's own provocative actions. There are indications, however, that the Taliban was split on the bin Ladin issue from the very beginning. Mullah Khakshar, the Taliban's deputy Minister of Interior, reportedly met bin Ladin in 1996, after the latter's arrival in Afghanistan, and told him that "it is time for you people to leave our country."[482] Another well-known opponent of bin Ladin was Mullah Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, a

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[481] On the history of the Taliban movement, see, e.g., Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and The New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: Tauris Publ., 2000); Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*, 3rd Edition (London: Zed Books, 2001); Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to the Present* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 233-311.

[482] The meeting was held in a guesthouse belonging to Mullah Rabbani (the Taliban's Chief of Ministers), but the place or exact date is not provided. Bergen (2006), 235.

secretary of Mullah Omar who became the Taliban's Foreign Minister in 1999.[483] Muttawakil attempted several times to restrict bin Ladin's activities, especially after bin Ladin publicly declared war on the United States in 1998.

It appears that the dispute was not merely about the status of bin Ladin, but that a more fundamental disagreement existed among certain Taliban members regarding the Taliban's relations with the outside world. Muttawakil belonged to a group of so-called moderates who wanted the Taliban to achieve international recognition, and was therefore opposed to any antagonistic actions. This included the cordial relationship between some Taliban members with bin Ladin, but also other issues such as Mullah Omar's decision to destroy the ancient Buddhist statues in the Bamiyan province in March 2001.[484]

Bin Ladin's own behavior in Afghanistan added fuel to the fire. In particular, it was his media activities and refusal to obey Mullah Omar's orders to keep a low profile that antagonized many within the Taliban. One of bin Ladin's most provocative incidents was the May 1998 press conference in which he announced the "World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders" and stated that it was an individual duty for all Muslims to kill Americans, civilian as well as military.[485] An insider account explains that, from around 1999, "a nucleus of opposition to bin Laden appeared within the Taliban...[they believed] bin Laden should be punished or expelled because he repeatedly refused to obey the instructions of [Mullah Omar]." A leading figure in this opposition was Mullah Muhammed Hasan, a member of the Taliban's Shura Council, who "believed that bin Laden had become the decider of foreign policy in the emirate, because his media activities aroused U.S., Pakistani, and Arab reaction, and, under U.S. influence, Europe and the United Nations moved against the Taliban."[486] At times, bin Ladin was placed under surveillance, and in February 1999 his phone was said to be confiscated. It was probably these and other restrictions that led bin Ladin to say: "Two entities are against our jihad. One is the U.S., and the other is the Taliban's own foreign affairs ministry."[487] It appears, however, that the tensions were caused by the ideological and strategic rifts between al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, rather than cultural or

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[483] After the U.S. air strikes on Afghanistan in October 2001, Muttawakil is believed to have been in negotiations to make Mullah Omar to hand over bin Ladin. He later left the Taliban. See "Profile: Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil," *BBC News*, 9 February 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1810717.stm (accessed 13 June 2009); "Taleban minister's 'peace role' mystery," *BBC News*, 17 Oct 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1604691.stm (accessed 13 June 2009).

[484] According to Vahid Mojdeh, a Taliban Foreign Ministry official, quoted in Bergen (2006), 248.

[485] See also Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's account of these tensions, quoted in Lia (2008), 284.

[486] Bergen (2006), 234.

[487] Ibid., 250.

ethnic divisions between the groups. As bin Ladin sought to carry out his global agenda from Afghanistan, individuals within the Taliban regime increasingly viewed him as a threat.

On the other hand, parts of the Taliban were also positively inclined to bin Ladin's presence in Afghanistan. Officially, the Taliban regime would describe its relationship with bin Ladin as being founded on their common Muslim identity and Pashtun tribal values of hospitability and honor. For example, in an interview on the Taliban's website in July 2001, Mullah Omar stated that "Sheikh Osama bin Laden is a Muslim who emigrated to Afghanistan, and he is a guest with the Afghans. His extradition or surrender would be a violation of Islam, and of the customs of the Afghan people."[488] Mullah Omar also used the argument of tribal culture in meetings with Pakistani envoys. According to Iftikhar Murshed, Pakistan's special envoy to Afghanistan:

> Mullah Omar told us that the Taliban were in a bind. They wanted to get rid of bin Laden but did not know how. Under Afghan traditions it was not possible to surrender a person who had sought asylum. He told us on several occasions that if he extradited bin Laden there would be a nationwide uprising which he would not be able to control... Afghan men, women and even children, according to Omar, would rather die than dishonourably surrender a fugitive.[489]

It is interesting to note that local cultural dynamics, in this case, appear to have worked in favor of the Arabs in Afghanistan, rather than creating tension. On the other hand we do not know for sure whether Mullah Omar was really bound by the cultural codex, or whether he just used it as an excuse for protecting bin Ladin.

There are two other common explanations for why bin Ladin was allowed to stay in Afghanistan. The first is that bin Ladin provided the Taliban with material resources and fighters, which it badly needed in its struggle against Ahmed Shah Mas'ud, who posed the most serious military threat to the Taliban regime.[490] Another common explanation is that bin Ladin was protected through his personal friendship with Mullah Omar, the all-powerful commander of the Taliban.

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[488] The interview itself was undated, but it was displayed on a version of the website that was stored on 21 July 2001. "The Second Meeting with the Leader of the Faithful" (Arabic), *The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*, retrieved from Internet Archive, http://web.archive.org/web/20010721163206/http://www.alemarh.com/.

[489] He does not specify when the statements were made. S. Iftikhar Murshed, *Afghanistan: The Taliban Years* (London: Bennett & Bloom, 2006), 294.

[490] See, e.g., Bergen (2006), 163-64, 235.

Although Kabul fell to the Taliban in September 1996, the Taliban's war was not over. It had yet to conquer northern Afghanistan, which was controlled by powerful warlords. The northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif finally fell to the Taliban in 1998, but Ahmed Shah Mas'ud refused to give up the northeastern corner of the country. The Arabs were known to be highly skilled, effective and motivated fighters, and this probably made them valuable assets to the Taliban.[491] Estimates vary on exactly how many Arabs were fighting for the Taliban, ranging from a few hundred up to 6,000.[492] One of the more realistic estimates was probably made by Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, who wrote that 300 Arabs were fighting alongside the Taliban in 1997, and by 1999 the number had reached 400.[493] Estimates of how much money bin Ladin contributed to the Taliban in this period are similarly vague. Several sources argue that after his stay in Sudan, he was "very close to financial bankruptcy," and thus had little to offer the Taliban.[494] Others have argued that although he was under financial pressure at the time, it is possible that he still had access to some personal savings, or that he was able to collect funds from donors in the Gulf.[495] The Syrian theoretician Mustafa bin Abd al-Qadir Setmariam Nasar, better known as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, recalled in a personal letter to bin Ladin in 1998 that the latter had made many promises to the Taliban, such as urbanization projects, road-building, providing fighters to defend Kabul, etc., but that "the wind blew them away."[496] In any case, the Taliban was probably hoping for material contributions from bin Ladin, recalling his assistance to the Afghan mujahidin in the 1980s.

Another common argument is that it was Mullah Omar's personal affection for bin Ladin that prevented the latter from being expelled by the Taliban regime. A moderate Taliban official, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, told a U.S. representative in September 1998 that 80 percent of the Taliban were against bin Ladin's presence, and that Mullah Omar was his strongest supporter.[497] Due to the lack of sources, it is hard to estimate the exact nature of the relationship between bin Ladin and Mullah Omar. One theory can probably be discarded though: bin Ladin's and Mullah Omar's families were not connected by inter-marriage, despite many rumors to that effect.[498] Also, the friendship between Mullah Omar and bin Ladin seems to have had its ups and downs. Indeed, it is

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[491] Burke (2004), 190.
[492] Abuza (2003), 8.
[493] Bergen (2006), 165.
[494] Ibid., 209.
[495] Coll, 332.
[496] Lia (2008), 287.
[497] Bergen (2006), 232-33.
[498] Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, 4th Edition (London: Phoenix, 2003); Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, 2nd Edition (London: Hurst & Company, 2003).

argued that by 1998, Mullah Omar had fallen out with bin Ladin. Rahimullah Yusufzai, who met Mullah Omar and bin Ladin several times, said Mullah Omar "particularly resented Mr. bin Laden's flamboyant grandstanding—his blood-curdling declarations against America, phoney fatwas for which he had no religious authority, and news conferences scripted to exaggerate his power."[499] Bin Ladin's press conference in May 1998 had infuriated Mullah Omar. Yusufzai claimed the Taliban leader called him after the press conference, saying "How can he hold a press conference without my permission? There is only one ruler. Is it me or Osama?"[500] Although the Taliban leader himself probably held anti-American views, he clearly disapproved of bin Ladin's use of Afghan territory to issue threats against the United States.

According to several sources, this disapproval almost led the Taliban to hand bin Ladin over to Saudi Arabia in mid-1998. In June 1998, the Saudi intelligence chief, Prince Turki al-Faisal, went on a secret visit to Afghanistan to ask Mullah Omar to hand over bin Ladin. According to al-Faisal, Mullah Omar had "assented to the Saudi demand, asking only that the two countries first set up a joint commission of Islamic scholars to formulate a justification for the expulsion."[501] In July 1998, the Taliban sent an envoy led by Mullah Wakil Ahmed Muttawakkil, Mullah Omar's secretary and advisor on foreign affairs at the time, to Saudi Arabia to confirm the deal. What seems to have derailed these negotiations, however, were the U.S. missile strikes on Afghanistan following the 7 August 1998 East Africa embassy bombings. Instead of coercing the Taliban into cooperating with the United States, the strikes apparently had the opposite effect of strengthening the relationship between Mullah Omar and bin Ladin.[502] In September 1998, Mullah Omar was to have a meeting with al-Faisal and Inter-Services Intelligence head General Naseem Rana in Kandahar, in order to discuss the details of bin Ladin's handover. To the surprise of the foreign delegation, he announced that he had no intention of handing over bin Ladin.[503]

Jason Burke has argued that at this point, Mullah Omar "was still profoundly aggrieved with bin Laden," but after the U.S. missile strikes, it was impossible for the Taliban to expel him "without appearing to be either frightened of America or stooges of the Saudi Arabians."[504] It is impossible to know the exact reasons for why Mullah Omar chose to protect bin Ladin in the end. It seems clear, however, that a number of independent

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[499] Alan Cullison and Andrew Higgins, "Once-Stormy Terror Alliance was Solidified by Cruise Missiles," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 August 2002.
[500] Quoted in ibid.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Cullison and Higgins.
[503] Murshed, 301.
[504] Burke (2004), 186-87.

developments between 1998 and 2001 contributed to bringing them closer together.[505] Regardless of why Mullah Omar chose to protect bin Ladin, his position as the Taliban's all-powerful leader was of vital importance for the outcome of events, in the sense that it enabled him to overrun the so-called moderates within the Taliban who were in favor of expelling bin Ladin for political-strategic concerns.

In sum, the Taliban government was split in its view of bin Ladin and the other Arab fighters in Afghanistan. The criticism mainly stemmed from differences in ideology and strategy, and the feeling that bin Ladin "had become the decider of foreign policy in the emirate," in the words of one al-Qa'ida critic.[506] What seems to be absent from these debates, however, is references to cultural or ethnic issues. The Taliban's moderates criticizes bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida not because they were Arabs, but because of bin Ladin's political activities. If anything, local cultural dynamics may actually have worked in favor of the Arabs in Afghanistan, due to the Pashtun traditions of offering hospitality and refuge. At least such traditions were used as an excuse by Mullah Omar for not expelling the al-Qa'ida leader.

The Salafi-Jihadist Current and the Taliban

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri has written that the Arabs' attitude towards the Taliban varied from "total rejection, especially among the so-called [purist] Salafis, to support."[507] It was common to praise the Taliban for its religiosity, and for managing to establish an Islamic state governed by sharia laws. However, the Salafi jihadist current was clearly split in its views of the Taliban. There were two kinds of criticism: one apparently based on cultural and ethnic differences, the other on theological disagreement.

According to Andrew Higgins, the Arabs' widespread contempt for the Taliban stemmed from the fact that they "found Afghanistan such an inhospitable place: primitive, backward, dirty and chaotic."[508] An undated document found in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion in 2001 talks about the Taliban's fight against Ahmed Shah Mas'ud's troops. The document's author complains that the members of the Taliban have "lost their will to sacrifice," and that there is a lack of qualified officials in the Taliban government with whom to talk. He further states that the Arabs are starting to lose their motivation to fight, and that only a handful of Arab fighters were left at the front at the time of writing.[509] In another document, dated April 2000, an author named

[505] Ibid.
[506] Bergen (2006), 234.
[507] Quoted in Lia (2008), 239.
[508] Quoted in ibid. See also Cullison and Higgins.
[509] "Ciphers and Status of bin Laden's security," AFGP-2002-003677, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).

Abd al-Hadi noted that it was hard for the Arabs to coordinate battlefield activity with the Taliban and that the Taliban insisted on controlling the heavy weapons and ammunition. He also suggested putting people in the rear of the battle to provide support to the Arabs "in case the Taliban abandon them."[510]

Due to the fragmentary nature of these documents, one should perhaps not put too much weight in these quotes. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a certain amount of prejudice and distrust between Arabs and Afghans on the battlefield. The distrust was probably not unfounded. Indeed, the Pakistan-based Syrian journalist Ahmed Zeidan argued that, during the U.S.-led attack on Afghanistan in 2001, there was a lack of coordination between the Taliban and their foreign allies and the Taliban's sudden withdrawal from Kabul led many Pakistanis and Arabs to be captured, especially newly arrived Pakistani fighters. It appeared that no one told the foreign fighters in Kabul that the Taliban were going to withdraw.[511]

The mutual mistrust was probably aggravated by the fact that Arab and Afghan militants often did not integrate, but trained and fought in separate groups.[512] Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy have argued that the militants who came to Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001 were different from those who had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s. They belonged to a second generation "who threw themselves abruptly into radicalization without passing through the intermediate stages of religious or political militancy."[513] Furthemore, they "were hardly interested in their local surroundings and came to Afghanistan only to be trained there to take part in the global *jihad* against the United States…"[514] There are obviously many exceptions to these generalizations. However, it may serve to explain some of the attitudes among the rank-and-file of Arab militants in Afghanistan. At the same time, it should be stressed that the Arab fighters in general were known to fight hard, and were feared by Taliban's enemies. One general of the Northern Alliance described the foreign fighters as follows: "They are well equipped and well trained... They fight hard and they fight bravely. They will be glue that will hold the Taliban together when we attack."[515] Hence, while ethnic and cultural tensions most likely existed among individuals on the battlefield, it appears

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[510] "Notes from Abd al-Hadi," AFGP-2002-000091, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[511] Ahmad M. Zeidan, *Osama bin Laden Revealed* (Arabic) (Beirut: World Book Publishing s.a.l., 2003), 196.
[512] Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection* (London: Hurst, 2004), 51; Gary C. Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Presidio Press, 2005), 124-25.
[513] Abou Zahab and Roy, 50.
[514] Ibid., 51.
[515] Schroen, 124-25, 345.

that the Arab contingent as a whole was nevertheless able to fight effectively alongside the Taliban.

Another source of tension between Arabs and the Taliban concerned the Taliban's Islamic credentials as a movement based on the relatively liberal and syncretistic Hanafi school of law, as opposed to the more literalist Hanbali tradition favored by the Salafi jihadists. Although this may seem like an abstract debate over religious doctrine, it was not irrelevant for the rank-and-file of al-Qa'ida. As Brynjar Lia has noted, the debate must be taken seriously because "it made many jihadis consider the Islamic emirate as simply another temporary safe haven, not a kernel or a starting point for the coming Islamic caliphate."[516] Moreover, Thomas Hegghammer has shown that for Saudi recruits—who made up the bulk of volunteers after 1999—the issue of doctrinal purity was often crucial, and many only traveled to Afghanistan after prominent Saudi scholars such as Hamud al-Uqla al-Shu'aybi vouched for the Taliban in 2000.[517]

When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, it claimed to have established an Islamic state based on sharia law. In a letter to an Islamist conference in Islamabad in 1998, bin Ladin expressed strong support for the regime, arguing that it was a religious obligation for Muslims to support the Taliban, "because by enforcing Sharia in Afghanistan, the Taliban have established the system of God on God's land."[518] Others within the Salafi jihadist current strongly disagreed, however, criticizing the Taliban for being deviant or even un-Islamic. The criticism circulated around three main themes.[519] First, the Taliban were accused of not implementing a proper version of Islam. In particular, they were accused of *quburiyyah* (grave-worship) and *shirk* (polytheism). Sufism and local superstitions are widespread in Afghanistan and the Taliban were accused of not doing enough to eradicate these local traditions. Second, the Taliban were criticized for wanting to join the United Nations, and for having a political relationship with so-called infidel Muslim regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Lastly, the Taliban were criticized for fighting against other Muslims in Afghanistan, which constituted *fitna* (sedition). Critics argued that the Taliban was no different from other mujahidin factions in Afghanistan, and that the group was not fighting to defend Islam, but only for local power gain. Part of this criticism may have stemmed from some Arab scholars who did not trust "mullas" and who held that members of the

[516] Lia (2008), 240.
[517] Thomas Hegghammer, *Violent Islamism in Saudi Arabia, 1979-2006*, PhD thesis, Sciences-Po Paris (2007).
[518] Quoted in Thomas Hegghammer, *Documentation on al-Qa'ida: Interviews, Statements and Other Primary Sources, 1990-2002* (Kjeller: FFI, 2002).
[519] See, e.g., Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, "Muslims in Central Asia and the coming battle of Islam" (Arabic) (on file with author).

Taliban were nothing but agents of the Pakistani state.[520] The title "mullah" is normally used as a sign of respect, but the word may also be used in a derogatory way to cast doubt upon someone's religious credentials—which is apparently the way it is used here. It cannot be excluded that the doctrinal disputes outlined above may have been influenced by cultural and ethnic prejudice among Arab scholars towards non-Arabs. However, there are numerous examples of doctrinal disputes *within* the Salafi jihadist current as well. For example, some of the purist Salafis criticized bin Ladin as much as they criticized the Taliban, due to the former's endorsement of the Taliban regime.

There was clearly a need for al-Qa'ida to speak to the accusations against the Taliban regime. For instance, in a letter addressed to bin Ladin and dated June 2000, an author named "Abu Hudhayfa" argued that al-Qa'ida should improve its media activities, especially towards Saudi Arabia and should "clear up the issue of Taliban to the people." [521] The author continued:

> If we take a look at the status quo of the [Arabian] Peninsula, we find that the legitimacy of [the Taliban] is in a state of tide and ebb in the minds of the people due to the absence of true information, on the one hand, and to the contradiction of the news conveyed by returning brothers, on the other. This is because emotions dominate their thinking in making their judgment, and as a result, they are sometimes confronted with questions that they can't answer... [T]he Movement needs to clear up the issue of the Taliban to the people as well as the suspicions circulating around them...[522]

The context of this particular document is unclear. However, in July of the same year, Yusuf al-Ayiri, a key al-Qa'ida representative in Saudi Arabia and the architect behind the violent campaign in the kingdom in 2003, was invited to Afghanistan, where he had a series of meetings with senior Taliban leaders. According to Hegghammer, the trip "clearly convinced al-Ayiri of the need to support the Taliban and al-Qaida, because from the autumn of 2000 onward, al-Ayiri devoted himself more and more to the Afghan cause."[523] Al-Ayiri's trip was important for improving the image of the Taliban in Saudi Arabia, due to his influence over Saudi religious scholars. As Hegghammer explains: "He convinced clerics that the Taliban regime was worth supporting, whereupon the scholars would encourage followers to go to Afghanistan."[524] In

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[520] Zeidan, 180-81.

[521] "A memo to sheikh Abu Abdullah," AFGP-2002-003251, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).

[522] Ibid.

[523] Hegghammer (2007b), 278.

[524] Ibid., 281.

December 2000, al-Ayiri also published a book in defense of the Taliban entitled "The Taliban in the Balance" (*al-mizan li-harakat taliban*), in which he quoted the interviews he had had with senior Taliban officials, including Mullah Omar himself, in 2000.

Confusion regarding the Islamic credentials of the Taliban was evident among the rank-and-file of Arab jihadists. A document that was found in Afghanistan after the 2001 invasion listed a number of questions that had been raised by trainees after camp lectures. Some questions were concerned with the legality of fighting on the side of the Taliban against Ahmed Shah Mas'ud, since it involved killing other Muslims. Although bin Ladin, supported by fatwas from Afghan scholars, argued from 1996 onwards that the Taliban's fight against the Afghan warlords was a "fight between Islam and unbelief," some trainees were apparently not convinced and wondered how to characterize Mas'ud, and whether or not the fight against him was a legal jihad.[525] Others were concerned with the Taliban's "idol worshipping," probably referring to local Afghan practices of decorating graves. Others asked why some of the leaders of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad had refused to pledge the oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar.[526]

A coalition of individuals known as "the Peshawar group," was among the strongest Salafi jihadist critics of the Taliban. Members of this group included Abd al-Hamid al-Suri and Abu Mus'ab "Reuter." They wrote a pamphlet criticizing the Taliban entitled "Exposing the Fighters' Suspicions under the Banner of Those Who Violated the Essence of the Religion," which addressed the legality of Muslims fighting for the Taliban.[527] The document accused the Taliban of espousing *quburiyya* (grave-worship), of making alliances with God's enemies (i.e. moderate Arab regimes), and of ingratiating itself within the UN. The pamphlet not only dealt with the Taliban, but discussed a number of other regimes and groups in the Middle East (Hamas, Hizballah, etc.), as well as in Afghanistan (Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf's group and other parties).

The Peshawar group also appears to have written a letter addressed directly to the prominent Jordanian ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. In this letter, which was signed "Abu Mus'ab" [probably referring to "Reuter"], the author said he opposed fighting under "banners of infidelity" and referred to a meeting with Abu Mus'ab al-

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[525] In an interview with *al-Quds al-Arabi* (ca. 1996), bin Ladin allegedly said, "I agree with the fatwas of sheikh Haqqani and sheikh Yunus Khalis that the fight between the Taliban and Dostum today is a fight between Islam and unbelief." "The Taliban: Between Hopes for the Future and Dangers of Conspiracy," (Arabic), *Minbar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (n.d.), http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=3288&c=4028.

[526] "Various Admin Documents and Questions," AFGP-2002-801138, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).

[527] For more details on the Peshawar Group, see Brown (2007), 13-15.

Zarqawi, who had agreed with him on the matter.[528] Moreover, he claimed that he had been involved in a fight in an Afghan village where the Taliban supported the Pakistani army against the foreign fighters: "Everyone, even children in the streets knew that they [the local Taliban] were created and controlled by Pakistan. Their leader Fadhlurahman is a friend of Benazir, Saddam and Qaddafi... They are extremists of the Sufi sect and straying from the right path."[529]

In Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's reply to the Taliban-critical pamphlet, al-Maqdisi said that the author had not provided proper evidence that the Taliban was deviant. He also disputed the claim that members of the Taliban were polytheists, and while he agreed that an Islamic state should not join the United Nations, he said that the Taliban had done nothing wrong because it had declared its intention to follow only those UN regulations that do not conflict with the sharia.[530]

Apart from Salafi jihadist scholars based abroad, such as al-Maqdisi, there were several members of the Arab community in Afghanistan who sought to bridge the various differences between Arab militants and the Taliban. Their main argument was that the Arabs should be more pragmatic and tolerant towards local militants, referring to cultural, doctrinal and political-strategic fault lines. For eample, in a letter dated April 2000, an author named "Abd al-Hadi" discussed the relationship between Arabs in Afghanistan and the Taliban. He argued that it was important not to criticize the local traditions and customs of the Afghans. He further claimed that the Arabs were self-centered and "made many mistakes, and thus became part of the problem," and that they "became nothing but advisors and critics (theoretical point of view) rather than joining them [Taliban] in a practical way..."[531] Although the author also pointed out the difficulties of cooperating with the Taliban, he argued that, in the end, criticizing Mullah Omar would bring no good.[532]

Among the Arab community's most outspoken supporters of the Taliban was the Syrian theoretican Abu Mus'ab al-Suri. His first report on the Taliban was published as early as 1996, after a short fact-finding mission to Afghanistan, which he claimed to have conducted in the middle of that year. In July or August 1997, he moved permanently to

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[528] "Status of jihad," AFGP-2002-601693, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[529] Ibid.
[530] "Question regarding the Content of the Book 'Exposing the fighters' Suspicions under the Banner of Those Who Violated the Essence of the Religion,'" (Arabic), *Minbar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=143.
[531] "Notes from Abd al-Hadi," AFGP-2002-000091, *CTC's Harmony Document Database*, http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony/harmony_docs.asp (accessed 12 June 2009).
[532] "Ciphers and Status of bin Laden's Security."

Afghanistan.[533] As discussed in greater detail in Brynjar Lia's chapter in this volume, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was reportedly close to Mullah Omar, and described himself as a "media advisor" to the Islamic emirate.[534] In October 1998, he issued a 131-page pamphlet entitled "Afghanistan, Taliban and the Battle of Islam Today." The reason for writing the pamphlet, he stated, was that he "noticed there is a lot of confusion among jihadis regarding the Taliban and the legality of fighting for them."[535] The text then went through a list of twenty-one common accusations hurled against the Taliban, only to refute them all. In some cases he agreed with the criticism, but argued that the Taliban only needed proper guidance, not rejection.[536] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's defense of the Taliban regime was not limited to the doctrinal disputes. In fact, he also criticized bin Ladin for not complying with the orders of the Taliban, arguing that bin Ladin's actions were antagonizing the Taliban and thus jeopardizing the presence of the whole Arab community in Afghanistan.[537]

From an ideological point of view, however, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri was not completely aligned with the Taliban. While he supported the Taliban's visions of creating a pure Islamic state, he still disagreed with the Taliban regarding the *role* of this state. The Taliban's goal was to create an Islamic state for the Afghan people, and it had no interest in waging an offensive war on behalf of all Muslims from Afghan territory. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's vision was more in line with that of 'Abdullah 'Azzam, who envisioned Afghanistan as the solid base for the re-conquest of Palestine and other Muslim lands. In fact, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri envisioned the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan as "one of the three main bases [the other two being Yemen and North Africa] from which jihadi efforts should be directed with a view to creating similar emirates in other Arab and Islamic countries."[538] He wrote that "there is a need to strengthen the Islamic emirate, and territorially expand, by using it as a launch pad."[539] However, he emphasized the need to do it "step by step[,] targeting the easiest objectives first."[540]

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's activities in Afghanistan confirm this impression. Although he funded a training camp to "assist in building and defending [the Islamic emirate]" and encouraged Arabs in Afghanistan to fight with the Taliban against the Northern

[533] Lia (2008), 230-31.
[534] Ibid., 240.
[535] Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (1998).
[536] Ibid.
[537] Lia (2008), 290.
[538] Ibid., 236-37.
[539] Ibid.
[540] The use of the term "launch pad" to describe Afghanistan was also echoed by Ayman al-Zawahiri in two of his speeches in 2006 and 2007. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri (n.d.).

Alliance, he did not limit his activities simply to supporting the regime.[541] Lia argues that even though Abu Mus'ab al-Suri's camp was officially part of the Taliban's Defense Ministry, he trained his recruits for a global violent struggle against the Crusaders far beyond Afghanistan.[542]

In sum, the Salafi jihadist current appears to have been very divided in its view of the Taliban. There were mainly two types of criticism: one rooted in theological debates, the other in ethnic and cultural differences. First, the Taliban were criticized by purist Salafi scholars for not fulfilling the criteria of an Islamic state. The al-Qa'ida leadership clearly sided with the Taliban in these debates, supported by influental Salafi jihadist clerics such as Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi and Yusuf al-Ayiri. Second, some of the Arab commanders and foot soldiers in Afghanistan expressed distrust and prejudice against their Afghan counterparts, apparently stemming from ethnic and cultural differences. In some cases, this may have prevented effective cooperation between Arab and Afghan militants. On the whole, however, it seems that the Arab contingent in Afghanistan was both valued by the Taliban and feared by commanders of the Northern Alliance. The al-Qa'ida leadership seems to have played an overall coordinating role for the Arabs in Afghanistan and appeared determined to support the Taliban's struggle. Several of al-Qa'ida's most experienced cadre fought alongside the Taliban regime prior to its fall, while a number of Arab leaders were helped to escape safely to Pakistan. If ethnic tensions did exist between al-Qa'ida's Arab leaders and the Afghan Taliban, they do not seem to have disrupted the two groups' overall ability to cooperate and coordinate their activities. This again points to the conclusion that in the al-Qa'ida-Taliban relationship, ethnic and cultural tension appears to have been a less important fault line than political and strategic fissures.

Conclusion

There is no simple way of explaining the genesis of disputes between Arab and non-Arab members of the global jihad current. Numerous debates and fissures exist within as well as between these two broad groups. At the same time, it is difficult to evaluate the relative importance of ethnic and cultural fissures within al-Qa'ida, particularly because those fissures must be weighed against strategic and doctrinal differences.

This chapter has argued that, in the relationships between Arabs and their non-Arab allies, three broad types of tensions may be identified: a) tensions caused by disputes over religious doctrines; b) tensions caused by cultural and ethnic differences; and c) tensions caused by disagreements over politics and strategy. The case studies show that

[541] Lia (2008), 252.
[542] Ibid., 256-257.

doctrinal disputes were raised mainly by purist Salafis, while ethnic tensions were typically reported among foot soldiers in the field. However, al-Qa'ida's leaders appear to have stayed clear of both these disputes, due to their relatively pragmatic approach to local allies and tolerance of ethnic and cultural differences. The most decisive fault lines in al-Qa'ida's relationship to local allies were therefore not caused by ethnic or religious differences, but were instead of ideological and strategic nature, and oftentimes centered around power. In both case studies examined here, local elements resented being dominated by foreigners, as al-Qa'ida's agenda was seen as being in conflict with the local group's goals and interests.

It is, however, too early to make any firm conclusions about the role of ethnic tensions within and around al-Qa'ida. More case studies need to be conducted to determine whether the dichotomy of "Arabs vs. non-Arabs" is, in fact, an artificial division.

Chapter 7: Jihadis and the *Ikhwan*

Marc Lynch

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood, the largest and most influential mass-based Islamist movement in the Arab world, poses a unique challenge to efforts to combat al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups. It is one of the key sources of Islamist thought and political activism, with affiliated organizations in almost every country in the world and a sophisticated political and social infrastructure.[543] It plays a crucial role in promoting Islamic consciousness and organizing political activism in a wide range of countries, particularly in the Arabic speaking world—the the primary focus of this chapter. It strongly supports violent resistance against Israel , but at the same time, has consistently denounced al-Qa'ida's ideology and terrorist activities in Muslim countries and in the West. It offers a significantly different vision of an Islamic state from that favored by Salafi jihadist groups. As an Islamist movement with global reach and a message that resonates widely with Arab publics, the MB represents the strongest challenger to al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups within Islamist politics—far stronger than the more liberal and Westernized secular Muslims or pro-American activists with which the United States generally prefers to work. Its leaders speak the language of democracy, reject extremism and takfir,and advocate peaceful political participation.[544] Yet, the MB remains deeply committed to spreading a conservative vision of Islamic society and its cadres are deeply hostile to Israel and to U.S. foreign policy.

How should the MB therefore be understood in the context of efforts to combat al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups? Does its organizational and ideological rivalry with Salafi jihadist groups outweigh its contributions to spreading Islamic identity and public culture? Why has the MB emerged in the last several years as a primary hostile fixation among Salafi jihadist leaders and commentators? Should counter-terrorism efforts identify the MB as a key part of the problem—facilitating the recruitment into more radical movements and ideologies even if eschewing violence itself—or as part of the solution? And how should policy-makers weigh the short-term benefits of

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[543] For background on the Muslim Brotherhood, see Richard Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Brynjar Lia, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (London: Ithaca Press, 1998); Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005), 373-95; Rosefsky Wickham; Bruce Rutherford, *Egypt After Mubarak* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Marc Lynch, "The Brotherhood's Dilemma," *Middle East Brief* No. 25, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University (2008).;

[544] On takfir, see the chapters by Brooke and Hafez in this volume.

harnessing the MB's opposition to al-Qa'ida against the long-term risks of facilitating the Islamization of Arab politics and society?

The long-latent conflict between the MB and al-Qa'ida has emerged over the last few years as a central cleavage in Islamist politics, driven by intense disagreements over Iraq, Palestine, the Shi'a question and the legitimacy of participation in democratic elections.[545] Al-Qa'ida leaders from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir have sharpened their long-standing animus against the MB into a more global critique. In a series of tapes and writings, Zawahiri savaged Hamas and the Egyptian MB for their participation in elections and public life. Al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza identifed the MB as the driving force behind the setbacks of the jihad in Iraq, pointing not only to the Iraqi Islamic Party (an MB affiliate), but also to a wide range of other Sunni Islamist adversaries lumped together under the MB label. In general, al-Qa'ida has found itself on the wrong side of virtually all of these arguments with respect to mainstream Arab public opinion, while the MB has taken broadly popular positions on each.

Like al-Qa'ida, the MB is a global organization with a genuinely transnational scope and a universalizing mission.[546] It competes with al-Qa'ida at the global level in a way that few other Islamist movements can, commanding Arab media attention and a political presence that more than rivals its violent competitor. At the same time, however, the "Global Muslim Brotherhood" exists only notionally. The MB is a loosely-connected set of national organizations that vary widely in their local strength and relationship to competing power centers, and with very limited operational control from the main offices based in Cairo. Different national MB organizations feature widely varying configurations of organizational structures, ideological peculiarities and relations with the state and other local Islamist movements.[547] Understanding the extent of the MB's challenge to al-Qa'ida requires carefully analyzing national variations in addition to the macro-level debates. Discussions of doctrines or political disagreements should be supplemented by careful attention to national variation, including

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[545] The deep clash between Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups and Salafi jihadism is a key theme of influential analysts such as the Jordanian journalist Mohammed Abu Rumman and Akram Hijazi (whose writings are widely circulated on a range of jihadist internet forums). See Akram Hijazi, "Muwajjiha Hasima bayn al-Salafiya al-Jihadiya wa al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin" (Decisive Confrontation between Salafi-Jihadism and the Muslim Brotherhood), 7 May 2007, http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=10436; Akram Hijazi, "Response to the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood," 22 February 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=47638.

[546] On al-Qa'ida's global vision, see Assaf Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Atacks," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2008), 46-78.

[547] Abd al-Rahman al-Rashwan, "Public opinion inside the MB organization," 21 December 2008, http://ikhwanyouth.blogspot.com/2008/12/1.html.

competition for recruits and organizational dominance within a defined political space.[548]

On the crucial question of radicalization, this chapter assesses two influential arguments regarding the relationship between al-Qa'ida and the MB: the "firewall" argument, which holds that the MB "captures" Islamists within a relatively moderate and peaceful movement and prevents their evolution into more radical, violent actors; and the "conveyor belt" alternative, in which the MB's "non-violent extremism" is only a stage in the process towards radicalization.[549] Both approaches present valid arguments, with the tough policy choices they frame coming down to weighing the short-term potential for harming al-Qa'ida against the long-term effects on the wider political culture. States that repress the MB—often to preserve their own political power rather than to combat extremism—may not only be weakening the foundations of democracy and public freedoms, but also opening up the space in which al-Qa'ida and other extremist groups can organize, recruit and act. Ultimately, this chapter argues the MB should be allowed to wage its battle against its extremist challengers, but not supported as a privileged interlocutor. In addition, engagement with the Brotherhood should not promote illusions that it is a *liberal* actor or likely to support broader American foreign policy objectives in the region.

The Intertwined Islamist Movements

> We—the MB—reject completely the methods and actions by al-Qa'ida network.
>
> -- MB Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib[550]

> I don't know where to start with the conspiracies, treasons, hateful alliances... [T]hey believe in parliaments and elections instead of declaring takfir on the tyrants…the ikhwan of apostasy, living under the thumb of the tyrants and ruwafidh. –
>
> Al-Ekhlaas forum contributor 'Shamal al-Baghdadi[551]

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[548] Mohammed Salah, "The Ikhwan and al-Qa`ida and other groups… a complete guide to Islamist movements in the world," *Al-Hayat*, 26 January 2006.
[549] "Rewriting the Narrative: An Integrated Strategy for Counterradicalization, Presidential Task Force on Confronting the Ideology of Radical Extremism," Washington Institute for Near East Policy (March 2009).
[550] 1 January 2007, quoted in Ikhwanweb.com, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=2758&SectionID=147.
[551] Forum contributor "Shamal al-Baghdadi," *Al-Ekhlaas*, 16 May 2008. "Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Alam ya'Ayshun fi al-Batala," http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=147720.

The MB was formed in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna and quickly became a major political force inside the country, while establishing branches throughout the Arab world.[552] Only a few years after the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, which the MB supported, President Gamal Abd al-Nasser's repression drove the MB underground and abroad into exile, fueling Sayid Qutb's formulation of his much more radical conception of contemporary society as *jahiliyya*—a term referring to the pre-Islamic age of ignorance. The MB cadres who dispersed throughout the world, particularly to Saudi Arabia, carried with them these new Qutbist ideas, even as the MB itself reasserted a more moderate orthodoxy under the guidance of its then-leader Hassan Hudaybi.[553] As a result, the Egyptian MB evolved in a more moderate, *wasatiya* (centrist) direction than did some of the branches more influenced by the Qutbist-inspired exiles.

Sayid Qutb is both the key link and point of divergence between the mainstream MB and its more radical cousins. During the period of Nasserist repression, Qutb's more extreme vision of Egyptian society as existing in a state of *jahiliyya* took root within a demoralized, angry and fiercely repressed Brotherhood. Many of the MB members who fled to Saudi Arabia in the 1950s and 1960s to take up positions in the Saudi state apparatus were from the Qutbist wing, and fled in part because of their uncompromising vision and more radical political views. Their ideas politicized Wahhabist doctrines and helped build a new orientation towards what today we call Salafi jihadism.

The mainstream MB rejected the core of Qutbist ideology with the publication of *Preachers Not Judges* in 1969 (even if Qutb's books remained widely read and popular among MB rank-and-file). In the 1970s, the Brotherhood took full advantage of Anwar Sadat's invitation to enter politics as a counter-weight to the Nasserists and Communists.[554] It evolved in Egypt into a mainstream organization participating in public works and elections across all levels of civil society and government. The official MB website prominently features founder Hassan al-Banna, not Qutb, as its guiding spirit. Nonetheless, Qutb remains popular with the MB's membership. Discussions of his ideas can be found throughout MB-affiliated internet forums and publications and, by all accounts, Qutb continues to be read in the MB curriculum. Qutb's writings, for example, are widely available in MB-affiliated bookstores across the Middle East.

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[552] Mitchell.

[553] Barbara Zollner, "Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle During Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954 to 1971," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (2007), 411-33; Hossam Tammam, "Al-Ikwhan al-Muslimoon wa al-Sa'udiya al-Wahhabiya" (The Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabi Saudi Arabia), *Al-Akhbar*, 22 January 2009, http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/114449.

[554] Zollner (2007); Rosefsky Wickham.

Admittedly, the differences have not always been as stark as they appear today. Indeed, MB members who took refuge in Saudi Arabia during the years of Nasserist repression in the 1950s and 1960s and MB theoreticians such as the Palestinian-Jordanian 'Abdullah 'Azzam were extremely influential in the formation of al-Qa'ida. Ayman al-Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad Organization grew out of a Qutbist splinter of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. This cooperative relationship grew even stronger in the cauldron of Afghanistan, where the MB's organizational networks worked hand in hand with the Saudi project of supporting the mujahidin. The Muslim Brotherhood itself is internally diverse, and more radical thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb remain influential within its membership despite the official rejection of his key doctrines.

The tensions between these trends could be seen on the ground in key conflict zones. Even in Afghanistan, competition between the Wahhabi and the Ikhwani factions was often stiff and grew even sharper in the 1990s, as violent insurgencies broke out in key Arab countries. The Afghan returnees who made up an important part of violent insurgencies in places such as Egypt and Algeria had little use for local Islamist organizations of any kind, particularly the MB, which they saw as overly accommodating of local political structures. In Algeria in the 1990s, the Salafi jihadist GIA fought viciously with the MB-infected remnants of the Islamic Salvation Front, which had been on the brink of winning national elections before the military coup.[555] The MB often found itself caught up in the undifferentiated regime crackdowns that followed, forcing it to go to great lengths to demonstrate its differences from its more radical and violent competitors.

For their part, Salafi jihadists no longer recognize the MB as the inheritor of its own ideas. For Salafi jihadists, the rejection of Qutb is where the MB went decisively astray. Zawahiri's influential denunciation of the MB, *Bitter Harvest*, traces a catalog of catastrophe from that doctrinal divide.[556] *Bitter Harvest* offers the template for a standard Salafi jihadist bill of complaints about the MB over the last two decades. In the Salafi jihadist telling, the MB aligned with the West in Afghanistan instead of the Taliban. In Algeria in the 1990s, the MB figure Mahfouz Nahnah aligned with the military against the Armed Islamic Group. In Iraq, the MB's Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) aligned with the United States and joined the political process while under occupation. In Jordan, the MB sided with the Hashemite monarchy despite its strategic alliance with the United States and good relations with Israel. In Malaysia, it aligned with Anwar Ibrahim at a time when more radical groups viewed him as part of the regime they despised. In Palestine, the MB (in the form of Hamas) was accused of protecting the Jews from al-Qa'ida. In each instance, Salafi jihadists argue, the MB sided against the

[555] On Egypt and Algeria, see Hafez (2003).

[556] Zawahiri's *Bitter Harvest* is available at http://tawhed.ws.

doctrine of jihad and with the convenient compromise.[557] As Shaykh Nasir al-Din al-Albani argued (before his death in 1999), the MB supports the Salafi doctrine in principle but abandons it in practice.[558] In another example, in August 2007, Abd al-Majid Abd al-Karim Hazeen wrote: "no doubt there are many sincere Muslims in the MB and Hassan al-Banna was a good man," but in the modern day, it was impossible to overlook the MB's alliances with "Crusaders, Communists, Jews, Masons" or a whole panoply of ideological deviations.[559] Similarly, another prolific forum commentator wrote "Hassan al-Banna created a fine organization but then circumstances changed...a new phenomenon emerged under the same name."[560]

The challenge posed to al-Qa'ida by the MB is rooted in the groups' core similarity: both are Islamist movements with a global reach. Both want to Islamicize the public domain and create Islamic states ruled by sharia. Both are Salafi in their approach to jurisprudence, both consider jihad central to Islam (though they interpret jihad differently) and both are deeply suspicious of Westernization and U.S. foreign policy. At certain points in their history, there have been important crossovers, such as the role played by Palestinian MB figure 'Abdullah 'Azzam in the organization of the Afghan jihad.[561] These similarities have led many observers to see the groups as kindred organizations, whether or not there are demonstrable organizational ties.[562] Such views are reinforced by concerted propaganda efforts on the part of some Arab regimes challenged by mass-based Islamist moderates to tie the MB to al-Qa'ida in order to delegitimize it in the eyes of the West and their own publics.

Yet, the two groups' competition over the years is well-documented. For instance, al-Qa'ida clearly resented the MB's condemnations of the 11 September attack. While the conflict subsequently mellowed through 2005—indeed, as late as spring 2005, Salafi jihadist figures like Louis Attiyatollah wrote about the MB not as a potent adversary,

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[557] Shaykh Abu al-Hareth al-Ansari wrote a brief distributed by the Global Islamic Media Front under the title "Al-Ikwhan wa al-Yahud wa al-Qa'ida," www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=158323, 7 July 2008 -.

[558] Shaykh Nasir al-Din al-Albani, quoted on the Muslm.net forum, 21 May 2008, http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?p=1866107.

[559] Abd al-Majid Abd al-Karim Hazin, "Mo'amirat Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin ala al-Islam wa Ahlihi" (Conspiracies of the MB against Islam and its people), *Al-Ekhlaas*, 4 August 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=73101.

[560] "Jund al-Murabitin," *Al-Faloja*, "Al-Ikhwan al-Mustaslamin," 12 March 2007, http//www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=7187.

[561] Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Hossam Tamam, "The MB and Saudi Wahhabism," *Al-Akhbar*, 22 January 2009, http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/114449.

[562] "Mohammed Mehdi Akef denial of any relationship with al-Qa`ida," 24 May 2008, http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=37484&SecID=211.

but as a spent force—tensions began escalating that year.[563] In late September 2005, Yusuf al-Qaradawi infuriated the jihadist forums by calling Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi a "criminal."[564] The MB condemned virtually every attack carried out by al-Qa'ida affiliated organizations in Muslim countries. The MB's response to the Amman hotel bombings in November 2005 infuriated Zarqawi's Salafi jihadist loyalists. The MB participated in elections in Egypt, and Hamas in Palestine—scoring great successes each time—leading MB Political Office member Essam el-Erian to explain that the Islamic world is split between two Islamist programs, one of which has demonstrated over decades that it works (strengthening Islam from within) and one which has not (coups and violent change). This provoked one Salafi jihadist who identified himself as Fatah al-Rahman to write a widely-disseminated, over ninety page-long rebuttal to the MB on behalf of the Sharia Committee of the Jihad, rehearsing the MB's alleged history of doctrinal and practical failure.[565]

In January 2006, Zawahiri released an audiotape focused on the MB's participation in the Egyptian elections and on developments in Iraq, which was seen at the time by many analysts as a departure in the style and focus of al-Qa'ida discourse—an attack on competing Islamist groups rather than seeking the high ground of Islamist consensus.[566] This decision likely reflected al-Qa'ida's unease over the growing popularity and profile of its Islamist competitors at a time when it was riding relatively high due to the course of events in Iraq (see below). Over the course of 2007, the influential Jordanian Salafi jihadist writer Akram Hijazi announced that developments in Iraq were hastening "the decisive showdown between Salafi jihadism and MB."[567] Hijazi argued that Ikhwan rhetoric against jihadism "mirrors the propaganda campaign of the Zionist-Crusaders."[568] The conflict went well beyond Iraq: "What remains of *hakimiya* (God's sovereignty) or jihad when the Islamic Party participates in occupation of Muslim lands[,]...[when other MB branches] participate in governments not based on Sharia[,]...deny that jihad is an individual obligation[,]…attack the jihad and the jihadist program [and]…deny the doctrine of takfir?"

Leaders of al-Qa'ida, not only influential commentators, pushed this conceptual confrontation with the MB. In March 2007, AQI leader Abu Hamza al-Muhajir voiced his anger at the MB's Iraq branch, fuming that "the treason [of the Iraqi Islamic Party] is

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[563] Louis Attiyatallah, "The salafis will lead the Muslim liberation jihad against the Crusaders," 31 March 2005, http://majdah.maktoob.com/vb/majdah6564.

[564] See comments at http://www.al-farouq.com/vb/showthread.php?t=2143

[565] Fatah Rahman, "Response to the Statement of the MB," http://www.tawhed.ws.

[566] See, for example, Youssef al-Dini, "Zawahiri and the Ikhwan," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 13 January 2006.

[567] Hijazi article, accessed at http://drakramhijazi.maktoobblog.com/?post=314380.

[568] Ibid.

not the product of the moment." In September 2007, Islamic State of Iraq leader Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi singled out the MB for its role in the campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq, an argument he expanded upon in his 22 February 2008 audiotape. In that tape, he criticized Hamas for "a chain of treacheries" and other MB branches for "entering into peculiar alliances with the apostate regimes" in Egypt, Syria, and Iran, while displaying "rampant hostility towards the Salafi Jihadists." According to al-Baghdadi, they "have truly betrayed our religion and the Islamic nation, and they have abandoned the blood of the martyrs."

In his April 2008 answer to questions posed on the internet, Zawahiri focused heavily on the MB.[569] His single longest answer to any question was a detailed critique of the MB's draft party platform circulated in the fall of 2007. Zawahiri argued that the platform is not truly based on sharia and is fundamentally inconsistent with the principle of *hakimiya* (God's law on earth) because of its efforts to work within the Egyptian constitution. He worked through the party platform point by point to demonstrate that the MB's reform program subordinates the sharia to the constitution, proving the movement's abandonment of true Islam. In the eyes of many in al-Qa'ida circles, by the fall of 2007 the "MB globally helped surrender Iraq to the crusader occupation."[570] Nor was this the exception: "this happens again and again…[it is] not an isolated incident."[571] The betrayal in Iraq, some proclaimed, marked "the end of the *ikhwan*...[and the] beginning of the generation of Ekhlaas."[572]

From the available evidence, al-Qa'ida's conflicts with the MB and with other Islamist groups (including Hamas, Hizballah and the nationalist insurgency groups in Iraq) have had the effect of isolating al-Qa'ida rather than greatly harming the MB. Public opinion polling showed broad support for the Brotherhood's general orientations and very little for al-Qa'ida's. For instance, an opinion survey from spring 2009 found that 83 percent of Egyptians approved of attacks on American troops in Iraq (as did the MB), but only 8 percent approved of attacks on American civilians in the United States (as did al-Qa'ida).[573]

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[569] English version available at www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefazawahiri0408.pdf.

[570] Dr. Ahmed Tahhan, "'Ajeeb Amer al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Iraq," *Al-Ekhlaas*, 4 October 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=87343'.

[571] Abdullah Mansour, "Al-Hezb al-Islami al-Iraqi wa al-Masmar al-Akhir fi Na'ash al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin," *Al-Ekhlaas*, 17 October 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=90231.

[572] Abu Hamza al-Maqdisi, "The End of the Brothers, the Beginning of the Generation of Ekhlaas," *Ana Muslim*, http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=208800.

[573] Project on International Policy Attitudes, released 24 February 2009, http://worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafricara/591.php?lb=brme&pnt=591&nid=&id=.

Ideology

> [T]hey call for *wasatiya* but what is half-way between truth and falsehood?
>
> -- Abu Hadhifa al-Libi[574]

There is little disagreement that the MB and al-Qa'ida disagree over tactics. The MB's leadership has consistently denounced al-Qa'ida's violence, from 9/11 (which Supreme Guide Mohammed Mehdi Akef called "a criminal act which could only have been carried out by criminals") to the attacks carried out in Muslim countries.[575] The intense public argument between Zawahiri and the Egyptian MB over the question of reform demonstrates this gap clearly, with Zawahiri denouncing protests and elections as useless and Brotherhood leaders countering that al-Qa'ida had "nothing to offer than their futile ideology of violence and destruction."[576] The more serious argument revolves around their strategic objectives, with many critics of the MB arguing that it shares al-Qa'ida's ultimate goals.

But a closer look at the ideology of the MB as it has evolved in recent decades demonstrates serious problems with the common argument that the MB and al-Qa'ida share similar goals even if their tactics differ. They do share the general goals of spreading Islamic identity and ultimately establishing an Islamic state governed by sharia. Yet, there are extremely significant differences in their conception of sharia, state and society.[577] A MB-inspired Islamic state would look very different from a Salafi jihadist Islamic state—a vital point obscured by the lazy conflation of the two groups as undifferentiated Islamists.

Al-Qa'ida's conception of the Islamic state envisions absolute *hakimiya*, an extremely strict reading of Islamic behavior and practice, the rigorous enforcement of Islamic morality, an absence of civil law independent of sharia, zero tolerance of diversity of interpretation and no place whatsoever for the institution of the nation-state. Both in ideology and practice, the MB has demonstrated that it can tolerate a wide range of practical variation in forms of governance, diversity of interpretation, civil law drafted by elected parliaments and enforced by an independent judiciary and the legitimacy of state borders. The MB's recoiling from the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan and from the

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[574] "Tafrigh Kalimat al-Shaykh Abu Hadhifa al-Libi 'an Harakat Hamas wa Hizb al-Ikhwan," *Al-Ekhlaas*, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=74598.

[575] Quoted in http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=5995&SecID=211, 4 December 2004.

[576] Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib, 9 June 2006, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=4130&SectionID=147.

[577] Chris Hamisch and Quinn Mecham, "Democratic Ideology in Islamist Opposition? The Muslim Brotherhood's 'Civil State,'" *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (2009), 189-205.

excesses of the Islamic State of Iraq are typical of a general opposition to both the methods and the goals of the Salafi jihadist trend.

The MB sees itself as part of society, changing it from within through open political and social action, while al-Qa'ida conceives of itself as outside of a corrupt *jahiliyya*, changing it from the outside. The MB rejects the use of violence outside of carefully defined domains as a matter of principle, not just tactics (although, problematically for the United States, its definition of legitimate violence against foreign occupation includes both Palestinian resistance to Israel and the Iraqi insurgency against the U.S. presence). The MB accepts nation-states as zones of action, and is itself organized around a framework of largely independent branches within sovereign states, while al-Qa'ida rejects the very principle of states and sees itself as a de-territorialized band of knights.

The MB's political pragmatism, working within existing institutions, clashes sharply with al-Qa'ida's principled rejection of existing institutions as *jahili* and its sharp definition of possible alliances through the doctrine of Al Wala' Wal Bara' (embracing all that is Islam and disavowing all that is not). The MB has renounced the doctrine of *takfir* since the publication of *Preachers Not Judges* under the name of then-Guide Hassan al-Houdaybi in the late 1960s, while al-Qa'ida has embraced the takfirist method in full fervor. In contrast to the role of the MB in facilitating the flow of Arab volunteers to Afghanistan in the 1980s, there has been virtually no evidence of any MB foreign fighters in Iraq. Indeed, in October 2007, a jihadist commentator writing under the name of Abdullah Mansour complained: "why has the Ikhwan not issued one official statement calling its followers to jihad in Iraq?"[578]

In short, the MB is far stronger, has positions far more in line with mainstream public opinion, and is more able to act within existing political structures. A recent public opinion survey found that 64 percent of Egyptians had a positive view of the MB and only 16 percent negative views, 69 percent think that it is genuinely committed to democracy and almost 75 percent agree with its idea of a body of religious scholars with a veto over legislation.[579]

The depiction of the MB as moderate rests only in part upon its juxtaposition to the Salafi jihadists, however. Core aspects of the vision of economic and political reform expressed in a variety of MB electoral platforms are quite compatible with the ideas

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[578] Abdullah Mansour, "Al-Hezb al-Islami al-Iraqi wa al-Masmar al-Akhir fi Na'ash al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin," *Al-Ekhlaas*, 17 October 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=90231.

[579] Project on International Policy Attitudes, released 3 June 2009, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafricara/613.php?nid=&id=&pnt=613&lb=.

presented by secular trends.[580] The influential cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi explicitly locates the Brotherhood's form of Islamism as "centrism" in opposition to "extremism."[581] The politically-minded "middle generation" of the MB prides itself on pragmatism, and has demonstrated real commitments to the political process and to a generic vision of economic and political reform.[582] This generation's condemnations of violence (outside of domains defined as legitimate resistance to occupation) go well beyond tactics, judging by its members' documents, speeches and interviews over the last decade in both Arabic and English.[583]

Still, there are limits to the Brotherhood's moderation. The group's program for the complete transformation of society from the bottom up, spreading faith "one soul at a time" (in the phrase commonly associated with founder Hassan al-Banna) through proselytization from below and legislation from above, is far more radical than the more prosaic goals of other movements that simply want to seize power. While the MB consistently avows "no compulsion in religion," its methods do not necessarily live up to this lofty ideal, and many non-Islamists in these countries find a great deal of compulsion within their project. While it may not initiate *hisba* cases (lawsuits declaring a Muslim to be an apostate) itself, for instance, it has rarely taken a strong stand against them. It is a conservative voice in local culture wars, and is generally feared and even despised by secular liberals in these societies.

As much as the MB doctrine of *wasatiya* falls short of the hopes of many Western liberals, it also poses a rich target for the ideological purists of Salafi jihadism.[584] In general, the modern MB is stronger on organization and politics than on doctrine, which arguably has served it very well in terms of institutional survival, but has put it at a disadvantage when embroiled in doctrinal disputes. The London-based Egyptian Salafi jihadist Hani Siba'i argues that if judged by closeness to sharia, a standard important to doctrinal purists but not to MB pragmatists, the MB experience has been

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[580] Raymond Baker, *Islam Without Fear* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rutherford.
[581] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism* (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouq, 2001).
[582] See Marc Lynch, "Islamist Views of Reform," *Brookings U.S.-Islamic World Forum*, 18 February 2008.
[583] For more detailed discussion, including author interviews with senior MB leaders in several countries, see Marc Lynch, "The Brotherhood's Dilemma," *Brandeis University, Crown Center Middle East Brief* 25 (January 2008).
[584] On the "gray zones" in MB thought from a liberal perspective, see Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy and Marina Ottoway, "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones," *Carnegie Paper #67* (March 2006). For an example of Salafi jihadist skepticism, see Dujlat wal-Furat, "Is it permitted to belong to the MB trend… a political and doctrinal discussion," *Al-Faloja*, 1 April 2007, http://www.al-faloja.net/vb/showthread?php?t=8230.

failure.[585] When the MB fails to deliver results—such as in unsuccessful electoral campaigns or an inability to influence legislation—it will be on the defensive against ideologically purer and tactically more aggressive rivals.

The MB-al-Qa'ida cleavage rose to the forefront of Islamist politics around a number of major issues: 9/11 and jihad, takfir, Palestine, democracy, Hizballah and the Shi'a question and Iraq. Since the Shi'a question and Hamas are treated in the chapters by Haykel and Paz elsewhere in this volume, I focus instead on jihad, takfir, democracy and Iraq.

Jihad

Views on the application of the doctrine of jihad are a key marker separating the competing doctrines of the MB and al-Qa'ida. The MB has long embraced the centrality of jihad in Muslim life, but has never accepted 'Abdullah 'Azzam's influential elevation of the duty of jihad to a central pillar of Islam that informs Salafi jihadism. As stated above, the MB (and many of its affiliated public figures) immediately condemned the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers, terrorism and bin Ladin's strategy. At the same time, the group has consistently condemned virtually every al-Qa'ida attack in the Muslim world, from Morocco and Algeria to Indonesia and India, as well as Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's attacks on civilians and on the Shi'a in Iraq.[586] Furthermore, with the important exception of Hamas attacks against Israel, the MB is invisible in the roster of suicide terror attacks of the last decade.[587] In the summer of 2009, Yusuf al-Qaradawi released a major book, *Fiqh al-Jihad* (The Jurisprudence of Jihad), which defended jihad as an obligation under specific conditions but denounced al-Qa'ida's "mad declaration of war on the whole world."[588] Remarks such as those by MB Supreme Guide Mohammed Mahdi Akef against bin Ladin's view of jihad infuriated Salafi jihadist purists: "the blood of the martyr Sayid Qutb has not dried yet… [D]id he not show the jihad to be one of the obligations of Islam?"[589]

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[585] Hani Siba'i, "Calm message to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood," http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=zgadf08r.

[586] "MB Condemns Deadly Bombs In Algeria And Morocco," *IkhwanWeb*, 5 May 2007, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=714&SectionID=0; "The Muslim Brotherhood Condemns Terrorist Attacks in India," *IkhwanWeb*, 26 November 2008, http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=18773&SectionID=0.

[587] See Moghadam (2008a).

[588] The book's main arguments were presented in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Masry al-Youm*, 29 June - 6 July 2009, first installment, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/printerfriendly.aspx?ArticleID=217021.

[589] "Hafid al-Hussein," 6 November 2007 (al-Hanein), www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=42027.

At the same time, the MB supported the insurgency in Iraq as a legitimate resistance to foreign occupation (even as its Iraqi branch participated in the political system under occupation) and praised Hamas violence against Israel. For the Islamic State of Iraq, the jihad was global in nature, with Iraq only one battlefield among many and the purity of doctrine as important as battlefield success. The more nationalist factions (including the MB) identified the jihad as intended solely to liberate Iraq from foreign occupation. The MB's stance rested heavily on a distinction familiar to Arab public discourse between illegitimate terrorism and legitimate resistance:

> The [Muslim] Brotherhood calls for the ending of the occupation with the Mujahidiin, whatever the place, time or nationality... For the MB is with Al-Qa'ida in its jihad against occupation in any place where an occupation is present. The MB is with Al-Qa'ida with everything in this only.[590]

It bears repeating that the MB position sits firmly within the Arab mainstream on the question of the use of violence against Israel or against the United States in Iraq. As demonstrated in the survey research discussed above, its positions on these issues broadly reflect wide trends in regional discourse and attitudes, rather than uniquely Islamist views. The same is true of the MB's condemnation of acts viewed as terrorism outside of those so-called zones of resistance, whether in the United States, Europe or Muslim-majority countries. This is cold comfort to Americans in Iraq or to Israelis facing Hamas attacks, but does attest to the essentially mainstream aspirations and orientations of the MB.

Takfir

As is discussed in detail by Mohammed Hafez in this volume, *takfir*—the process of declaring a Muslim to be an apostate—is a key ideological line of division in contemporary Islamism. The use of *takfir* by Salafi jihadists is based on a stark, restrictive definition of Islam in which only the doctrinally pure merit the name Muslim. This doctrine authorizes the most extreme brutality, from Algeria to Iraq, and is one of the most potent weapons in the arsenal of Islamism. The MB struggled with the *takfir* question for decades before officially repudiating it with the publication of *Preachers Not Judges* under the name of then Supreme Guide Hassan Hudaybi. Its position on this question continues to arouse doubts in Egypt and beyond, since it refuses to either endorse or to take a strong public stance against the *hisba* cases brought against public figures in Egypt by radical lawyers such as Yusuf al-Badri. But this nevertheless remains a stark line of doctrinal distinction between the two trends.

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[590] Al-Ikhwani al-Salafi, "Why I defend the mujahideen of al-Qa'ida," *Al-Boraq*, 17 June 2008, http://www.alboraq.info/showthread.php?t=50080.

Democracy

The question of participation in formal political life, like jihad, cuts to the core of the differences between the MB and al-Qa'ida. For al-Qa'ida, as for Sayid Qutb, contemporary Arab states that do not rest upon sharia should be considered a form of *jahiliyya*. Participation in elections or in such parliaments, which elevates the rule of man over that of God, represents a form of polytheism and a rejection of the doctrine of *hakimiya*. Coexistence with non-Islamist groups, to say nothing of actual alliances, violates the principle of Al Wala' Wal Bara', which jihadi-Salafis believe forbids cooperation or interaction with non-Muslims.[591] This stance puts al-Qa'ida far on the margins of contemporary Arab discourse, as majorities of 90 percent typically express support for democracy as a form of government in public opinion surveys.[592] Indeed the MB's position is attacked in the Arab world mainly by those who doubt the sincerity of its avowed commitments, not because of its democratic discourse.[593]

Since the 1970s, in contrast to al-Qa'ida, the MB's pragmatic approach has focused on participating in elections wherever permitted, working within the political system to advance the cause of Islamic life and law. MB-affiliated thinkers have developed an elaborate theoretical defense of democracy, rooted in the principles of *shura* (consultation) and *ijtihad* (personal interpretation).[594] In that regard, Yusuf al-Qaradawi's 1993 fatwas in support of pluralism and democracy established the broad guidelines for the movement that remain in place to the present day.[595] The MB has participated in elections at every level possible, from student unions to professional associations to parliaments, in virtually every country and in every possible occassion when its participation was permitted by the authorities (with the major exception being polls so blatantly rigged that participation would be pointless). Brotherhood members of pParliament have worked pragmatically and effectively where possible, focusing on issues of corruption and governance as well as cultural and Islamic issues.[596] While MB members argue furiously about the appropriate balance between politics and *da`wa* (outreach), in general the MB considers itself fundamentally a part of society and not as

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[591] For more on Al Wala' Wal Bara', see the chapter by Hafez in this volume.

[592] Amaney Jamal and Mark Tessler, "Dimensions of Democratic Support in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 19 (January 2008), 97-110; Mark Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes Toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries," *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002), 337-54.

[593] Abdel Monem Said al-Aly, "The MB and the Question of Reform," *Middle East Brief* 23 (Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, October 2007).

[594] Rutherford; Baker.

[595] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Al-Islam wa al-Dimoqratiyia* (Islam and Democracy) (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouq).

[596] Samer Shehata and Joshua Stacher, "The Brotherhood Goes to Parliament," *Middle East Report* 240 (2006), 32-39.

a righteous movement outside of a hopelessly corrupt, fundamentally non-Islamic society.

The long-festering democracy question dividing the MB and al-Qa'ida came to the fore with the fierce attack by Zawahiri on the decisions by Hamas (in 2006) and the Egyptian MB (in 2005) to participate in parliamentary elections. In line with Salafi jihadist orthodoxy, Zawahiri argued that democracy is opposed to sharia because it puts the will of a human majority over the will of God. He also challenged the MB's participation on pragmatic grounds, asking how the movement's participation in elections had improved the conditions of Islam under Mubarak. Finally, Zawahiri skillfully exploited the international community's boycott of the Hamas-led elected Palestinian government to highlight Western hypocrisy towards democracy and Islamists.

Such pragmatic arguments—which were frankly shared by many MB and Hamas Islamists as well—gained far more traction than did the ideological critique. Whereas the argument against democracy in principle had limited resonance, the argument against participating in a democratic process openly manipulated by authoritarian governments had more appeal. That is probably why in his later tapes, rather than rehearse the doctrinal issues, Zawahiri instead details the Egyptian government's repression of the MB and crude intervention in municipal elections, the struggles of Gaza under Hamas and the mistreatment of Islamist parties in Morocco and Jordan in parliamentary elections. Whatever one thinks of democracy in principle, he suggests, the practice in today's Arab world makes a mockery of those advocating participation.

Iraq

Iraq emerged in 2006 and 2007 as one of the most intense arenas of conflict between al-Qa'ida and the MB, as the insurgency divided and broad swathes of the Sunni community turned against AQI. While the reasons for this turn are beyond the scope of this chapter, important factors were the declaration of the Islamic State of Iraq in October 2006 and the attempt by al-Qa'ida to impose its hegemony over the disparate and fragmented Iraqi insurgency. Ironically, given the intensity that this conflict generated, it was in a way a conflict with the Ikhwan in name only, since many of the targeted groups were not part of the global MB at all (only the Iraqi Islamic Party and a handful of insurgency factions were officially affiliated with the MB, while major groups such as the Association of Muslim Scholars of Iraq were not). As late as November 2006, Ali al-Naimi, spokesman of the Islamic Army of Iraq (the largest and most important of the so-called nationalist jihadist factions), called the MB's Islamic Party "nothing but supporters of the enemies of the *ahl al-sunna*, the crusaders and *ruwafidh*" and called on all "honest Muslims" to leave the IIP. Six months later, the

Islamic Army was routinely denounced as "MB," which had evolved into a catch-all term for Islamist groups that were willing to work within existing political institutions, prioritized the national rather than the universal jihad and put pragmatism ahead of principle.

The MB, for its part, faced its own dilemmas in Iraq. While its global constituency and leadership opposed the U.S. invasion and supported resistance factions, the MB in Iraq joined the political process.[597] As noted below, there was no global MB to discipline the Iraqi MB, and the Iraqi MB's decision to participate in existing political institutions when given the opportunity was, in fact, entirely consistent with MB practice and doctrine. Iraq had not previously had a serious MB presence because of Saddam's refusal to tolerate competing movements or power centers, and much of the Iraqi MB sided with the opposition in exile against Saddam because of the latter's treatment of the movement over the years.[598]

Al-Qa'ida came to blame the global MB and its Iraqi affiliates as the key enemy in Iraq, lurking behind the scenes of a variety of irritants—the tribes, the *sahwa* (Awakening movement), al-Jazeera and the Islamic Party. The net of the alleged MB conspiracy was cast wide. For instance, one prolific forum commentator wrote in late April 2007 that the IIP and Association of Muslim Scholars of Iraq (for years the leading Salafi reference for the Iraqi insurgency) are two sides of the same coin, the MB.[599] Another described the conspiracy as encompassing "the Saudis and the rulers of Jordan and the MB all under American patronage[,]…the tribes under Saudi-Jordanian supervision, MB through the IIP and Saudi money, the Salafi resistance [muqawima] through Saudi intelligence [mukhabarat], Baathists." [600] This discourse was not limited to the forums. In one of his audiotapes, ISI Amir al-Baghdadi discussed the conspiracy against the jihad as "not a monopoly of the ikhwan but also includ[ing] some claiming the name of salafiya and who have rapprochement with ikhwan."[601] Al-Jazeera, which in the first years of the Iraqi insurgency was seen by the United States and the insurgency alike as helping the so-called resistance (i.e. the battle of Fallujah in 2004), was now cited in the forums as the media arm of the conspiracy. These complaints grew even more intense after al-Jazeera appeared to misrepresent the contents of an audiotape focused on Iraq

[597] Mohammed Ahmed al-Rashid, *Naqadh al-Mantaq al-Silmi* (Refutation of the Peaceful Logic) (Non-copyrighted internet book, issued in Baghdad, September 2008).
[598] Usama Tikriti, head of Islamic Party of Iraq, interviewed on al-Jazeera, 2 February 2000, http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveID=89267.
[599] "Mo'ataz Bi'llah Al-Jathami, "The 'Nationalist' AMSI," *Al-Faloja*, 24 April 2007, http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=9558.
[600] Abd al-Aziz al-Dulaymi, "ISI and the Political Council. What Next?," *Al-Ekhlaas*, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=90792.
[601] Ibid.

by Usama bin Ladin. Salafi jihadists saw this as part of a wider MB attempt to find a rapprochement with the United States and its purportedly moderate Arab allies. Even reported meetings between MB members of the Egyptian Parliament and U.S. Congressmen became part of the conspiracy.

The al-Qa'ida-MB rift in Iraq was muted during the early years, 2003 and 2004, when the insurgency was relatively unified across ideological lines. For instance, al-Jazeera's Ahmed Mansour, generally considered to be sympathetic to the MB, had no problem reporting sympathetically from Fallujah during the April 2004 battle. The conflict emerged in fits and starts over the course of 2005 and 2006, linked to U.S. engagement (direct and indirect) with insurgency representatives and the broader Sunni turn against al-Qa'ida in Iraq. Zarqawi engaged in a highly public polemic with Yusuf al-Qaradawi over the latter's criticism of beheading videos and attacks on Shi'a civilians. In February 2007, forums pointed to the participation of Salam Zakam al-Zoub'ie of the Islamic Party in Baghdad security plan as evidence that the "MB joins ruwafidh and Peshmerga in exterminating the Sunnis of Iraq."[602]

The brewing struggle exploded with a 4 April 2007 statement by the Islamic Army of Iraq denouncing the ISI, which was later described on numerous forums as "the most dangerous document." The document put forward a bill of complaints, including the Salafi jihadist imposition of strict sharia and the attempt to impose political hegemony. This set in motion open ideological warfare. On 6 April, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir attacked the Iraqi Islamic Party (Hashemi) as a proxy for the intra-insurgency rivals. The jihadist forums followed suit, quickly coming to define nearly all of their Islamic rivals as "Ikhwani," no matter how tenuous their actual connection to the MB.[603] A number of jihadi commentators reflected that these factions had started honestly but then gone astray at the hands of the MB. One June 2008 contribution, for instance, divides resistance into MB, Salafi and Salafi jihadist divisions, and concludes that the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades did some good things but then fell into the trap of the political process, the Awakening and the media campaigns aginst ISI.[604] Grumbled the Salafi jihadist theorist Akram Hijazi, "the Islamic world is most confused and upset by

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[602] Abu Hamza al-Maqdisi, "The End of the Brothers, the Beginning of the Generation of Ekhlaas," http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=208800.

[603] Akram Hijazi's numerous articles along these lines were particularly influential; for example, see the three part series "Secrets of the conflict between the IAI and al-Qa'ida," 22 May 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=95318; Moattaz Bi'llah al-Jathami, "Ansar al-Sunna reveals the truth about the so-called 'Reform and Jihad Front," 10 October 2007, http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=20001.

[604] Islamic State of Iraq/Ministry of Information, "Al-Qul al-Mubayin fi Haqiqa Kata'ib al-Thawra al-Ishrin," 5 June 2008, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?154076.

the MB... [I]f the tribes are just in it for the money, what explains them?"[605] As al-Qa'ida searched for reasons for its setbacks on the ground in Iraq, then, many of its theorists settled on the Muslim Brotherhood as its most important enemy and the one most in need of exposure before its own people.

Organization

The MB poses two rather different challenges to al-Qa'ida: a global ideological challenge and a local, context-specific, organizational challenge. MB organizations share a general doctrine and a pyramidal cell-structure organization emphasizing close face-to-face interaction locally and hierarchy nationally. They tend to participate in political life wherever given the opportunity, maintain large-scale social service sectors and engage in *da`wa* (proselytizing) through a wide set of avenues. At the same time, there is enormous variety in their relative organizational strength, the distribution of radical and moderate voices within the organization, their major competitors (Islamist and otherwise), their relationship to the ruling regimes and more. The "global" organization is more a theoretical construct than reality, with Cairo exercising little operational control over its like-minded member organizations. As the Jordanian journalist Yasir Abu Hilalah notes, there has never been a global MB organization, only local organizations who are themselves divided over many key issues.[606] This means that the MB's operational challenge to al-Qa'ida will vary significantly based on local conditions.

Local variation

A great deal of analysis of the MB draws upon the relatively unique Egyptian case, but expanding the comparative universe of cases of MB organizations offers a much more diverse picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses. This section briefly reviews a number of Arab cases beyond Egypt to show the significance of local conditions and variations.

In Egypt, the MB is exceptionally public (despite still being outlawed), well-entrenched and a forceful presence in both mass and elite society. It is widely considered to be the largest mass-based political organization in the country, with perhaps 100,000 members and deep financial resources. While some observers argue that it is losing its grip on the poorer sectors and evolving into a middle class organization, it retains a formidable

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[605] Akram Hijazi, "Shuhada wa Abtal bi Muwasifat Amrikiya," *Al-Ekhlaas*, 16 September 2007, http://www.aekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=82424.

[606] Yasir Abu Hilalah, "The disaster of the MB of Iraq," *Al-Ghad*, 6 May 2007, http://alghad.jo/index.php?article=6260.

organization.[607] The moderate trend in the MB was consolidated by Anwar Sadat's encouragement of the MB as a political alternative to Nasserism. Throughout the 1980s, the MB participated in electoral politics at all levels and built up a strong public presence More radical members of the MB split off from the organization, forming a number of smaller, violent trends. When Egypt descended into insurgency and counter-insurgency in the 1990s, however, the Mubarak regime stopped differentiating between moderate and radical Islamists and cracked down indiscriminately on both radical Islamists as well as the MB. With the MB leadership paralyzed, liberal reformists split off in frustration to form the Wasat Party, which has never been licensed by the Egyptian government. In 2004, Mohammed Mehdi Akef took over as Guide of the Egyptian MB and, somewhat surprisingly, ushered in a reformist, politically-oriented period dominated by the so-called middle generation. The MB participated in the ill-fated 2005 elections, only to do too well and suffer a sharp crackdown at the hands of the regime. The group is currently besieged, but shows no sign of abandoning politics or of resorting to violence even in the face of sharp regime provocations. It is worth noting that, in this context, al-Qa'ida has proven singularly unable to find any point of entry into the Egyptian polity. When the leader of one of the radical Egyptian jihadist factions declared the creation of an al-Qa'ida affiliate in Egypt, he could not even bring his own organization with him and the project rapidly faded from view.

The trajectory of the MB in Jordan was decidedly different. Rather than operating as a de facto opposition, for decades the Jordanian MB was a core part of the Hashemite ruling coalition, with privileged access to government positions and a strong public presence. When Hamas appeared in 1988, many Jordanians viewed the development through the lens of this long-standing positive relationship with the MB (as well as the Hashemites' long-standing rivalry with Yasir Arafat's PLO). Indeed, the Palestinian MB from whence came Hamas remained a constituent part of the Jordanian MB even after the official severing of ties in 1988. The Islamists were one of the only important forces in the kingdom to not accept this decision, and today continue to be wracked by controversy over the question of Jordanian-Palestinian relations. The MB dominated the first parliamentary elections in 1989, forming the largest bloc, and proved perfectly able to work within the limits of the Hashemite system. This relationship began to break down in the 1990s when the MB took the lead in opposing King Hussein's peace treaty with Israel. The MB formed the core of the emerging anti-normalization bloc, leading numerous protests as well as the parliamentary opposition. Over the course of the 1990s, relations with the Jordanian regime suffered. The real break, however, came with the succession to King Hussein by his son Abdullah, who lacked his father's long-cultivated personal ties to the Brotherhood's leadership, and the eruption of the Al-

[607] Hussam Tammam, *Transformations of the MB* (Cairo: Madbouli, 2006).

Aqsa Intifada in the fall of 2000, which aroused fears of the violence shifting to the East Bank of the Jordan River. Over the next decade, the MB found itself under episodic state repression, including growing attacks on its legal infrastructure, particularly over the question of its relationship with Hamas and its opposition to the peace treaty with Israel. The struggles of the MB with both the Jordanian regime and the Hamas tide coincided with the rising appeal of radical forms of Salafism in the kingdom. The radical milieu from which came Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi felt as alienated from the MB as it did from the Hashemite regime. Salafi jihadists such as Abu Mohammed al-Maqdisi challenged the MB's accommodating approach, willingness to remain in a parliamentary game, and to implicitly recognize the peace treaty with Israel. Ironically, the backlash against Zarqawi's bombing of the Amman hotels in November 2005 caught the MB up in the cross-fire, particularly after several MB leaders publicly paid their respects to Zarqawi after his death. The Jordanian MB was also deeply affected by its relationship with Hamas. Jordanian national identity and security are deeply shaped by the Palestinian issue, since the West Bank was part of the kingdom until 1967 and only formally relinquished in 1988, while a majority of Jordan's population is of Palestinian descent. The nature of the Jordanian MB's relationship with Hamas has been a perennial topic of political debate, which over the last few years has led to a concerted effort on the part of the MB to demonstrate its independence from its Palestinian counterpart. In Jordan, therefore, the MB's declining purchase on official institutions as well as its implicit association with the peace treaty with Israel has likely cost it support in the face of rising Salafi presence outside of Amman.

The Syrian MB, by contrast, was formed in the 1940s and evolved into an elitist, parliamentary movement. As in Iraq, the Syrian MB had virtually no organization on the ground following Hafez al-Asad's brutal assault on its stronghold in Hama in 1982. Driven into exile, the Syrian MB shared the general ideological orientation of the wider MB, but lacked the organizational infrastructure found in Jordan and Egypt. Its desperate straits and exile orientation led it to adopt a number of problematic positions from the perspective of the wider MB. They even aligned with Saddam Hussein at a time when the Iraqi MB fiercely opposed his regime and suffered at his hands.[608] The Syrian MB also joined a broad national opposition front against the regime of Bashar al-Asad (the MB subsequently left in April 2009) and demonstrated a tactical flexibility and willingness to align across ideogical lines. In the 1980s, the defeated remnants of the Syrian MB scattered, and the absence of a grounded organization perhaps explains why significant numbers of members joined the more extreme Salafi jihadist networks, including persons such as the primary theorist of leaderless jihad, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri.

[608] Ala al-Nadi, "Hamas was tasfiya tarakat al-nasab al-ikhwani," *Islam Online*, 13 January 2009.

Similar comparisons could be made across a range of cases that have featured strong Muslim Brotherhood organizations, including Yemen, Morocco and Algeria. The Gulf States offer a less frequently studied, but extremely interesting, set of comparative cases that includes even more variation in the nature of the organizations and their relationships with the national political environment. There have been few studies of the MB in the Gulf to this point, due to its underground nature and the absence of good documentary evidence, but this gap has begun to be filled in recent years by a number of Gulf-based scholars. [609]

The Kuwaiti experience resembles the experience of the Levant countries in important ways, with a well-established MB organization contesting elections and occupying important positions within state institutions. The Kuwaiti MB was founded in 1947, and quickly became one of the strongest and wealthiest of the MB branches in the Gulf. It enjoyed a strong media presence, a thriving public services sector and a role in various governments and governmental institutions. After long serving as a key location for Palestinian MB members, it reportedly severed its ties with the global MB organization in protest over the general MB support for Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait. After the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, the Kuwaiti MB formed the Islamic Constitutional Party, which participated successfully in a series of parliamentary elections, but was shocked in 2008 by the electoral success of its Salafi rivals.

Bahrain saw a somewhat similar trajectory, with an MB student association formed in 1941 evolving into a potent national organization, becoming the Jama'iya al-Islah in 1980. Even more than in Kuwait, a rising Salafi trend has overwhelmed the MB in Bahrain to the point of hegemony over the Sunni Islamist field.

Two other key Gulf cases, by contrast, highlight the possibility of influence without an organization. In Saudi Arabia, the MB exists more as a trend than as an organization, since the Saudi government did not allow the creation of an organization despite the large numbers of MB members entering the kingdom in the 1950s. The King of Saudi Arabia famously (albeit probably apocryphally) responded to a request by Hassan al-Banna to establish a branch of the MB in Saudi Arabia with the cryptic remark, "in the Kingdom we are all Muslim…and all Brothers."[610] While no formal branch of the MB could be established, a large number of individual Muslim Brothers took on major roles

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[609] Baqir al-Najjar, *Religious Movements in the Arab Gulf* (Arabic) (Dar al-Saqi, 2007); Nabil al-Bakiri, "Gulf Brothers.. moving from hidden into open," *Islam Online*, 12 April 2008, http://www.ala7rar.net/nawah.php?tid=565; Mohanna al-Hubayl, "The state of the MB in the Gulf," *Islam Online*, 3 June 2008, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1209358102635&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Daawa%2FDWALayout.

[610] Al-Bakiri.

in the Saudi state apparatus and educational system over the course of the 1950s and 1960s.[611] Al-Azzi writes that the MB is less known in Saudi Arabia because of the Salafi domination of religious institutions and because the MB figures there went by different labels.[612] Its influence was profoundly felt at the ideological level, even in the absence of a formal organization, while its ideology arguably was shaped more by the local Saudi context due to its own organizational weaknesses and the considerable power of the religious authorities in the Saudi state.

The absence of an organization can also be seen in Qatar where, according to the influential Islamist Abdullah al-Nefissi, the MB formally dissolved itself as an organization. Again, despite the lack of a formal organization, the MB retains a powerful presence intellectually and in the media, where the leading figure, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a fixture on al-Jazeera and in the Doha religious establishment.[613] Qatar has had only one serious terrorist attack, but this could be explained by a wide range of other factors, including al-Jazeera's presence or the small size of the country which allows effective security control. The absence of a formal organization in Qatar combined with a strong intellectual presence poses a particularly interesting test of the questions about the relative significance of organization and ideology, to which the next section returns.

Is the MB a Firewall or a Conveyor Belt?

How effective is the MB for combating al-Qa'ida and like-minded groups? For counter-terrorism purposes, this is one of the most important questions of all: does the MB—whether through organization or ideology—prevent Islamic-minded individuals from becoming terrorists? How do local variations matter?

The conveyor belt approach, popular with students of radicalization, argues that the similarities between the ultimate goals of the movements are more important than their tactical differences, in other words that "non-violent extremists" are crucial enablers of terrorism.[614] "The crux of the debate between al-Qa`ida and the MB is not over the

[611] The Saudi regime increasingly points to the MB influence to explain the rise of Salafi jihadism in the kingdom, in part to deflect attention from its own Wahhabi establishment. For example, al-Arabiya aired a two-part program on the impact of the MB in Saudi Arabia, 27 April 2006.
[612] See al-Rasheed (2007); Stephane LaCroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New 'Islamo-Liberal Reformers,'" *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 3 (2004); Hegghammer (forthcoming); Omar Mohammed al-'Azzi, "The Saudi Ikhwan – trend which has not yet said its word," *Al-Asar*, 25 July 2004.
[613] See Abdullah al-Nefisi, "Dissolve the MB," http://www.alnefisi.com/Default.aspx?Pages=item&id=62; see also discussion by Mishari al-Zaydi, "Should the MB disband," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 25 February 2007; Mohammed Abu Rumman, "Is dissolving the MB organization the solution?," *Al-Ghad*, 26 February 2007, http://www.alghad.jo/?article=5781.
[614] "Rewriting the Narrative."

ends," such analysts argue, "but rather the means by which to realize the greater goal of Islamic governance throughout the Muslim world."[615] In this view, Brotherhood activism creates stronger Islamic identities and potentially a pool of recruits on which more radical groups can draw. It creates a more Islamically-oriented public sphere, establishing the space for al-Qa'ida's mode of argument and strategy. It radicalizes opinion against the West, which can offer plausibility to al-Qa'ida calls for violent action even if the MB does not itself support such acts. Ultimately, conveyor belt theorists argue, the MB and al-Qa'ida share a common goal and their actions are mutually supportive regardless of their intentions. These skeptics argue that at least some individuals and financing move between the milieus, and that addressing the challenge of violent extremism requires also tackling the challenge of non-violent ideological enablers.

The firewall model, more popular among political scientists, places greater weight on the competitive aspect of the relationship between the MB and al-Qa'ida. The two movements may both be Islamist, but their doctrines are radically different, as are their views of mainstream society and the legitimacy of the use of force. Whether through the strength of their ideas or the robustness of their organizational structures, the MB in this model forms a firewall, preventing otherwise susceptible Muslims from descending down the path of radicalization. Members instead are more likely to remain committed to the MB's methods and doctrines, and to be more able to resist the temptations of the radical path to jihad.

Which of these approaches better captures the relationship between the MB and al-Qa'ida? It seems likely that there is movement of individuals across organizations, at least at the margins, but unfortunately there is little reliable or systematic (as opposed to anecdotal) evidence either way.[616] Research into such questions is difficult, given the sensitivity of the topic and the security concerns of both governments and the movements in question. It is far easier to interview senior MB leaders than it is to gain access to reliable information about their members defecting to al-Qa'ida. Still, it is possible to at least draw some inferences from available information and point to areas for future research. It is telling, for instance, that profiles of suicide bombers in Iraq overwhelmingly suggests that they are directly radicalized, and do not come from a MB

[615] Lydia Khalil, "Al-Qa`ida & the Muslim Brotherhood: United by Strategy, Divided by Tactics," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 6 (23 March 2006), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=714.

[616] For an interesting discussion of those who have left the MB, see Assam Talimi, "Departers from the Ikhwan: How, When and Why?," *Islam Online*, 1 November 2008.

background, in contrast to the Afghan jihad of the 1980s, where the MB played an important role in mobilizing volunteers.[617]

The next step would be to determine mechanisms: how, exactly, does a strong MB interfere with al-Qa'ida-style movements? MB leaders themselves seem to prefer the ideology explanation, arguing that their moderate ideas are the crucial barrier against extremism. But ideology alone does not seem to be enough—ideas tend to be somewhat elastic, adapting to circumstance, and there are lots of different Islamist ideas out there besides those of the Brotherhood. Ideas do not float freely, and much of the MB's strength appears to be organizational. Thus, to test the firewall hypothesis, a preliminary hypothesis would be that strong and well-rooted MB organizations would lock out more extremist challengers while weaker organizations cannot, thus leaving an open field for Salafi jihadists to recruit among individuals oriented towards Islamic causes. The competing conveyor belt hypothesis would see strong MB organizations creating a fertile ground for al-Qa'ida recruitment. The organizational approach would therefore stress that the key is not so much ideology as it is the MB's distinctive organization, which allows it to effectively monitor and control social space—through mosques, charities, organizational networks and other widespread networks. Put simply, by this argument the MB is aware when radicals move in to social sectors full of Islamic-oriented and politically active people, and are in a position to lock out their challengers. Of course, the MB is not the only kind of organization that can do this; an efficient mukhabarat, tribes or clans, established neighborhoods, gangs and so forth might all perform similar functions. But MB structures have a distinctive advantage with regard to specifically Islamist challengers: the MB is present in the religious, pious spaces where al-Qa'ida might get a foothold in a way that unions or secular organizations are not.

This simple comparison is complicated by the variation in how regimes deal with the MB at different stages. Regime repression is particularly significant in affecting the potential MB firewall.[618] Beyond the radicalizing effects of the repression itself, such efforts can degrade precisely the organizational capacity that keeps radicals out of the picture. As Egyptian analyst Khalil al-Anani writes:

> The "scorched earth" policies of Arab regimes played a major part in the growth of the Salafi trend in the Arab world. Arab regimes have consistently repressed moderate Islamists, especially those affiliated with the MB, in countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Jordan... The moderates are becoming marginalised, both intellectually and

[617] Hafez (2007); Hegghammer (forthcoming).
[618] Hafez (2003).

> organisationally, and they seem to have lost all hope in ever becoming influential again.[619]

The current wave of official crackdowns on the MB in places like Jordan and Egypt might similarly hinder their capability (if not willingness) to act as a firewall. Repression after choosing political participation discredits the pragmatists within the organization, and it is possible to imagine politicized youth growing frustrated at feckless leadership or to see the MB struggle to hold on to some of its constituencies. What is more, the repressive efforts increasingly target precisely the charities (Jordan) and financial underpinnings (Egypt) that make the organization so formidable. There is precedent for such degraded capacity: during the Egyptian insurgency of 1992 through 1997, for instance, the MB found itself caught up indiscriminately by the regime's repressive response despite its efforts to differentiate itself from the Islamic Group and Islamic Jihad and was thus perhaps less able to contain radical challengers.

It is clear that Salafi jihadists do make appeals to MB members and attempt to recruit them—something taken seriously enough that Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib was forced to publicly deny reports that MB members were joining al-Qa'ida.[620] Jihadist forums often contain direct appeals to MB youth. For example, one wrote in the Iraqi context but for a wider audience:

> Do you know why the people love the ISI? Because it did not vote for the constitutions[,]...because we are a global Islamist jihadist movement[,]...and you are a national Iraqi movement which doesn't accept non-Iraqis and brag about that on satellite TV.... Is a [government] of technocrats better than a government of sharia?... Emigrate from the government of technocrats to the government of god.[621]

"Why does the MB not participate in the jihad of the Islamic umma against the Crusaders in Iraq and Afghanistan," challenged a typical forum post in November 2006.[622] Asked another bluntly, "where are the MB youth with the jihad?"[623] In May

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[619] Khalil al-Anani, "Salafis Ascendent in the Arab World," *Brookings Institution*, 12 June 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0612_arab_conservatism_alanani.aspx. Ibrahim Houdaybi, a well-known youth moderate in the MB, describes this process in Egypt in an unpublished manuscript, "MB youth and radicalization" (2007).

[620] Quoted in *Ikhwan Online*, 7 August 2006, http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=22551&SecID=211.

[621] Abu Hadeel, "Oh Soldiers of the Islamic Army, Emigrate to Abi Omar al-Baghdadi," 6 April 2007, http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?t=8464.

[622] Abu Bakr al-Qurshi, "Question for the lovers of the MB," *Al-Boraq*, 12 November 2006, http://www.al-boraq.info/showthread.php?t=23676.

2007, a discussion ostensibly by an MB member about how they had been "deceived by our leaders" circulated on the forums.[624] Jihadists attacking the MB carefully distinguished between the MB leadership and its cadres who are misguided and poorly led, but could be saved. For instance, Abu Hadhifa al-Libi suggested that "there is no doubt that there are many strivers in the MB in the field of dawa and Islamic work…but many of their leaders, especially in Egypt, know little of sharia or religion."[625] This was a bid by al-Qa'ida for the rank-and-file of the MB to defect, against which the MB had to vigorously defend.

Anecdotal evidence on the MB rank-and-file suggests that there can be a receptive audience for a harder line than that of the pragmatic leadership, but that such temptations can be met through organizational adaptation and the strong face-to-face relationships nurtured by the MB's structure of cells and "families."[626] In Egypt, MB youth wonder about the political orientation of the Guide's office and the meager returns on political participation, and push for a more religious orientation. In Jordan, MB youth face the attractions of a strong Salafi movement, and the distraction of the Hamas movement appealing strongly to more radical Brothers of both Jordanian and Palestinian origin. MB organizations are aware of these challenges and fight back, attempting to retain their own members and to expand their own membership and market share among Islamist sectors of society. When the MB found itself coming under fierce state or international repression after participating in elections, as happened in Egypt and Palestine in 2005 and 2006, this clearly weakened the position of the MB organizations who had to answer critics who asked what their pragmatism had accomplished.

The experience in Egypt demonstrates the difficulty of coding the MB's success and failure at crowding more violent Islamists from the political scene. Many members of the Islamic Jihad movement, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, began within the MB but grew impatient with its moderate, non-confrontational strategy. When the MB opted to reject Qutb's arguments, many of these more radical members left the organization to create—among other new trends—the Islamic Jihad Organization. The MB remained committed to non-violence and working within the system, but an Islamist insurgency

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[623] Sayf al-Islam, "Wayn Ikhwanuna min Shabab al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin?" (Where are our brothers from the youth of the MB?), 27 January 2007, http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=197723.

[624] "Kayf Yakhdana Qadatna fi Jama'a al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen" (How our leaders in the MB deceived us), http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=232287.

[625] Abu Haditha Al-Libi.

[626] This paragraph is based on my personal interviews with MB youth activists in Egypt and Jordan in 2007 and 2008.

nevertheless wracked Egypt in the 1990s. Is their departure from the MB to form a new trend a testament to the strength of the MB's organizational firewall or its weakness?

The focus on the organization rather than the ideology would arguably make the global MB less relevant as a firewall than specific national MB organizations. It would also raise cautionary concerns about the likely impact of the repressive measures currently being taken by Arab regimes: by weakening the MB organizationally, they could be opening up those spaces for more radical competitors. Jordan seems to be a particularly relevant test case here, with the MB and Islamic Action Front, the local MB organization, discredited after the response by some of its members to Zarqawi, highly publicized internal splits, the fallout of Hamas over the last few years, its poor electoral performance and in general the breakdown of the long-standing accord between the regime and the MB. Syria might also emerge as a national arena upon which to focus, just as Lebanon has to such widespread alarm over the last year.

Conclusion

The differences between the MB and al-Qa'ida go deeper than a simple disagreement over tactics. The two trends embody very different visions of the ideal Islamic state and of the relationship between movement and society. The Brotherhood's pragmatism is rooted in a doctrine of *wasatiya*, which is anathema to the doctrinal purism of the Salafi jihadist trend. This does not make the MB a force sympathetic to American values or foreign policy interests. Its members are genuinely Islamist, within their *wasatiya* doctrine, in contrast to the Islam-lite or secularism offered by other trends that the United States finds more amenable. The MB strongly opposes Israel and supports Hamas, and during the height of the Iraqi insurgency supported its resistance to American occupation. There should be no more illusions about the MB's authentic preferences than there should be about its alleged connections to al-Qa'ida.

The central question should not be whether the MB is friendly to the United States, but whether it represents an effective opponent to al-Qa'ida and like-minded movements. Does its ideology and/or organization pose a formidable obstacle to al-Qa'ida or does it smooth the path towards radicalization? The evidence presented in this chapter is mixed, but generally supports the firewall thesis. When organizationally robust, the MB is well-placed to act as a barrier to incursions by al-Qa'ida. Its hostility to al-Qa'ida is not based on a desire to please the United States—which makes it more, rather than less, valuable. The MB recognizes a self-interest in preventing the spread of Salafi jihadist competition, and where it is strong it has effectively prevented the emergence of Salafi jihadist extremist movements. What worked in Iraq can offer support for working with MB organizations elsewhere, or at least allowing them to operate in their own self-interest. This should not extend to active support, however, and American counter-

terrorism practitioners should have no illusions about the ideological commitments of the MB or about the possible effects of their domination of political and social space. Should al-Qa'ida fade as a central focus of American interests, the policy calculations about the MB should change as well.

Chapter 8: Jihadis and Hamas

Reuven Paz

Introduction

On 14 August 2009, Hamas security forces attacked a group of men affiliated with the Gaza-based Salafi jihadist group Ansar Jund Allah. Twenty-four of the men, who had gathered at the Ibn Taymiyya mosque in Rafah, Gaza, were killed, including Abu Nour al-Maqdisi, the group's leader. The attacks at the Ibn Taymiyya mosque were a stark reminder of Hamas' willingness to use violence to suppress opponents and preserve its power in the Gaza Strip. They were also the latest round in the growing dispute between Hamas and the global jihad movement.[627]

In recent years, the rivalry between Hamas and the global jihad movement, with al-Qa'ida being its most prominent protagonist, has become the main schism among Sunni Arab Islamists.[628] Encompassing the respective leaderships, but also the rank-and-file of both movements, this competition involves two parties that represent competing doctrines of militant Islamism. On one side of the divide is Hamas, a group that has its origins in the Muslim Brotherhood, although it is the only MB-affiliated organization that currently employs violence. On the other side of the divide is al-Qa'ida, a group that represents the vanguard of the global jihad movement. Unlike Hamas, whose objectives focus on Palestine and Palestinians, al-Qa'ida is dedicated to the idea that the entire Muslim community of believers, the Umma, needs to wage a perennial jihad to overcome the enemies of Islam and reestablish a transnational caliphate.

Hamas' primary focus has always been to create a functional social infrastructure for Palestinians, rather than international politicking. Its goals have always revolved around liberating all of Palestine from Israeli occupation and replacing it with the Islamic State of Palestine. Hamas has not wavered from its narrow geographic focus, which provides the global jihadist movement with ongoing fodder to attack it.

Al-Qa'ida, be it understood as an organization or as an ideological umbrella for global jihad, is a relatively new Islamist player that, in 2008, celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Unlike Hamas, al-Qa'ida aims to unify the entire Muslim world in collective global solidarity, while enforcing the principle of militant jihad as a way of

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[627] Even though *Jund Ansar Allah* is not formally affiliated with al-Qa'ida, the two groups share the same Salafi jihadist ideology.

[628] On the clash between jihadis and Hamas, see for example Kim Cragin, "Al Qaeda Confronts Hamas," Studies *in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 32, no. 7 (July 2009); and Are Hovdenak, "Al-Qaida-A Challenge for Hamas?, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) Report, 2009.

life among the Islamic community. Al-Qa'ida distinguishes itself from MB-derived groups like Hamas through its message of pan-Islamic unity irrespective of national or geographic divisions; its insistence on a global application of violence; a fundamental rejection of democratic processes; and, not least, brutal tactics that have alienated many Muslims, including MB supporters. Consequently, the al-Qa'ida-Hamas conflict reflects the larger competition between two distinct approaches to militant Islamism: that of the jihadis and that of the ikhwan. The competition is heightened because of the uniquely sacred territory that Hamas claims, but also due to the utility of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to al-Qa'ida's propaganda and efforts to attract support around the Middle East. The essence of the al-Qa'ida-Hamas quarrel is embedded in the larger dispute between the global jihadist movement and the Muslim Brotherhood, which in turn is a clash over compromise. The main question is: who best represents the interests of the Umma? Is it the Muslim Brotherhood and its willingness to compromise, or the jihadist movement and its complete rejection of the very idea of compromise? At present, there are no indications that these two groups can overcome their differences.[629]

Central to the divide between the two doctrines is Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Like other branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, Hamas could have embraced a non-violent, pragmatic and opportunistic strategy in the Palestinian Territories. Instead, however, the group has long stood at the frontlines of the armed struggle against Israel and even inspired some global jihadist elements. Thus far, al-Qa'ida and other global jihadist groups have focused their energies on other regions of the Arab and Muslim world and very rarely directed attacks against Israel. Nevertheless, the ideology of these groups emphasizes Palestine and places it at the center of the universe of grievances for which they fight.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been of central importance to the Arab and Muslim world. Since 1979, Arab peace agreements with Israel and attempts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict have stirred strong emotions and controversy among Muslim populations. Even internal disputes between Arab regimes regularly feature accusations of sympathies to Israel or charges that these regimes have sold out the Palestinian cause.

But the rivalry between Hamas and al-Qa'ida extends beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the origins, nature and future of the Hamas-al-Qa'ida split in greater depth. To that end, the first section of this chapter lays out the fundamental elements of the accusations and attacks against Hamas on the part of al-Qa'ida and the global jihad movement. The second section discusses the rising tide

[629] For more on the clash between global jihad and the Muslim Brotherhood, see the chapter by Marc Lynch in this volume.

of Salafi jihadist groups and the concurrent unrest in Gaza over the rule of Hamas. The third section places the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the broader context of al-Qa'ida and the global jihad movement's strategy.

Al-Qa'ida vs. Hamas

As the most important offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood currently engaged in terrorism and political violence, Hamas has long been admired and supported by broad segments of the Arab and Muslim world, including by those with a global jihadist outlook. These sympathies can be explained in part by Hamas' leadership of the struggle against Israel, but Hamas has also attracted attention and respect for adopting innovative terrorist techniques. Most importantly, these include suicide attacks against Israeli civilians, although Hamas, unbeknownst to many, also spearheaded the innovative use of the Internet for propaganda, indoctrination and recruitment purposes.[630]

Al-Qa'ida's attacks on Hamas have intensified over time, but have become more pointed since June 2007, when the latter became the ruling power in Gaza. The stage for these attacks was set in January 2006, after Hamas won free, Western-style elections in the Palestinian Authority. Both the process by which Hamas gained power and the practical compromises that were required to attain and retain power fueled al-Qa'ida's critiques of the Palestinian Islamists.

Since evolving into a militant movement in December 1987, Hamas has kept an independent image within the spectrum of the Brotherhood's branches. Its bitter rivalry with Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization writ large, and later with the Palestinian Authority, distinguish the group from the strictly nationalist components of the Palestinian armed struggle. Most Islamists perceive Hamas' fight for the liberation of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa mosque as religious in nature—a struggle that, similar to the aims of global jihadists, attempts to free the Islamic world from the chains of Western culture on what is Islam's second holiest territory. Indeed, to many jihadists, the struggle over Palestine even surpasses in importance of the struggle over Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam. While Saudi Arabia is occupied by an internal enemy, the logic goes, Palestine is held captive by the Jews, their American supporters and the so-

[630] Hamas was one of the first Islamist movements to introduce a website in the late 1990s. In December 2001, it introduced its main website in Arabic (www.palestine-info.info), which became a model for many other Islamist sites to follow. Published in a way as a news agency of the Palestinian Media Center, the site includes every possible angle of the movement's Islamist, political, cultural, educational or military activity. Al-Qa'ida has also emulated Hamas on the recording of martyrdom videos, as is indicated I a 2000 letter by Abu Hudhayfa to bin Ladin. The letter was declassified as part of the Harmony Project of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. See http://www.ctc.usma.edu.

called Zionist-Crusader alliance. Not surprisingly, therefore, earlier jihadist propaganda prominently featured Shaykh Ahmad Yassin and Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, the two most prominent Hamas leaders, who were killed by Israel in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

Al-Qa'ida's accusations, criticisms and attacks against Hamas revolve around several key issues. Al-Qa'ida is fundamentally at odds with Hamas over its origin in, and ongoing affiliation with, the Muslim Brotherhood; its conception of jihad; its alliance with Iran and Hizballah; its cooperation with Arab apostate regimes; its unwillingness to fully implement sharia law in Gaza; its pragmatic approach towards violence against Israel; and its crackdown on groups and families supportive of al-Qa'ida.

The Muslim Brotherhood Factor

The Muslim Brotherhood is the first, largest and most influential Arab Muslim movement in modern times. Its strategy is *da`wa*, which combines an enormous socio-political and religious-cultural infrastructure with a search for doctrinal consistency and unity. In its more than eighty year-long history, the MB has faced numerous political and organizational struggles. Many of these compelled the MB to adapt to local concerns and conditions, and in the process, gradually turned it into a more pragmatic movement. Local control over regionally focused MB groups became one of the key tenets of the MB, an approach that helped to ensure the movement's survival. At the same time, the MB's acknowledgement of the need to absorb local variations into its doctrine rendered the local MB branches more autonomous, and ironically undermined the Brotherhood's effort to formulate a truly encompassing and unified organization.

As Marc Lynch described earlier in this volume, the past two decades have witnessed a clash between the MB and al-Qa'ida over the appropriate definition of jihad, and over the appropriate scope of activities for a militant Islamist group. At the core of this dispute is a disagreement over the genuine Islamic way in which to serve the Umma and promote its political and ideological unity. The MB believes in creating an Islamic revolution from below, by indoctrinating the majority of the Arab Muslim publics while abiding by the rules of the local political game. To that end (and in order to attract recruits), MB branches often develop a vast social, educational, economic and welfare system of da`wa. Hamas ahas followed this model.

Al-Qa'ida, on the contrary, believes in imposing change from above, through violence and other mostly extra-legal methods by which it hopes to radically alter the status quo. Al-Qa'ida and like-minded jihadists utilize the practice of Takfir, which essentially refutes any system rooted in non-Islamic values and enables them to expel rulers from the community of Muslims, thus making these rulers subject to attack. The MB, in

contrast, holds that compromises with, and within, an existing political system—even if it is an infidel one or influenced by outside infidel elements—is better for the movement's long-term efforts, and also in the best interest of the Arab Muslim public. The MB-al-Qa'ida battle is waged mostly in the Arab world, attesting to the fact that even though al-Qa'ida, its affiliates and its sympathizers think in global terms, their primary attachment is to the Arab states that represent the homeland to the bulk of al-Qa'ida's membership. The Arab world is deeply divided, save for the issue of Israel/Palestine. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is thus of unique importance for both the MB and the global jihadi movement, both of which hope to unite the entire Umma into a new caliphate. Given that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the only consensus issue within Muslim publics in the Arab world, it was only a matter of time before a clash was bound to emerge between two of the dominant exponents of these movements.

Hamas and al-Qa'ida are relatively new groupings within the Sunni militant tradition. Taking advantage of a spontaneous, popular Palestinian uprising, Hamas emerged in December 1987 from the Palestinian MB branch. It formulated its ideological foundation in August 1988 when it published its Charter, which remains effective to this day.[631] The fact that Hamas emerged in Gaza is significant because it afforded the local group a far greater degree of freedom of thought than would have been the case had it sprung up in the West Bank, where the local Palestinian MB and its Jordanian mother movement have always enjoyed a close relationship.

Hamas was born in Gaza partly as a result of a dispute that pitted the PLO and Fatah—the vanguard of the Palestinian national liberation movement—against the Palestinian Islamic groups in a confrontation that challenged Fatah's dominance and policies. Until 1988, the Palestinian MB focused on developing its religious and socio-cultural infrastructure, and avoided getting embroiled in the military and terrorist struggle of its nationalist counterparts.

Hamas thrived just as Palestinian nationalist groups began to moderate. Pursued since 1988, this moderation entailed a process of reconciliation with Israel as well as the abandonment of armed struggle as the key element of a strategy to produce political change. The Oslo Accords and the subsequent establishment of the Palestinian Authority between 1993 and 1994 provided Hamas with further evidence that the nationalist groups had abandoned their cause, and that it needed to continue its violent opposition to the so-called Zionist entity. From the mid-1990s onward, Hamas replaced the PLO and Fatah as the main Palestinian group devoted to the armed struggle against Israel.

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[631] There are many translations of the Charter posted on the Internet. See, for example, http://www.acpr.org.il/resources/hamascharter.html.

Hamas owes a number of its key characteristics to the early period of its existence. In December 1992, Israel deported about 400 senior Hamas activists to South Lebanon, where they came under the direct patronage of Hizballah and Iran. This mentorship promoted a strong alliance between Hamas and Hizballah/Iran that remains intact today. Hizballah and Iranian influence also account for Hamas' dramatic adoption of suicide attacks against Israeli civilians, which henceforth became its signature mode of attack.[632]

While the PLO and the majority of its commanders assumed positions within the new Palestinian Authority, Hamas' exclusion from official posts within the Palestinian Authortiy (PA) secured its reputation as a highly popular and credible resistance movement. Adding to this aura of authenticity was the socio-political background of the group's founders, most of who were highly educated Palestinians from poor, Gaza-based families. In stark contrast, most of the PLO membership originally consisted of Palestinian students from Cairo and other places outside of the Occupied Territories.

Hamas' Acceptance of Western Political Institutions

Al-Qa'ida fundamentally opposes Hamas' sociopolitical and Palestine-centered nationalist version of jihad, which contrasts with al-Qa'ida's violent and transnational interpretation. Hamas' permanent strategy—building a local struggle against Israel while seeking legitimacy through the acceptance of the Western-style, democratic Palestinian Authority—is anathema to the hardcore Salafi jihadist groups in and outside of Gaza. Global jihadists perceive Hamas' jihad as being undertaken not for the sake of Allah, but for the sake of the Palestinian homeland, and hence as a nationalist, rather than religious, jihad. Global jihadists find further proof of Hamas' un-Islamic nationalist and opportunistic strategy in the latter's ongoing refusal to fully impose sharia law in Gaza.

According to al-Qa'ida, not only has Hamas failed to go global, it has even hesitated from expressing clear signs of anti-Americanism. On the contrary, since Hamas became the sole government in Gaza, it has made efforts to gain international legitimacy, including from the United States. Al-Qa'ida accuses Hamas of playing by the rules of the West and abiding by its standards: embracing democracy within the Palestinian Authority (itself an outcome of the Oslo Accords); seeking international legitimacy;

[632] Suicide operations have been used since the 1980s by two secular semi-Marxist groups: the LTTE (Tamil Tigers) in Sri-Lanka and India, and the Kurdish PKK in Iraq and Turkey. From 1983 to 2000, Hizballah, Amal and non-Islamic Lebanese groups carried out such attacks against Israeli and international military forces, but not against civilians. However, the use of this kind of attack by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and, since 1998, by al-Qa'ida and other jihadi groups, gave this method a previously absent Islamist character.

fighting for an independent (albeit Islamic) Palestinian state; and tolerating, even adopting, Western ideas and institutions such as a parliament, man-made constitutions and laws and free elections.

Global jihadists accuse Hamas of recognizing the worldly international political system as part of its efforts to gain legitimacy. Following the MB approach of working within the existing political system of Western-style democracy and parliamentary election campaigns, Hamas has always sought to expand its representation in the Palestinian national bodies, above all in the PLO-controlled Palestinian National Council (PNC). Shortly after Hamas was established in December 1987, it claimed at least 40 percent of the seats in the PNC.[633] At the end of 2005, Hamas participated in the election campaign for the PA's Legislative Council. In January 2006, the movement won about 40 percent of the seats in Palestinian elections, becoming the de facto Palestinian government. The fact was inescapable that Hamas' rise to the top of the Palestinian power structure was facilitated by a framework of institutions established in accordance with the Oslo Accords, scoped according to Western democratic principles and accepted by the Israeli government. Hamas had few qualms about using a disqualified, infidel system for achieving its goals, which accords with the traditional opportunism of the MB. And yet, Hamas' rise to power via elections contravened al-Qa'ida's understanding of tawhid, the idea of the unity and all encompassing nature of God. Tawhid, according to al-Qa'ida, proscribes any governing system that does not directly impose sharia, God's law. For al-Qa'ida, therefore, Hamas' utilization of democratic processes implied that Hamas valued the opinions of Palestinians over those of God.

Al-Qa'ida's dispute with Hamas is further complicated by Hamas' status as the main Islamist group to resist Israel. This was evident in the recent exchange between al-Qa'ida deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and one of his former mentors, Sayyed Imam Sharif. Sayyed Imam Sharif accused Zawahiri of failing to support Hamas—which he described as the frontline for Muslims opposed to Israel—out of spite and jealousy. Zawahiri responded with the typical bromides about Hamas' nationalist outlook, but conceded that responding to critiques about al-Qa'ida's stance on Hamas was the most difficult task he had to face—not just because of Hamas' militant lineage, but also due to its popularity among Islamists.[634]

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[633] This claim has been rejected by Fatah.

[634] Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Kitab al-Tabri'ah – Risalah fi Tabri'ah Ummat al-Qalam wal-Sayf min Manqasat Tuhmat al-Khawr wal-Dhu'f* (A Treatise Exonerating the Nation of the Pen and the Sword from the Blemish of the Accusation of Weakness and Fatigue). See an online copy at http://www.e-prism.org/images/kitab_al-Tabrieah_-_2-3-08.pdf.

The Israeli operation in Gaza in the winter of 2008 to 2009 focused Arab attention on the situation of Gaza's Palestinians and highlighted the complexity of al-Qa'ida's relationship with Hamas. Supporters of al-Qa'ida and global jihad found it more difficult to maneuver between their traditional animosity toward Hamas and the need to present Hamas as the victor in the resistance against Israel. There was growing sympathy for the people of Gaza among many Arabs and Muslims, including supporters of the global jihad, although the latter chose to ignore the Palestinians living in the Fatah-dominated West Bank.

Indeed, most of the accusations hurled against Hamas by al-Qa'ida and its global jihadi supporters are aimed against the political leadership of the movement and not against its rank-and-file or its terrorist wing, the `Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Al-Qa'ida's focus on condemning Hamas' political leadership has become even more apparent since the Israeli attack in Gaza. Since the al-Qassam Brigades have been the main vehicle of jihad against Israel, it has been more difficult for al-Qa'ida to publicly condemn this group. The example of Gaza has also made it easier to accuse Hamas' political leadership of limiting the violent confrontation and imposing its submissive policy on Hamas' military ranks. The heroism and sacrifices of the al-Qassam members in fighting Israel, even in al-Qa'ida's eyes, has insulated them from al-Qa'ida's criticism. Finally, it has always been al-Qa'ida's policy to differentiate between Muslim publics and their governments. To al-Qa'ida, Hamas became another Arab government when it won Palestinian elections. As such, al-Qa'ida attacks should be focused on the leadership, not the fighting members of the Palestinian movement.

Alliance with Iran and Hizballah

Al-Qa'ida also disagrees with Hamas over the latter's alliance with Shi'a Iran and Hizballah, while also condemning Syrian patronage over Hamas' external leadership.[635] Following the war between Israel and Hizballah in the summer of 2006, global jihadists and their supporters rejected Hizballah's claims of victory over the Zionist entity, arguing that the victory followed the destruction of parts of Lebanon by Israel, an unjust and immoral ceasefire and a UN resolution that called for international forces to be stationed at the Israeli-Lebanese border. Above all, however, global jihadists were irked by the solid support Hamas had extended to Shi'a Hizballah. In al-Qa'ida's eyes, this was evidence of a sinful alliance that desecrates the Sunni world, undermines Sunni solidarity and offers a service to the evil empire of Iran. One of al-Qa'ida's most important ideological supporters, the Jordanian Dr. Akram Hijazi, compared the alliance of the Brotherhood and Hamas with the Shi'a, headed by Iran, to the alliance between Palestinian organizations with the Soviet Union:

[635] See Bernard Haykel's chapter on al-Qai'da and the Shi'a in this volume.

> Just like the Soviets had goals and motives for adopting liberation movements in the Third World after the triple aggression on the Suez Canal in 1956, the situation is the same for Iran with its alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas in the region. It also has its plans and this is not out of love or to support the liberation of the Al-Aqsa [Mosque]. The difference between the two alliances is that the Soviets wanted to spread their Marxist ideology as a counter to the capitalist ideology. So what do the Iranians have to spread other than the Shiite ideology? Nothing and we will see this later.[636]

Hijazi further stated:

> [I]t is not proven that Hamas has become Shiite, whether partially or fully, except for turning the other way, and encouraging Shiites, beginning with Hizballah, the Badr Brigades, and the Al-Mahdi Army and ending with Iran. However, this unseen conversion to Shi`ism does not hide a very dangerous Shiite culture in Palestine that first struck the members of the Brotherhood and their institutions and then spread to the general public…. The fact of the matter is that Hamas has worked and still is working to copy the Hizballah example in Lebanon to Palestine in its security, political, military, and media aspects. This is a performance that would be worthy of respect had Hamas preserved its jihadi plan according to what was in its founding manifesto and not relinquished it…The essence of the matter is that the Iranian-Safavid plan uses Hamas especially and the Muslim Brotherhood in general, as a tool to reach its goals.[637]

Dr. Hijazi's statements underscore the fact that in recent years, global jihadists have elevated Iran to the status of an enemy almost equivalent to the Crusader-Zionist West. This perception of Iran is mainly the result of the jihadist insurgency against U.S. forces and the new government established in Iraq in 2006, which global jihadists consider to be Shi'a. According to the jihadi narrative, recent developments in Iraq are the product of an American-Iranian conspiracy against Sunni Islam. In the Palestinian arena, meanwhile, Iran has been an ally and a source of assistance for Palestinians for a relatively long time. It was able to fill a void left by persistent Arab neglect of the Palestinian issue.

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[636] Akram Hijazi, "*Eighty Years of Their Emptiness: The Brotherhood and HAMAS Alliances*," part 4, 16 September 2009.
[637] Ibid.

Al-Qa'ida is also bothered by Hamas' alliance with 'Ba`athist' Syria and Syrian hospitality towards the external leadership of the movement, especially Khaled Mish`al. Global jihadists consider Syria to be part of the alliance with the Shi'a crescent of Iran, the Shi'a in Iraq and Hizballah. For jihadis, Syria's willingness to enter direct peace talks with Israel or indirect talks through Turkey places them firmly in the group conspiring against the global jihadists.

Collaboration with Apostate Regimes

Al-Qa'ida accuses Hamas of cooperating with the despised regimes of the Arab world. As evidence, al-Qa'ida cites Egypt's mediation between Hamas and Israel, but also the resumption of talks between Hamas and Fatah in an effort to solve the growing split in the Palestinian Authority between Gaza and the West Bank. The cease-fires between Hamas and Israel prompted claims by al-Qa'ida supporters that Hamas had sold out the path of jihad—rumors that were flamed by claims that Hamas would recognize Israel. So did Hamas' behavior in two kidnapping cases, that of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and of British journalist Ian Johnston. In both instances, Hamas avoided a violent resolution, which would have been the global jihadists' preferred option. In all these cases, al-Qa'ida argued that Hamas again demonstrated its preference for political solutions and restraint.

Unwillingness to Implement Sharia Law in Gaza

Hamas' efforts to impose sharia law over Gazans have been relatively limited—an issue that is controversial even within the Hamas movement, but serves as fodder for global jihadist attacks against the Palestinian Islamist movement. To the jihadists, it is further proof of Hamas' nationalist character. Salafi jihadists believe that jihad is only truly just if it is designed to impose sharia, whereas Hamas aims to unite its entire constituency in Gaza, rather than impose specific religious doctrines. Hamas needs the permanent support of broad segments of the local population of Gaza and avoids imposing steps that could cause a backlash. Gazans in general are much more religious than Palestinians from the West Bank, and they do not challenge the conservative religious (but nevertheless pragmatic) aspirations of Hamas.

Pragmatic Stance on Anti-Israel Violence

Global jihadists accuse Hamas of limiting violence against Israel whenever Hamas' interests are threatened by direct confrontation. Moreover, they lambast Hamas for limiting anti-Israeli violence by other Palestinian groups. For jihadists, this is simply more evidence that Hamas falls in the same category as Arab governments, which they

accuse of blocking attacks against Israel from their borders. Similar to these Arab traitors, Hamas is accused of joining the Arab defense shield of Israel.

The dispute over violence against Israel, which is a cornerstone of the al-Qa'ida-Hamas quarrel, is particularly ironic given the wide consensus over the legitimacy of the struggle against Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestine. Fighting against Israel is the key to achieving legitimacy in the Arab world, and hence an urgent challenge for the global jihadist movement. Support for al-Qa'ida and its associated movements does not extend beyond a tiny minority of Muslims and Arabs, so the group aims to recruit new members in Gaza and beyond by adopting a more extremist line than Hamas. Attacking Israel would bestow on global jihadists far more glory and legitimacy than would additional strikes on Arab infidel governments.

Hamas' transformation into the main political authority in Gaza compelled the hard core of the global jihad to focus more effort on the Palestinian arena. One side effect has been the emergence of a variety of new Salafi jihadist groups that have emerged in Gaza since 2007. Hamas' response to these opposition groups has been harsh and violent. Its brutal suppression of these elements also reduced its legitimacy in the eyes of the global jihad movement. Hamas itself turned into an enemy—one that needed to be fought regardless of its leadership in the battle against Israel. It was a warning sign to Hamas: if the organization entered the mainstream political process like the PLO and Fatah had, the global jihadist movement would challenge it from the right.

Crackdown on Pro-Al-Qa'ida Groups

In late 2007, al-Qa'ida Central leaders began a series of fierce public attacks against Hamas. On some occasions, members and supporters of Hamas attempted to fight back on jihadi Internet forums, but these attempts were quickly silenced by counter-postings that further heated the debate. At times, the global jihadist responses are muted, as is often the case following successful attacks by Hamas against Israeli targets. The massive Israeli strike on Gaza during the winter from 2008 to 2009, for example, spawned waves of sympathy by global jihadists for Gazans, which also had a softening effect on verbal attacks hurled at Hamas. As soon as Israel's Gaza offensive (known as Operation Cast Lead) was suspended, however, the debate reemerged, along with many of the old accusations.

The harsh verbal bouts against Hamas peaked in mid-August 2009, when Hamas forces brutally attacked the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque in Rafah, killing twenty-four people who attended the Friday prayers there, including several armed men. The mosque was the main hub for supporters of Ansar Jund Allah, a small extremist Salafi jihadist group led by Sheikh Abd al-Latif Mousa, aka Abu Nour al-Maqdisi. The attack followed al-

Maqdisi's sermon declaring the Islamic State of Gaza, which implicitly challenged Hamas' power. Aware of al-Maqdisi's intentions ahead of time because of postings on jihadi web forums and public declarations, Hamas used these plans as a pretext to attack the mosque, killing Abu Nour al-Maqdisi in the process. The violent death of the Ansar Jund Allah leader generated a well-organized campaign by followers of al-Qa'ida to turn up the scale of the verbal attacks against Hamas. The previously unknown al-Maqdisi became an instant Salafi jihadist hero, replacing the model of heroism previously filled by Shaykh Ahmad Yassin, the assassinated quadriplegic founder of Hamas.

Hamas' attack was a well planned shoot-to-kill operation designed to eliminate an entire opposition group, including its clerics, in thirty minutes. No negotiation or option to surrender was offered. The attack against the Ibn Taymiyya Mosque was a cold-blooded execution conducted by Hamas leadership to prevent the Iraqization of Gaza by nipping in the bud any attempt to declare an Islamic caliphate in Gaza. Hamas' response to Abu Nour al-Maqdisi was a clear statement that it would not allow any Salafi jihadists to challenge its rule in Gaza.[638]

The Rising Specter of Salafi Jihadism in the Gaza Strip

The emergence of Jund Ansar Allah in November 2008 was the latest sign of a rising Salafi jihadist movement in the Gaza Strip, which had grown as Hamas consolidated its rule there. The burgeoning of Salafi jihadism coincided with al-Qa'ida's creation of some terrorist infrastructure in the Sinai, just across the border from Gaza in Egypt.[639] Salafi groups and clerics have always been active in Gaza, but in recent years a younger generation has become susceptible to Salafi jihadist indoctrination. These Salafi jihadists split from Hamas, primarily in Rafah, Khan Younis and other southern parts of the Gaza Strip. Indeed, many of the pro-jihadi groups in Gaza are essentially more anti-Hamas than ideologically pro-al-Qa'ida. After Hamas eliminated the Fatah infrastructure in Gaza, these global jihadist groups remained as the only organized opposition elements in Gaza.

Since 2008 and 2009, there has also been a growing presence of local Palestinian clerics and scholars on jihadi Internet forums. Some of the more senior of these clerics, such as Dr. Abu Bilal, Abu Younis al-`Abassi and the late Abu Nour al-Maqdisi—all of them

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[638] For a detailed report about the attack, see http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e080.pdf.

[639] See, e.g.,"From Riyadh 1995 to Sinai 2004: The Return of Al-Qaeda to the Arab Homeland," *PRISM Occasional Papers* 2, no. 3 (October 2004), 1-9.

Palestinians from Gaza—have earned great popularity and respect among jihadi forum participants, or what might be called Internet scholars.

According to public statements and websites associated with supporters of al-Qa'ida, global jihadists do not aspire to turn Hamas into an al-Qa'ida-style global movement. Instead, they aim to establish and promote an independent Palestinian jihadi organization within Gaza and the West Bank, perhaps using the al-Qa'ida brand. Supporters of global jihad are encouraged by the signs of growth of Salafi jihadist groups in Gaza, as well as by the emergence of pro-al-Qa'ida groups in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, where Hamas is relatively weak. Al-Qa'ida hopes to add its affiliated groups to the spectrum of anti-Israeli militants. Their reading of the Palestinian public differs from that of other Islamist groups in that al-Qa'ida regards the Islamic element as crucial for the historical rise of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, whereas other groups focus on Hamas' nationalist message and *da`wa*.

Economic factors also play an important role in the conflict between Hamas and the burgeoning jihadi groups, especially related to the use of the hundreds of smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. These tunnels, which have existed for several years, serve as the main smuggling conduit into Gaza, not only for weapons, but for all sorts of goods. The tunnels are a lifeline for the Gazan economy, and many are privately owned by influential individuals or families who deplore Hamas' attempts to control these smuggling routes and levy taxes on goods transported through them.

The Dughmush family illustrates the issues in Gaza. A large and powerful family from the neighborhood of Sabra in Gaza, this family is known for its involvement in criminal activity and attempts to create an armed militia to defend its businesses. Following Hamas' takeover in Gaza in 2007, the family was one of the first to challenge Hamas' security forces. In 2008, leaders of the family established a militia named *Jaysh al-Islam*—Army of Islam—and adopted Salafi jihadist doctrines to justify its resistance to Hamas. On 15 September 2008, an attempt by Hamas police forces to arrest two members of the family developed into a violent clash in which Hamas killed eleven family members and wounded forty-seven, while destroying several of the family's houses. This clash was a landmark in the fight of Hamas against any powerful family that challenged its rule in Gaza, as well as against any entity declaring support for Salafi jihadist ideas.

Despite such crackdowns, support for al-Qa'ida is growing in Gaza, in parallel with increased Palestinian involvement in al-Qa'ida struggles outside of Gaza, including in Northern Sinai, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. It is difficult to ascertain whether jihadi military cells affiliated directly with al-Qa'ida really exist in Gaza, but there are a variety of groups that have already proclaimed their support for al-Qa'ida, and even carried out attacks against Israel, including through the so-called Zarqawi rockets.

In 2008 and 2009, the growing support for jihadi ideas manifested itself in several ways, including in the emergence of new Salafi jihadist websites focused on Gaza, and in the growing activity by Salafist groups and scholars. During the same period, Salafis in Gaza have also launched violent attacks of a moral-religious nature in Gaza, including against the small Christian community in Gaza. These Salafists are sometimes supported by offshoots of Hamas, but also by large families at odds with Hamas or its police and security apparatuses. Salafi jihadism in Gaza is also on the rise because a growing number of Sunnis are converting to Shi'ism, probably because they identify with Iran or Hizballah, or wish to benefit from such an association. This phenomenon dates back to the activities of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Since its inception in 1982, PIJ had been regarded by the then Palestinian MB as Shi'a, based on its affiliation to Khomeini's doctrine.

The Role of Palestine in Global Jihad Strategy

Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been a cornerstone of al-Qa'ida's stated doctrine since the group's first formal declarations in 1996 and 1998. In recent years, al-Qa'ida leaders such as Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri, and leading scholars such as Abu Yahya al-Libi, have referred to Palestine even more frequently, mentioning it in scores of published video and audiotapes, some of which included direct appeals to the Palestinians. Until his death, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi had provided a model for the supporters of global jihad by arguing that Iraq was only the introduction to the eventual struggle in Palestine. It was also Zarqawi who coined the slogan adopted by the Islamic State in Iraq: "The Islamic State in Iraq is the gate to the liberation of stolen Palestine" (*Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyyah fi al-Iraq hiya bawabat Tahrir Filasin al-Mughtasabah)*.

Al-Qa'ida's Gaza-related propaganda is the most popular of the releases issued on Arabic language jihadi forums.[640] Whether al-Qa'ida's declarations of support for Palestinians are meant truthfully or not is hard to determine. Support for Palestinians is perhaps the only issue on which there is a widespread popular consensus throughout the Arab and Muslim world. The strong alliance between Israel and the United States, perceived by most Muslims as even tighter than is actually the case, adds another dimension to these perceptions. It provides solid proof of the existence of an anti-Muslim Judeo-Christian front. It is frequently cited to recruit support from the broader Muslim public and to accuse Arab and Muslim governments who maintain relations to, or are willing to compromise with, Israel.

[640] Daniel Kimmage, "Al-Qaeda Central and the Internet," *New America Foundation*, 16 March 2010.

In practice, al-Qa'ida and associated groups have staged only a few direct terrorist attacks against Jewish and Israeli targets, most of them between 2002 and 2005.[641] In addition, some pro-al-Qa'ida groups in Lebanon, Jordan and Gaza have carried out or attempted to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel across their borders. In April 2003, for instance, two self-radicalized British citizens of Pakistani origin who had been in contact with al-Qa'ida carried out a suicide attack in Israel with the help of members of Hamas' `Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.[642] This attack has thus far been the only one known to have been carried out by supporters of global jihad inside Israel.

From time to time, supporters of al-Qa'ida in jihadi web forums have raised questions about the small number of direct attacks against Israel and expressed their hope for additional attacks against the Jewish state. Internet scholars and supporters of global jihad answer these questions evasively, generally by citing the few attacks that have taken place, or by arguing that al-Qa'ida has its own strategy and timeline—and that the time to confront Israel directly has not yet arrived.

Al-Qa'ida supporters have only made a few attempts to infiltrate the Palestinian Territories, despite Gaza's porous border with Egypt, including its numerous smuggling tunnels that could be used for infiltration. The few attempts were aided by a relatively active, pro Al-Qa'ida infrastructure in Sinai, but have been blocked by the Egyptian authorities. Although there is no information about how many people moved through these tunnels, it is clear that they are a useful means to increase contacts between Gaza and Sinai. Despite these minimal efforts, al-Qa'ida did not sponsor an effective Palestinian jihadi group under its command. Instead, it waited for local groups, such as Ansar al-Sunnah and Jundallah, to adopt its ideology and then publicly declared its support for these groups in Gaza. This approach is similar to what al-Qa'ida has done in other regions of the world, including Iraq (until 2004), Chechnya, Somalia, Lebanon and North Africa.

In most parts of the world, al-Qa'ida prefers to focus on indoctrinating Muslims with Salafi jihadist doctrine rather than on building new groups and infrastructure. This

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[641] Examples include the April 2002 attack on a synagogue in Djerba; the November 2002 attacks in Mombasa against an Israeli owned hotel and an Israeli charter airliner; the series of suicide attacks in Casablanca in May 2003 that included several Jewish targets; and the November 2003 attacks in Istanbul, including at two synagogues.

[642] The attack was carried out on 30 April 2003, in the Mike's Place bar on the Tel Aviv beachfront, and killed three people while wounding over fifty. The perpetrators were twenty-two-year-old Asif Muhammad Hanif from London and tweny-seven-year-old Omar Khan Sharif from Derby. Sharif's bomb had failed to detonate. His body washed ashore on 12 May. For additional details on the attack, see http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2003/Details+of+April+30-+2003+Tel+Aviv+suicide+bombing.htm.

strategy is driven in part by the limitations imposed on al-Qa'ida since 11 September 2001. As part of the U.S.-led war that followed 9/11, al-Qa'ida lost most of its basic infrastructure of training camps, financial capabilities and mobility. Al-Qa'ida's strategy hence emphasizes its remaining strengths, namely, the ability to indoctrinate, especially through the Internet. Al-Qa'ida's efforts in Gaza reflect this strategy. The emergence of jihadi groups supportive of al-Qa'ida in Gaza is an outcome of virtual indoctrination on the one hand, and of the impact of rivalries between certain Gazan families and groups with Hamas, as described previously, on the other.

The defeat of Fatah at the hands of Hamas is also important in this regard. Since 2007, Fatah, long the largest mainstream Palestinian movement, has lost almost all its clout in Gaza, with its operatives and sympathizers brutally persecuted by Hamas. Following its defeat, Fatah ceased to function as a real opposition for Hamas or as a viable alternative to Hamas' control of Gaza. Since 2007, the Palestinian Authority has practically been divided into two autonomous regions, with each region ruled under a separate government. Given Fatah's almost complete elimination from Gaza, al-Qa'ida and global jihad supporters remain the only viable alternative for opposition groups. Other groups, including the pro-Iranian Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which has a largely military infrastructure, or purist Salafist groups supported by mainstream Saudi Salafism, are not taken seriously by much of the population.

Since Hamas' assumption of political control in Gaza in 2007, the rivalry between al-Qa'ida and Hamas has paralleled the enmity between al-Qa'ida and Arab governments. The difference is that in the case of Hamas, al-Qa'ida is challenging a group that has long been recognized as the primary spearhead in the fight against Israel. As such, Hamas enjoys widespread popular support from many Palestinians and non-Palestinian Muslims alike. In fact, Hamas draws support from much the same population from which global jihadist groups draw their support. Because of the positive reputation Hamas has among many disillusioned Muslims, al-Qa'ida's attacks against the group are problematic and objectionable in the eyes of many Islamists.

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

Since the Israeli strikes in Gaza in the winter of 2008 to 2009 many al-Qa'ida commanders, clerics and ideologues have grown more critical of Hamas in their public writings and statements. This change has been spearheaded by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, the influential Jordanian-Palestinian jihadist scholar and spiritual father of al-

Tawhid wal-Jihad—the movement that gave birth to the jihadi insurgency in Iraq and exerted significant influence among al-Qa'ida and its jihadist supporters.[643]

In April 2009, in an apparent attempt to put an end to the debate over Hamas and the Palestinian issue, al-Maqdisi published a harsh and unique article on his website titled *Jerusalem is in our Hearts; Is it not Time for it to Appear in our Actions?*[644] In the article, al-Maqdisi criticized the leaders of the Salafi jihadist trend for failing to take practical steps for the cause of Palestine and Jerusalem, and demanded that they rally under one flag to fight the Zionist enemy. He stressed that their lack of effort has led to an increase in Hizballah's popularity in the region. While attempting to push al-Qa'ida to focus on the Palestinian issue, al-Maqdisi also admitted that in practice, Salafi jihadist groups were neglecting Palestine. He called on Salafi jihadists to "exploit" the Hamas era, "and not to waste time fighting Hamas or deepening the confrontation with its government." Instead, he called upon jihadists to:

> work quietly toward raising the young to become soldiers of Tawhid (pure monotheism) and guardians of its pure banner, so that all the sons of the trend, inside and outside, revolve around it, and all those who contemplate the case of the deviant groups would join our movement. But this should not prevent pointing out Hamas' wrongdoings.[645]

Al-Maqdisi's call for a renewed focus on Palestine underscores the growing Salafi jihadist focus on the Palestinian cause. Signs of this transformation appeared in Usama bin Ladin's audiotape "Practical Steps for the Liberation of Palestine," in which he spoke of a jihadi supply line for Palestine beginning in Afghanistan and Iraq. Similar calls also appeared in online speeches of Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb leader Abu-Mus'ab Abd-al-Wadoud, the deceased Amir of al-Qa'ida's Islamic State of Iraq, Abu 'Umar al-Baghdadi, and even of the commanders of al-Shabaab in Somalia. These various leaders addressed their messages "to the Palestinian people and

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[643] Al-Maqdisi is known for his independent, and sometimes blunt, criticism of the extremism of global jihadi doctrines, tactics and *modus operandi*. He wrote at length against several controversial tactics of global jihad, including those that were regarded as sacred cows—the brutal fight against the Shi'a in Iraq and elsewhere, executions of Muslims by beheadings and exaggerated excommunications of Muslims. His legacy combines the Wahhabi Tawhid of Saudi Arabian scholars with the authentic teaching of another Palestinian scholar—Dr. 'Abdullah 'Azzam —who was the mentor of al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan in the 1980s. His fame also derives from long periods of imprisonment in Jordan in the past fifteen years, until his most recent release in 2008.

[644] "*Bayt al-Maqdis fi al-Qalb*," http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=0504095p.

[645] Ibid.

to those standing steadfast in the Gaza Strip," promising that shortly there will be "movements inside Palestine."[646]

Conclusion

The clash between Hamas and supporters of al-Qa'ida and other extremist Salafi jihadist groups in Gaza is unlikely to subside anytime soon. It is a dispute between two groups who follow the same religion but adopt very different interpretations of religious doctrine, and hence pursue distinct religious and political goals. In addition, as a nationalist Islamist movement, Hamas' localized focus is anathema to the transnational aspirations of the global jihad movement. It is also a confrontation between two parties in distress, each of them seeking legitimacy by claiming to be the chief vanguard resisting Israel. Moreover, both groups are prone to confrontation with political enemies, usually solving their disputes through violence or verbal threats.

Hamas is the stronger of the two parties, especially in Gaza. Its main reaction to the global jihadist attacks is to ignore the content of most charges, arguing that they emanate from a marginal group whose rants are unworthy of a serious reply. Hamas has responded harshly on the battlefield whenever its rule in Gaza has been challenged. It does not distinguish much between Fatah, Salafist-jihadist groups, individual scholars or powerful families. Hamas addresses all threats to its power with force, and it firmly believes that the Palestinian movement depends on it retaining a monopoly on power in Gaza.

So far, at least, Hamas enjoys two important advantages. Its political leadership and the commanders of the military wing, the `Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, cooperate relatively well, which will frustrate al-Qa'ida's efforts to divide the movement. Moreover, the majority of Gazans do not exhibit any desire for further Islamization through additional implementation of sharia law. A tiny minority of Salafists, often supported financially and morally by Saudi Arabia, has always been present in Gaza, but has not harbored political ambitions. Salafism is not a particularly popular force among the Gazan public, which has always been more focused on the socio-political questions highlighted by Hamas.

Hamas' reputation for confronting Israel offers it tremendous credibility with the Palestinian and wider Arab publics. And while it is still isolated by some Arab regimes, Hamas is recognized by a number of parties through back channels, from Arab governments to Israel and the United States under the Obama administration. Hamas

[646] See, for example, bin Ladin's speech, "The Way to Rescue Palestine," 20 March 2008. The text, in Arabic, is available at http://www.myhesbah.net/v/showthread.php?t=172911.

values legitimacy and has worked to establish its legality by maintaining the ceasefire with Israel, while working to prove that kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is alive and being treated relatively well during his captivity. Its participation in talks with Fatah under Egyptian patronage is another example of its pragmatism.

The rise of Salafi jihadist groups in Gaza, who seek violence at all cost, threatens Hamas' quest for legitimacy. In recent years, Hamas has carried out acts of brutal violence against such opposition groups. Unlike its attacks against Fatah, the Palestinian police force or the Dughmush family, however, the attack against Rafah's Ibn Taymiyyah mosque on 14 August 2009, was different. By attacking the Ansar Jund Allah activists led by Abu Nour al-Maqdisi, Hamas illustrated total intolerance for any jihadi movement in Gaza. Al-Maqdisi's declaration of an Islamic State in Gaza, reminiscent of other declarations of Islamic states in Iraq, Somalia, North Africa, Chechnya and Yemen, was more than a challenge to Hamas' control. It was perceived as threatening Hamas' efforts to gain Arab and international legitimacy, and thus as a threat to its very survival. Ansar Jund Allah was more than just another powerful family defending its interests by publicly supporting global jihad. It was a serious jihadi group that declared its loyalty to al-Qa'ida. For Hamas, it could not be tolerated.

It is hard to know whether jihadist rhetorical attacks on Hamas are genuine or merely a part of the global jihadist propaganda infrastructure. Al-Qa'ida knows it cannot compete with Hamas in Gaza. From the global jihadist perspective, criticizing Hamas demonstrates that the Salafi jihadist way is incompatible with compromise. Global jihadists signal to both mainstream Islamist groups and supporters of global jihad that violence is the only legitimate way to fight for their cause. Meanwhile, the Ibn Taymiyyah mosque events made it clear that Hamas does not tolerate support for any way other than its own. Al-Qa'ida should have carefully studied the history of the relationship between Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which remains on the scene only because it learned how to live and survive under Hamas' dominance. Nevertheless, the events of the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque have provided al-Qa'ida and its followers with new heroes and a welcome opportunity to wage jihadi propaganda campaigns on the Internet. For the time being, the prospects that the supporters of global jihad in Gaza or in the Palestinian Authority could become a serious threat to Hamas' dominance are dim, at least in Gaza. The Palestinian public in Gaza and the West Bank prefers the pragmatic opportunities of economic development and bargaining with Israel to release prisoners in return for an abducted Israeli soldier, rather than establishing the Islamic caliphate.

Chapter 9: Jihadis and the Shi'a

Bernard Haykel

> Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya said: … if the Jews were to obtain a state in Iraq and elsewhere, the Rafidis [Shi'a] will be their greatest supporters. They always ally themselves with the infidels among the polytheists as well as the Jews and Christians; they help them in fighting and showing enmity to Muslims."
>
> -- Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhaj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, (vol. 3, 378)
>
> We believe that the Rejectionist Shi'a (*al-rawafid al-shi'a*) are a group of unbelievers and apostates, and that they consist of the most evil beings under the celestial dome.
>
> -- Article 23 of the Creed of Al-Qa'ida in Iraq

Introduction

Al-Qa'ida is the product of two ideological and religious streams that are often in tension with one another, most prominently with respect to the treatment of the Shi'a. The first stream is that of the Muslim Brotherhood, a movement that has continuously stressed Muslim unity and opposed delving into intra-Muslim differences for fear of weakening the effort to establish a state in which the Sharia is implemented. Muslims, according to the Brotherhood, must seek to unite and ignore all religious differences that might lead to feuds and strife. For this reason, Sunni-Shi'a differences must be held in abeyance and forms of Islamic ecumenism emphasized. The second stream in al-Qa'ida is that of Salafism, a puritanical theological movement that insists first and foremost on purifying the creedal beliefs and practices of errant Muslims.[647] The Salafis are intent on making distinctions between those they consider to be true believers and those who are in error so as to delineate as clearly as possible the boundaries of the community of believers (Umma). Unity for the Salafis is only possible when everyone adheres to Salafi beliefs, and as a result, acceptance of theological diversity does not

[647] The Wahhabis are a subgroup of the Salafis and are the followers of the teachings of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), the founder of the reformist movement whose teachings dominate in Saudi Arabia. The Salafis I am discussing here are not to be confused with modernizing scholars such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad `Abduh who do not share the theology or program of these latter day Salafis. I will use the term Salafis to include the Wahhabis, who represent the most important Salafi group in modern times. For further information on Salafism and Wahhabism, and the various distinctions within the movement, see Haykel, 33-57.

form part of Salafism's ethos or practice. Salafis, in other words, are exclusivists and seek to reform other Muslims to their own version of Islam, ideally through missionary work, but in some cases through violent action.

The distinction between these two streams is further accentuated by the distinct geographical and political origins of each movement. The Muslim Brotherhood emerged in Egypt in the late 1920s as an anti-colonial movement intent on reversing Western dominance and influence in the Muslim world, whereas the Salafis are centered on Arabia—though they have had a presence in other regions as well—and arose most forcefully in the 18th century in opposition to the reprehensible innovations (*bida`*, sing. bid`a) and polytheistic (*shirk*) beliefs and practices of fellow Muslims.[648] In practical terms, the Muslim Brotherhood has not opposed Shi'a or Shi'ism (except in Syria—more on this below), whereas the Salafis have continuously vilified and attacked Shi'a, declaring them to be unbelievers (*kuffar*, sing. *kafir*). These two movements have also differed on the question of whether to engage the Shi'a in armed violence. Salafis despise and condemn Shi'a for the latter's theological deviance and for such practices as the veneration of the tombs of their imams and members of the Prophet's family (*Ahl al-Bayt* or *Al al-Bayt*). While obsessed with vilification of the Shi'a, the Salafis also attack other Muslim groups, including the Sufis, Ash`aris, Zaydis and all who believe in modern ideologies such as democracy, nationalism, secularism and feminism, among others.

It is a notable lacuna that we have no study as of yet of al-Qa'ida's views on the Shi'a, despite the significant ideological and physical attacks on this group by al-Qa'ida's ideologues and fighters and the strategic and political importance of this matter.[649] This article will explore al-Qa'ida's views on the Shi'a, and how and why these have changed over time, especially since 2003, toward greater intolerance of the Shi'a and a concomitant decline of the ecumenical spirit that al-Qa'ida had inherited from the Muslim Brotherhood. The study will also underscore the increased dominance of Salafism as a set of theological and political commitments among al-Qa'ida's ideologues, as well as the increasing importance of Arabia and Jordan as sources for ideological inspiration, recruits and funding.

One repercussion of the virulently anti-Shi'a trend within al-Qa'ida is the movement's increasing inability to speak on behalf of all Muslim concerns and grievances. Al-

[648] Salafis have historically had a presence outside of Arabia (e.g., Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the Indian subcontinent), but they have not constituted a dominant political or social force in these regions as they have in Najd and Yemen at various points in time.

[649] Jihadica.com, for example, one of the leading blogs devoted to jihadism studies, has very little to offer on Al-Qa'ida's views on the Shi'a.

Qa'ida's anti-Shi'ism has diminished its appeal to the broader Muslim public, as most Muslims neither share this sectarian animus nor understand the reasons for it. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qa'ida's second-in-command, admitted as much in one of his exchanges. Only a much smaller group of peoples find this anti-Shi'a vilification appealing, which in turn renders al-Qa'ida's attempts to garner support and recruits even harder. In other words, al-Qa'ida's anti-Shi'a rhetoric and violent acts result in its increasing marginalization within the Muslim body politic. Al-Qa'ida's anti-Shi'ism is having the same effect as its regular killing of Sunni Muslim civilians: such attacks make for bad public relations and restrict the appeal the movement may have once hoped to have among the broad Muslim masses.

Several important factors have contributed to the increased importance of the Shi'a question for al-Qa'ida. The first was the American invasion of Iraq and the emergence of the Shi'a as the political beneficiaries of this act and as the newly dominant group in the Middle East. Shi'a ascent has come at the cost of Sunni decline in influence in Iraq and elsewhere (e.g., Lebanon). Here, the role of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi has been very important in associating al-Qa'ida with the most rigid anti-Shi'a views. The second factor has been the emergence of Iran as a major regional actor seeking to monopolize the Palestinian cause through such groups as Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. Al-Qa'ida's relationship with Iran appears to have broken down significantly by mid- to late-2005, which has contributed to a more hardline position by al-Qa'ida's leadership against Shi'a and Iran. Finally, a younger generation of al-Qa'ida ideologues and activists has emerged who are more rigidly Salafi in orientation and therefore more anti-Shi'a in their attitudes and tactics. Taking these factors into account, this study aims to show how and why al-Qa'ida has become more Salafi and to address the trajectory and implications of this tendency on its views toward the Shi'a.

The Muslim Brotherhood and Shi'ism

It is established in the scholarly literature that the Muslim Brotherhood has held largely peaceful views with respect to the Shi'a and Shi'ism since its inception. Rainer Brunner, in his work on the Islamic ecumenical movement in the 20th century that fostered unity or closeness (*taqrib*) between Sunnis and Shi'a, has highlighted that Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was in favor of this trend.[650] The same was true for

[650] See Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 180-83 and passim. One particular work that directly attacks the *taqrib* tendency and that still is invoked by Salafi-jihadis is Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib's *al-Khutut al-`arida li-l-usus al-lati qama `alayha din al-shi`a* (The Broad Outlines upon which the Religion of the Shiis was Founded). Many of the same tropes and ideas that Khatib invokes (e.g., glorification of Umar ibn al-Khattab's

Hasan al-Hudaybi, who succeeded al-Banna to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.[651] Al-Banna is noted for expressing the view—quoting originally from Rashid Rida—that Muslims should "cooperate with each other on agreed upon matters and forgive each other when it comes to disputed questions." In effect, this amounted to ignoring differences and collaborating on the bigger project, namely, the attainment of power, which was and remains the principal goal of the Muslim Brotherhood. To that end, the capture of the state was not to be disrupted by theological or legal disagreements. And it is for this reason that the Muslim Brotherhood continues to be regarded by the more doctrinaire group, while the ideological Salafis are seen as opportunistic, simply vying for power in willful disregard of the principled questions about what constitutes proper faith and practice.

The trend of ignoring the theological differences between Sunnis and the Shi'a persisted with Sayyid Qutb, the most prominent ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood after al-Banna and the godfather of all of its radical and militant offshoots. One is at pains to find in Qutb's oeuvre any expression of condemnation of the Shi'a on theological or legal grounds; they simply do not appear on his list of the enemies of Islam who must be fought. Not surprisingly, Qutb has also enjoyed considerable acclaim among Shi'a scholars and leaders. No less a figure than Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has translated from Arabic into Persian the first two volumes of Qutb's Qur'an commentary, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, as well as Qutb's *The Future of this Religion*. Qutb's political register, which invokes and reformulates such Qur'anic concepts as the oppressed (*mustad`afun*) and their struggle against the forces of arrogance (*istikbar*), is to be found in the works of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and the official ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Though certainly not identical, in a number of important respects, the ideologies of Qutbism and Khomeinism are quite similar. This explains perhaps the initial reticence of ideologues such as Ayman al-Zawahiri or even Abu Yahya al-Libi, both of whom are drenched in a Qutbist worldview, to engage Shi'a in a full-throated attack or to excommunicate them (*takfir*) as either being apostates (*murtaddin*) or infidels (*kuffar*) *ab initio*. Of course, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, al-Libi has changed his views in this regard and now excoriates and vilifies the Shi'a.[652]

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murderer, Ibn al-`Alqami's betrayal of the Abbasids to the Mongols, etc.) reappear in more recent Salafi-jihadi texts as proof of Shi'a perfidy.

[651] I was informed by a learned and well-informed Shi'a scholar, who wishes to remain unnamed, that many a Shi'a, from Iran and elsewhere, offered his oath of allegiance (*bay`a*) to al-Hudaybi in the 1960s in his capacity as General Guide (*murshid `amm*) of the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that the Shi'a Hizb al-Da`wa of Iraq has had many ideological and programmatic affinities with the Muslim Brotherhood and that the influence between the two movements was reciprocal.

[652] See *Nar al-Majus fi Jazirat al-`Arab*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=j8w00ngm (accessed 7 September 2010).

It is only in Syria that the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood adopted an anti-Shi'a position, mainly from the 1980s onwards. When the 1979 revolution took place in Iran, members of various country branches of the Muslim Brotherhood sent delegations to Iran to offer congratulations to the leadership in Tehran. They saw in the Iranian revolution a populist Islamic revolutionary movement that had toppled a Western-backed secular tyrant and, therefore, a model for change to be emulated in their own societies. Iran's revolutionary ideology was seen as pan-Islamic, sharing the Muslim Brotherhood's ideals and goals, and not as sectarian or nationalist. Sa`id Hawwa (d. 1989), a prominent member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, went to Iran in 1979, where he met with Ayatollah Khomeini and other officials. His aim was to explain the Brotherhood's rebellion against the Ba`thist regime in Damascus, which was led by Hafiz al-Asad, a Nusayri-Alawi by sectarian affiliation.[653] Hawwa hoped to elicit Tehran's support and patronage against Asad. One of Hawwa's biographers describes him as seeking Iran's help in "the name of the brotherhood in Islam that Iranians share with the Muslims of Syria."[654] He was to be disappointed. Tehran decided to give its full support to the Asad regime with which it has maintained a strong and enduring alliance, despite the Muslim Brotherhood's crushing defeat in the city of Hama in 1982 and the massacre of many Sunni civilians. This confirmed for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood that the Islamic Republic was a regime driven by Shi'a sectarianism and Iranian nationalism, earning Tehran the group's eternal enmity.[655] The survivors of the Hama defeat ended up mostly in Europe and Saudi Arabia, while some went to the Afghan-Pakistan frontier region where a new front against the Soviet Union had emerged. Saudi Arabia would now become the principal patron of the Muslim Brotherhood, solidifying a trend already established in the 1960s, when many of the

[653] The Nusayris, in modern times more commonly known as Alawis, are an extremist sect of Shi'ism. Until quite recently, Nusayris were rejected by more mainstream Sunni and Shi'a groups such as the Twelvers or Imamis and the Zaydis, who did not consider them to be Muslim but heretics. However, the Nusayris have made considerable efforts to appear to be more orthodox Shi'a and therefore be recognized by the Twelvers as proper Shi'a. This attempt has met with mixed results. Cf. H. Halm, "Nusayriyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman et al., 2nd Edition (1995).

[654] `Abd Allah al-`Aqil, *Min a`lam al-da`wa wa-l-haraka al-islamiyya al-mu`asira* (Cairo: 2002), 453.

[655] Hawwa would write a much read and quoted book against the Shi'a and Khomeini entitled *Khomeini: Deviations in Beliefs and Stances* (*Khumayni, shudhudh fi-l-`aqa'id shudhudh fi-l-mawaqif*). For more on Sa`id Hawwa's life and thought, see Itzchak Weismann, "Sa`id Hawwa: the making of a radical Muslim thinker in modern Syria," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (1993), 601-23; Itzchak Weismann, "Sa`id Hawwa and Islamic Revivalism in Ba`thist Syria," *Studia Islamica*, 85 (1997), 131-54.

Egyptian and Syrian Muslim Brothers sought refuge and obtained jobs in the Saudi kingdom.[656]

An important elaboration on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood position is worth highlighting briefly here before delving into the Salafi view of the Shi'a. Unlike Sa`id Hawwa, one former Syrian Muslim Brother was apparently never beguiled by Khomeini or his revolution. This is the Islamist ideologue Muhammad Surur Zayn al-`Abidin, who lived in Saudi Arabia from 1965 and then in Kuwait in the 1970s, and thus never faced directly the wrath of the Asad regime. In Arabia, Surur developed a new form of Islamism that blended the organizational methods and political worldview of the Muslim Brotherhood with the theological puritanism of Salafism, a trend that has since been labeled Sururism.[657] Surur wrote an important and much quoted anti-Shi'a work entitled *Wa Ja'a Dawr al-Majus* (The Era of the Magians Has Come) under the pseudonym `Abd Allah Muhammad al-Gharib.[658] Although not initially subsidized by the Saudi government or its religious establishment, this book became a best-seller in the early 1980s and was widely distributed by the official Saudi ulama in its effort to counteract the influence of the Iranian revolution and Khomeini's ideology.[659] The work draws on a long history of anti-Shi'a polemics and adds political analysis of the Iranian revolution to arrive at the conclusion that Shi'a and Iranians have from the earliest times been nefarious enemies of Sunni Islam and the Arabs. Its blend of theological and historical argumentation, as well as contemporary political analysis, has been the fodder for a number of Salafi-jihadi ideologues and thinkers, most notably Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and his erstwhile mentor the Palestinian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.

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[656] Other Syrians would establish relations with Qatar, such as Zuhayr al-Shawish, and others still with Kuwait. Yet, Saudi Arabia was the principal patron and refuge for the Brothers who fled those countries, like Egypt, Syria and Iraq, that were taken over by military regimes with secular ideologies.

[657] Al-Rasheed (2007), 66 and passim; Stephane Lacroix, *Les Islamistes Saoudiens une Insurrection manquée* (Paris: PUF, 2010), 84 and passim.

[658] The term Majus typically refers to Zoroastrians, but the author is using it pejoratively to refer to the Shi'a, and in so doing is stripping Shi'a of their association with and belonging to Islam.

[659] See the interview with Muhammad Surur, aired on the television program *Muraja`at* (part 4), in which he admits to authoring this book and to the allegedly unexpected reaction and support of the Saudi ulama, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtnX4jeZMDw&feature=channel (accessed 7 September 2010).

The Salafis and Shi'ism[660]

By contrast with the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafis have a long anti-Shi'a tradition to draw upon, dating from pre-modern times. Indeed, a sectarian animus against the Shi'a is one of the constitutive elements of the core beliefs of Salafism. Salafis, in other words, are required to evince hatred toward the Shi'a in order to be true believers. It is for such purposes that the doctrine of association (with Muslims) and disassociation (from the enemies of Islam), *Al Wala' Wal Bara'* is invoked and implemented. For the Salafis, the Shi'a are theological deviants and the enemies of true Islam, and the former often repeat the claim that the two groups' respective differences are creedal (*usul al-din*), and therefore fundamental and irreconcilable, and not over disputed legal matters (*furu`*) that are open to debate. The *locus classicus* for the Salafi attack on the Shi'a can be found in Ibn Taymiyya's book *Minhaj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fi naqd kalam al-Shi`a al-Qadariyya* (The Prophetic Paradigm's Method in Criticizing the Teachings of the Qadari Shi'a).[661] The Shi'a, whom the Salafis refer to pejoratively and abusively as the rejectionists (*rafida*), are accused of a multiplicity of grave sins and are considered infidels (*kuffar*).[662] Among the litany of Shi'a crimes is the fact that the Shi'a rejected the legitimate rule of the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs or successors to the Prophet Muhammad and declared that Ali ibn Abi Talib (the 4th caliph) was designated explicitly (*nass*) by Muhammad as his immediate successor. Because of this, the first three caliphs and all those Companions (*sahaba*) who sided with them against Ali are grave sinners and are regularly cursed by the Shi'a. The crime of cursing of the Companions, especially but not exclusively Abu Bakr, Umar and `A'isha (one of the Prophet's wives), is an oft-repeated accusation leveled at the Shi'a and has legitimated acts of violence against them by Salafis. For the Salafis, this cursing of the Prophet's companions is an attack on the best generation of Muslims, who transmitted the custom of the Prophet (Sunna) and upon whose authority the entire corpus of traditions (Hadith) rests. Without the

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[660] The Shi'a referred to here are principally the Twelver or Imami Shi'a, who are numerically dominant in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain. Salafis apply their blanket condemnation of Shi'ism to its other sects, namely the Zaydis of Yemen and the Isma`ilis, but the latter two groups are not going to be addressed here.

[661] Ahmad b. Abd al-Halim Ibn Taymiyya, "Minhaj al-sunna al-nabawiyya," in *Mu'assasat Qurtuba*, ed. Muhammad Rashad Salim (n.p., 1986). The Qadaris are a theological group that adhere to reason-based arguments (as opposed to a literal adherence to the proof-texts of revelation) and are associated with the Mu`tazilis.

[662] The term Rafida (sing.: Rafidi) is also related to an episode in the life of the imam Zayd b. Ali (d. 740) who was rejected by a group of Shi'a sympathizers for his refusal to condemn Abu Bakr and Umar, the first two caliphs. See "Rafida," in Bearman, et al. There is a dispute among Salafis, and other Sunnis, as to whether all Shi'a are infidels or only their learned and political elite. This is a debate of crucial importance for the Salafi-jihadis because it establishes the basis upon which all, as opposed to only some, Shi'a are legitimate targets of violent attack (more on this point below).

Hadiths, there is no Sunna and without the Sunna, Islam, as taught and practiced by Salafis, is effectively eviscerated. Even worse, Salafis accuse the Shi'a of believing that the Qur'an as we have it today is not the original revelation, but rather a corrupted version that does not incorporate certain verses, especially those in which Ali's rights are mentioned.[663]

Salafis, as well as some other Sunnis, explain Shi'a perfidy by asserting that their beliefs are based on Judaism because one of its alleged founders, `Abd Allah ibn Saba', was of Jewish origin. An indication of this link is that the Shi'a introduced anthropomorphism (*tashbih*) into Islam, which Salafis argue is a Jewish belief. Other theological deviations of the Shi'a include their belief that their imams are immune from error and sin (*`isma*) and, in legal matters, the Shi'a engage in forbidden practices such as precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*), temporary marriages (*mut`a*) and ritualized self-flagellation to commemorate the martyrdom of al-Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, at the hands of Umayyad forces. The list of Shi'a sins and crimes is longer still, and includes doctrinal affinities with the Mu`tazila, but it all amounts to a complete repudiation of the Shi'a as Muslims.[664] In recent times, the aforementioned Jewish connection has been resuscitated very effectively to explain contemporary events, namely the alliance between the so-called Zionists and Crusaders with the Shi'a to topple the Sunni regimes of the Taliban in Afghanistan and that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, as well as Iran's strengthening of the Shi'a in both Syria and Lebanon against the Sunnis.

The Salafi scholars of the Arabian Peninsula, especially those associated with Wahhabism, have played a leading role in the attack on Shi'ism and the Shi'a, but there have also been others from earlier times.[665] More recently, ideologues from Syria and Jordan who have wanted to identify with an Arabian Salafi-style of Islam have taken up the same cause. Through this identification, they have sought to garner recognition of their authority among a global Salafi community and perhaps also patronage from Arabia. What is noteworthy is that both Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the number one and two leaders of al-Qa'ida, did not invoke or delve into attacks on either Shi'a or Iran until quite recently, and apparently somewhat unwillingly. This highlights

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[663] It is important to note that not only Salafis level such accusations against the Shi'a, other Sunnis do so as well. However, this animus toward the Shi'a is a marker of identity for the Salafis, which is not the case for other Sunnis, and it is largely Salafis, or those inspired by them such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, who have engaged violently with the Shi'a and used the arguments mentioned above as justification for this.

[664] A theological sect that emphasized the use of reason-based arguments in the formulation of its beliefs and tenets, s.v. See "Mu`tazila," in Bearman, et al.in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed..

[665] See Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi`is: Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi`ism," in Meijer (2009), 107-25.

how events and other leaders in the movement can play a role in moving al-Qa'ida in directions that the top leadership may not have anticipated or desired.

Usama Bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri on Shi'a

A search for references to the Shi'a in the writings and speeches of Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri before 2003 results in virtually no mention of the sect, let alone any polemical engagement against it.[666] Until recently, Bin Ladin has been reticent to attack the Shi'a, no doubt a reflection of the Muslim Brotherhood influence on his thought, but also because he has diligently sought to present himself as a unifying figure for the entire Muslim world against the enemy infidels. The same can be said for Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of whose principal works, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, makes no mention of Shi'a or Shi'ism.

The arrival of U.S. troops in Iraq in 2003 and the emergence of a Salafi-led Sunni insurgency against them changed matters considerably for Bin Ladin and Zawahiri. It quickly emerged that through its invasion, the United States had empowered Shi'a who would now exclude Sunnis from power and end their dominance in the very heart of the Muslim and Arab worlds. In response to this, Salafi groups emerged to fight the Americans and the Shi'a in Iraq. Leadership of these Salafis quickly devolved to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi who, after 2004, forged an alliance with al-Qa'ida. Unlike Bin Ladin and Zawahiri, Zarqawi's ideological inspiration came from a source that drew more directly on the Salafi heritage of Ibn Taymiyya and the Wahhabis of Arabia, as well as the Syrian and Jordanian ideologues who have since the mid-1970s identified openly with an anti-Shi'a Salafism. Zarqawi rejected on principle the accomodationist and ecumenical approach of the Muslim Brotherhood. Bin Ladin and Zawahiri had to come to terms with this explicitly anti-Shi'a Salafi tendency and they did so largely by accepting its terms, although with some prevarication.

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's Website *Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad*

It is accepted among the community of scholars and analysts who follow the Salafi-jihadi movement and phenomenon that `Isam ibn Muhammad al-Barqawi (aka Abu

[666] Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (London and New York: Verso, 2005); Laura Mansfield, transl., *In His Own Words: a Translation of the Writings of Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri* (TLG Publications, 2006). I was able to find one reference by Ayman al-Zawahiri to Iran and Shi'a in an interview he gave to *Nashrat al-Ansar* (no. 91) in 1995. Here he adopts the softest possible approach a Salafi is able to have when he says that ordinary Shi'a are not apostates and the learned among them can only be considered apostates if they persist in their erroneous beliefs after the truth is shown to them. See http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=zta7deht (accessed 7 September 2010).

Muhammad al-Maqdisi), the Palestinian ideologue based in Jordan, has an important ideological role to play, not least because his website, the "Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad" (*Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad* at www.tawhed.ws), constitutes *the* reference library of jihadi writings and statements.[667] It is perhaps the largest repertory for such sources. It also contains works, both medieval as well as modern, that jihadis rely on to make their case and justify their actions. This section of the article will present the anti-Shi'a content on this website in order to provide a sense of the Salafi-jihadis' ideological worldview and the resources they draw upon.

The Tawhed.ws site has a special page dedicated to the Shi'a under the rubric of "sects and schools," a section that is modeled on medieval Islamic heresiographical works, except that it also includes pages with tracts condemning such modern ideologies as nationalism, democracy and Communism, among others heresies. The page devoted to the Shi'a unfolds into four sub-pages dedicated respectively to tracts against Hizballah in Lebanon and to the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006, the Alawites in Syria, Ayatollah Khomeini and, finally, the suffering of the Sunnis of Iran.[668] The main page is divided into three sections—books and studies, articles and treatises, fatwas and responses—with each containing a list of titles that can be downloaded by clicking on individual links. Here one can download or read online thirty-one books, thirty-six articles and fourteen fatwas. The volume of material is considerable and some titles run into hundreds of pages of text, all in Arabic. Examples of the titles are "The Refutation of the Rejectionists" (*al-Radd `ala al-Rafida*) by Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab; "Narratives and Texts from the Corrupt Shii Sect" and "Words and Poems in Condemnation of the Infidel and Wicked Rejectionists," both by Sharif al-Rajihi; and "The Betrayals of the Shiis and their Effect on the Defeats of the Muslims" by `Imad Ali Husayn.

The content of these texts repeat the same arguments against the Shi'a—namely their eternal enmity and betrayal of true Islam because of their heretical beliefs—and offer endless quotations from earlier texts by Ibn Taymiyya and other scholars to underscore the perfidy and unbelieving character of Shi'ism and its adherents. A small number of these texts are authored by pre-modern scholars, namely Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Jawzi, Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad al-Shawkani, among others. Also represented is Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib's work vilifying the Shi'a and the ecumenical efforts (*taqrib*) that were in vogue in the first half of the 20th century.

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[667] Joas Wagemakers has conducted the most extensive research on al-Maqdisi to date and has conducted interviews with him in person. See, among other articles and works, his "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: al-wala' wa-l-bara' in the Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," in Meijer (2009), 81-106.
[668] On the page dedicated to Khomeini, the site makes a pejorative pun on the title Ayatollah (lit. sign of God) by referring to him as Ayat al-Shaytan (sign of Satan).

The majority of the titles about the Shi'a on tawhed.ws, however, are by contemporary scholars, some of whom are from Arabia, while others are closely linked to the Saudi religious and legal establishment or are among the younger stars of the Salafi-jihadi movement from Syria and Jordan. Broadly, the divide between the authors is fourfold. First, there are those writers whose worldview and arguments are rooted in a pre-modern Salafi and Wahhabi arguments, notably that the Shi'a are grave worshippers and creedal deviants. Second, there are former Syrian Muslim Brothers who have their own anti-Shi'a views, which crystallized around their hatred of the Nusayri-Alawi regime of the Asad family in Damascus and its ally, the Islamic Republic in Iran. The third group is represented by the Jordanian and Palestinian activists and ideologues who have been heavily influenced by an Arabia-centered Salafism, and who combine a theological and political discourse that draws from the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the sectarianism of the Salafis. Fourth, and finally, are men like Ayman al-Zawahiri, only a couple of whose statements on Iran are highlighted, underscoring that the core leaders of al-Qa'ida have very little, if anything, to say about the Shi'a.

A number of further distinctions can be made among the authors, such as those who are graduates of the Islamic University in Medina, perhaps the major center of Salafi scholarly production in the last few decades. Many have impeccable Salafi credentials and some have built their reputation by specializing exclusively in anti-Shi'a polemical works. Examples of scholars and preachers who are Arabian or linked to Arabia are Muhammad Mal Allah of Bahrain, Hamid al-`Ali of Kuwait and the Pakistani Ihsan Ilahi Zahir. Mal Allah has written over twenty titles, mostly condemning the Shi'a, and Ilahi Zahir has done the same, treating the Shi'a and other purportedly deviant groups in the Pakistani context. Indeed, perhaps no single scholar has been more influential in aggravating Sunni-Shi'a tensions and violence in the South Asian context than Ihsan Ilahi Zahir, with such titles as the "Shiis and the Qur'an" and "Between the Shiis and the Sunnis."[669]

[669] Although he does not touch on Ihsan Ilahi Zahir, Muhammad Qasim Zaman has an excellent study on the rise of sectarianism in Pakistan. See Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Sectarianism in Pakistan: the Radicalization of Shi`i and Sunni Identities," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1998), 689-716. A study of Ilahi Zahir's works is a major desideratum as would be a publication on the influence that Salafis have had on the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The latter appear to have adopted entirely the sectarian animosity that the Salafis have for the Shi'a and this perhaps explains the recent and dramatic rise of suicide bombings and other violent attacks on Shi'a throughout Pakistan. One likely route for the transmission of Salafi views to the Afghan and Pakistani context can be the activism and publications of ideologues like Ihsan Ilahi Zahir and, in Afghanistan, of the late Jamil al-Rahman (d. 1991), who had strong connections to Arabian Salafism.

The last group that is represented in the listed works consists of the ideologues and activists of the Salafi-jihadi movement and al-Qa'ida's leadership. Their titles have regularly been downloaded or read online by tens of thousands of visitors, if the numbers listed on the webpage are to be trusted. Amongst the most prominent names are the Saudi ideologues Nasir al-Fahd, Sulayman al-`Alwan, `Ali al-Khudayr, the Syrian Abu Basir al-Tartusi, the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri (one text on Iran, not the Shi'a), the Palestinians Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Anas al-Shami, and finally the Jordanian Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi.

By way of the flavor of the content that can be downloaded, here is what the Saudi ideologue `Ali al-Khudayr states in his fatwa about the Shi'a:

> What we have today are the Rafidis [i.e., Twelvers], the Batini Isma`ilis, the Batini Nusayris, and the Batini Duruz. These four groups are the ones who deify the Al al-Bayt [i.e., the family and descendents of the Prophet Muhammad], they seek their intercession and are the worshippers of graves (*quburiyyun*). So these [people] are infidel polytheists (*mushrikun kuffar*) and are not Muslims. There is no difference [in status] between their scholars and followers (*muqallidihim*) or the ignorant among them (*juhhalihim*). They are all polytheists and are not Muslims and cannot be excused for their claim to be ignorant that they are worshipping other than God (*la yu`dharun bi-l-jahl fi `ibadatihim li-ghayr allah*).[670]

This fatwa is important because it has provided the authority for some Salafi-jihadis to legitimize their violent acts against all Shi'a, without distinction between the learned and the unlearned or the civilian and the so-called collaborators with the U.S. occupation forces or the regime in Baghdad. Fatwas, including this one specifically, are invoked by the heirs of Zarqawi in Iraq to justify wanton acts of savagery and bloodshed against the Shi'a. The excessive nature of the violence has even raised questions and criticism among Salafi-jihadi ideologues and from al-Qa'ida's core leadership, namely about the strategic and tactical value of such acts (more on this below).

Another fatwa on the list, this time by the Syrian Islamist Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who lives in the United Kingdom, responds to the following questions: "As a

[670] `Ali ibn Khudayr al-Khudayr, *Fatwa fi l-Shi`a*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=d5opc80b (accessed 7 September 2010).

Muslim how should I interact with the Shii Rejectionist? What is the threat that Iran represents to the future of this region?" The response states:

> Interact with the Shii Rejectionists as you would with a person whose very existence is full of betrayal, treachery, fury and hatred against Islam and Muslims!… Interact with them as you would with someone who sees the violation of your sanctities to be an act of sacrifice for and worship of God… [T]he only thing stopping him from harming you is the fear of the Sultan's sword and of those who are powerful! As for Rejectionist Iran and the danger it poses to the region, this is represented by its intense and persistent efforts to convert the region to Shiism and to spread Rejectionism and Shiism among its folk…and then to follow this up with the spread of its [i.e., Iranian] power and domination over the region… In order to accomplish this, Iran is willing to offer huge sacrifices and many concessions to the enemies of the Muslim nation (*umma*), and to spend large sums of money…[671]

The views expressed in the two aforementioned fatwas encapsulate the sum total of the Salafi-jihadi view of the Shi'a as represented by the Arabian Wahhabi tradition on the one hand, and by the more politicized Muslim Brotherhood-inspired activists on the other. Iran's role in particular and its carving up of what is perceived to be Sunni Arab lands through the creation of a large Shi'a Arab country spanning the Arabian Peninsula has been graphically illustrated in a phantasmagorical map that has been circulating on jihadi forums. It is called the Eastern Arabian Republic and contains the bulk of Saudi oil reserves.[672]

This combination of theological and political condemnation has been adopted in its entirety by a new generation of activists such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and incarnated in practical and tactical terms by men like Abu Anas al-Shami and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Al-Maqdisi, as we shall outline below, would eventually have a slight change of heart regarding the indiscriminate targeting of Shi'a, but his reformed views appear to have had little practical effect in Iraq and elsewhere.

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[671] Abu Basir al-Tartusi, *Kayfa yata`amal al-muslim ma` al-rafida*, http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=0ikenzs8 (accessed 7 September 2010).

[672] The map can be seen at http://shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=39493 (accessed 7 September 2010).

The War in Iraq and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, which effectively led to the disempowerment of Iraqi Sunnis and to the rise of the Shi'a to power, brought a new dynamic to the global war on terror and changed the nature of al-Qa'ida's tactics and thinking. The war in Iraq precipitated the emergence of a new leadership within al-Qa'ida's ranks, one that is less informed about Islamic precepts and teachings and more willing to engage in unconstrained and undisciplined forms of violence. This development was embodied in the person of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, and through him it also forced al-Qa'ida to become much more anti-Shi'a in its rhetoric, ideological output and actions. The war opened a new front in the heart of the Arab and Muslim world, which effectively meant that the so-called far enemy could be fought on occupied Muslim territory and need not be attacked across an ocean.[673] Moreover, the classical rules and laws of Islamic warfare, which argue that Muslims are individually obligated to defend themselves against a non-Muslim aggressor, now clearly obtained, and resorting to violent confrontation was more easily justified. This was a defensive war, not an offensive one where more cumbersome rules applied and that was more difficult to justify. In Iraq, as in Afghanistan, any able bodied Muslim willing to go into combat was enjoined to do so.

Furthermore, regardless of the fact that the Shi'a of Iraq are a demographic majority, the promotion of the Shi'a to the highest posts in government—and the fact that a number of these politicians had been protégés of the regime in Iran—was perceived by the ideologues of al-Qa'ida, and by many other Sunni Arabs, as a joint conspiracy by Shi'a and Americans to take over the region. It is not difficult to see in the empowerment of the Shi'a in Iraq a replay of the story, so often invoked in Salafi texts, of when the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad was destroyed by the Mongols because of the aid of Shi'a like Ibn al-`Alqami and Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. History was repeating itself and the Sunnis had to defend themselves by counterattacking and foiling the plot.

Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi rose to become the man of the hour and the one who would lead the fight.[674] Zarqawi, a Jordanian Islamist and an acolyte of Abu

[673] On this point, see the chapter by Steven Brooke and the concluding chapter of this volume.

[674] For additional sources on Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's treatment of the Shi'a, see Hafez (2007), 70-78, 120-28; Nibras Kazimi, "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi upstages Maqdisi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 2 (2005), 59-73; Steven Brooke, "The Preacher and the Jihadi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*3 (2005), 52-66; Nibras Kazimi, "Zarqawi's Anti-Shia Legacy: Original or Borrowed?," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 4 (2006), 53-72.

Muhammad al-Maqdisi, only formally joined al-Qa'ida in 2004 and for reasons that are not firmly established. Some have argued that the formal affiliation with al-Qa'ida may have had to do with garnering financial support and recruits from Arabia for the fight in Iraq. Be that as it may, Zarqawi was a Salafi-jihadi and he brought to bear this ideological framework when analyzing the situation in Iraq and the strategy to be pursued there. His focus lay in wanting to create an Islamic state in Iraq, modeled after the Taliban emirate in Afghanistan, and to do so he needed to galvanize the Sunni Iraqis to rise up to fight for its creation and defense. He wished to secure a territorial base from which to conquer further territory and foment jihad in other regions of the Islamic world. In this respect, he was a faithful follower of al-Qa'ida's core leadership's strategy, namely to recreate a unitary Islamic state in the form of the caliphate through the establishment first of a series of emirates ruled in accordance with al-Qa'ida's interpretation of Islamic law. To accomplish this, Zarqawi struck upon a strategy that, as described in an intercepted letter in 2004 sent by Zarqawi to al-Qa'ida's leadership in Afghanistan, involved striking repeatedly and indiscriminately at the Shi'a so as to foment a sectarian civil war that would unite the Sunnis from Iraq and elsewhere with his cause.[675]

Zarqawi's advice is quite revealing and thus deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

> These in our opinion are the keys to change. I mean that targeting and hitting them [i.e., the Shi'a] in [their] religious, political, and military depth will provoke them to show the Sunnis their rabies and bare the teeth of the hidden rancor working in their breasts. If we succeed in dragging them into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger and annihilating death at the hands of these Sabeans [i.e., Shi'a]. Despite their weakness and fragmentation, the Sunnis are the sharpest blades, the most determined, and the most loyal when they meet those Batinis (Shi`a), who are a people of treachery and cowardice….
>
> They [i.e., the Shi'a] have declared a secret war against the people of Islam. They are the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis, even if the Americans are also an archenemy. The danger from the Shi`a, however, is greater and their damage is worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans, on whom you find a quasi-consensus about killing them as an assailing enemy.

[675] Hafez (2007), 75-78.

> They [i.e., the Shi'a] have befriended and supported the Americans and stood in their ranks against the mujahidin. They have spared and are still sparing no effort to put an end to the jihad and the mujahidin.
> Our fighting against the Shi`a is the way to drag the [Islamic] nation into the battle….[676]

Zarqawi pursued his stated strategy relentlessly until his death. His suicide bombers struck a path of destruction and killing, leading to the death of hundreds if not thousands of people, mostly Shi'a, including many at various holy shrines and mosques in Iraq. Ultimately, Zarqawi did help bring about a sectarian war between Sunnis and Shi'a, one that the Sunnis of Iraq effectively lost and that led many to abandon and turn against al-Qa'ida. Furthermore, Zarqawi's aim of radicalizing Sunnis and recruiting large numbers of them to his cause was not successful. The violence he unleashed led to a Shi'a backlash that broke the back of the Sunnis who then renounced al-Qa'ida, seeming to seal its fate in the country.[677]

Jihadi Criticism of Zarqawi

Zarqawi's strategy of indiscriminately targeting Shi'a elicited a relatively strong response from two unexpected quarters, and he and his supporters then spent

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[676] For the text of the intercepted letter, see http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2004/02/040212-al-zarqawi.htm (accessed 7 September 2010).

[677] Many journalists and analysts of the war in Iraq have attributed the defeat of al-Qa'ida to the U.S. troop surge of 2007 under the leadership of General Petraeus, although it appears that this took place for more complicated reasons. The U.S.-led coalition tried from 2004 onward to make the Sunnis realize that they had to re-embed themselves in Iraqi institutions while the U.S. was still present to ensure fair play. Once the U.S. drew down, the argument went, there would be no chance for the Sunnis to gain access to patronage networks, the armed forces, government positions, etc. The anti-Sunni brutality among the Shi'a militias, the running of secret prisons by the government where Sunnis disappeared and the risk that any Sunni politician would be branded and excluded as a Ba`thi made many young urban Sunnis believe there was no alternative to Zarqawi's nihilistic approach. In the internecine warfare that took place in 2006 and 2007, the Sunnis were effectively defeated by the Shi'a. Many Sunnis were made refugees and realized that the Shi'a were not going to be defeated or give up their newfound power in the country. This realization, in combination with the U.S.-led initiative that was initiated in the rural areas of Anbar to foster the Sahwa movement and to win over tribal networks, led many Sunnis to turn against al-Qa'ida and to join the ranks of the U.S.-sponsored and financed "Awakening Councils." The urban Sunnis did not join this effort until quite late in the game and never fully. That the tribes were the first to accept this initiative indicates that they are not inherently anti-Shi'a, and this can be explained in part by the fact that a number of the tribes are constituted by Shi'a as well as Sunni clans (e.g., the Dhu Muhammad, Shammar).

considerable effort defending his actions. The first to censure him, albeit politely, was his former mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, first in 2004 and then publicly in 2005 during an interview on al-Jazeera television. The gist of al-Maqdisi's critique revolves around Zarqawi's undisciplined and excessive use of suicide bombing attacks in which civilian Muslims were being killed, his wanton excommunication of fellow Muslims and his killing of ordinary Shi'a. He presciently argued that this would lead to the destruction of a carefully nurtured generation of jihadi fighters in Iraq, where they would be consumed by heedless violence. And because of this, the prime objective of rebuilding the glories of the Islamic nation and the establishment of the caliphate would be squandered.[678] Furthermore, al-Maqdisi makes it clear in the al-Jazeera television interview, as well as in his introduction to Abu Anas al-Shami's pamphlet entitled *The Shiis*, that he rejects the blanket excommunication of the Shi'a, the targeting of their mosques or the killing of their ordinary folk. Like Ibn Taymiyya before him, al-Maqdisi argued that the general Shi'a masses are not to be considered infidels; nor is any one to be accused of this without some process of verification, which involves finding out what the individual person actually believes.[679] So while al-Maqdisi is not in principle against suicide attacks, he feels that Zarqawi has gone too far in his tactics and that these are proving harmful to the jihadi current (*al-tayyar al-jihadi*).

The second person to criticize Zarqawi during this same period in 2005 is Ayman al-Zawahiri.[680] He writes to Zarqawi acknowledging in a perfunctory manner that the Shi'a are indeed colluding with the Americans, that they have always been treacherous and that their beliefs are at odds with those of the Sunnis. However, Zawahiri states:

> [T]he majority of Muslims don't comprehend this and possibly could not even imagine it. For that reason, many of your Muslim admirers among the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of the questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques, and it increases more when the attack is on the mausoleum of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib, may God honor him. My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace however much you

[678] See the Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi's interview with al-Jazeera at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55FVvEj-Oww&feature=related (accessed 7 September 2010).
[679] See Abu Anas al-Shami, *al-Shi`a*, 4-6 http://www.tawhed.ws/dl?i=0504095f (accessed 7 September 2010).
[680] See Shmuel Bar and Yair Minzili, "The Zawahiri Letter and the Strategy of Al-Qaeda," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3 (2006), 38-51.

> have tried to explain it, and aversion to this will continue. Indeed, questions will circulate among mujahideen circles and their opinion makers about the correctness of this conflict with the Shia at this time. Is it something that is unavoidable?... And if the attacks on Shia leaders were necessary to put a stop to their plans, then why were there attacks on ordinary Shia?[681]

Zawahiri goes on to ask further questions, such as whether it is possible to exterminate all the Shi'a, hinting at the futility of Zarqawi's effort. Furthermore, he argues that al-Qa'ida does not need to offend Iran by attacking Shi'a because Tehran is holding al-Qa'ida prisoners, and that Iran and al-Qa'ida must not fight with one another because there is a larger menace represented by the United States. Unlike al-Maqdisi's concerns, Zawahiri's are really about al-Qa'ida's public relations campaign among ordinary Muslims. Being from Egypt, where there are virtually no Shi'a, he knows that Zarqawi's tactics would not be well received. The Umma, Zawahiri feels, would not understand the reason why the Shi'a are being targeted and consequently turn against al-Qa'ida or find its propaganda unappealing. His perspective is geographically broader and more inclusive, in keeping with al-Qa'ida's original aims to represent the global Muslim community against Western imperialist aggression. Zawahiri is also implicitly acknowledging to the limitations of Salafism inasmuch as most Muslims do not share or sympathize with its puritanical zeal against so-called errant Muslims, such as the Shi'a. Without a doubt, Zawahiri also had in mind the appeal that a political movement and group like Hizballah in Lebanon would have among Muslim publics around the world. Not only is Hizballah able to attack Israel to considerable effect and in direct military fashion, it deliberately avoids drawing attention to itself as a Shi'a group. This appeal would test all Salafis, al-Qa'ida as well as others, in the summer of 2006, when Hizballah engaged Israel in a war whose outcome was deemed by many a qualified victory for the former.

By contrast with Zawahiri, Zarqawi's view was more local, focused on trying to galvanize the Sunnis of Iraq and the neighboring countries to his cause, but also clearly using this strategy against Shi'a to stake a leadership position for himself. And this fits with a more generalized phenomenon among Salafis and no doubt other radical religious and political movements, namely that the newly rising and ambitious leaders tend to be more extreme than the incumbent leaders. This outbidding feature of the competition over leadership allows a rising star to

[681] Mansfield, 268-69.

make a name for himself because it attracts attention and it is underpinned by a claim that the older leaders have gone soft and lost their zeal and commitment to the principles of Salafism. Zarqawi's aims in Iraq—to resist and repel the apostate Shi'a who are collaborating with the Crusader occupiers—fit perfectly with Salafism's longstanding and well-established anti-Shi'a ideology. Moreover, if most Muslims did not understand his strategy, then he would endeavor to show them that the Shi'a were even more dangerous enemies of Islam than the Crusaders.

Zarqawi Responds

Zarqawi defended himself against the two sets of criticism by stating that, as the commander on the ground, he was a better judge of the situation in Iraq and of which tactics best served the cause of jihad. Commanders on the front lines often advocate a more forward and hard line policy, and he was not different in this regard. In addition, Zarqawi issued recordings in which he made more precise legal and political arguments to support his tactics and to show that he, too, had mastery of the legal and religious canon and was not to be taken for an ignoramus. In one of these recordings entitled "The Grandchildren of Ibn al-`Alqami have Returned" (*Wa `ada ahfad Ibn al-`Alqami*), Zarqawi tries desperately to justify suicide attacks despite the deaths of innocent Muslims in such operations.[682] He states that Muslim casualties are inevitable and that jihad would cease altogether if these deaths, however regrettable, were to be considered grounds for banning such attacks. He then goes on to justify his total war on the Shi'a by arguing that the latter's attacks on Sunnis, including the seizure of mosques, the wholesale expulsion of Sunnis from various regions and, most shockingly, a campaign of rape against Sunni women, all justify the war he has waged on them. Zarqawi repeats and expands on these same themes, rehashing vituperatively many of the aforementioned anti-Shi'a polemics and tropes, in a recording entitled "Have You Heard about the Rejectionists?" (*hal ataka hadith al-rafida*), which he produced shortly before his death in June 2006.[683]

On the Internet, meanwhile, Zarqawi's supporters and members of his groups have been active in defending him. One such defense, from what appears to be a source within al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia, is worth focusing on because it summarizes most succinctly the justificatory arguments for attacking the Shi'a

[682] See http://www.tawhed.ws/dl2?i=2209099n (accessed 7 September 2010).
[683] A transcription of this text and its table of contents can be found at http://www.tawhed.ws/r?i=wck7070p (accessed 7 September 2010).

that al-Qa'ida's core leadership has found difficult to rebut. From its tone and content, this document is intended for an internal jihadi audience. It appeared on several jihadi websites, including Hanin Network (*Shabakat Hanin*), which focuses principally on the jihad in Iraq, and *Shumukh al-Islam Network*.[684] Entitled "The Response to those who Disapprove of the Declaration of Al-Qaeda (Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi) of a Total War on the Rejectionists in all Parts of Iraq," the text is about eight pages in length and quite detailed in its argument. The author begins by explaining that Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi engaged in this policy in response to the Shi'a attack on the Sunnis of Tal Afar in 2005, where al-Qa'ida had an important presence, and that this should be understood as treatment in kind (*mu`amala bi-l-mithl*) for what the Sunnis have endured. Those who have criticized Zarqawi did not do so on the basis of sound Islamic legal arguments, but rather on the basis of what would make for good public relations and publicity. The author then sets the stage by explaining that, while it is legal and legitimate for the jihadis to target ordinary Shi'a civilians, al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia only resorted to this when "God's enemies [i.e., Shi'a] crossed 'the red lines' in their war on the Muslims, namely by attacking the honor of Muslim women" and by engaging in a genocidal ethnic war against the Sunnis, civilian or otherwise.[685] This, in turn, has created an "exceptional situation" that has obligated the jihadis to engage in actions of "necessary deterrence" on the basis of "treatment in kind."[686]

The legal argumentation that follows is contorted and forced, in keeping with the justifications to which jihadis often resort for their actions. The author states that some of these actions against the Shi'a may be legally prohibited (*muharram*) in Islamic law on principle or as independent acts, but because they accomplish one of God's aims (*ghaya maqsuda li-l-shari`*), namely deterrence (rad`) and the ending of attacks (*hasm*) on Muslims, they are deemed permissible under exceptional circumstances. He then cites several Qur'anic verses to give further justification for retaliatory acts, such as: "And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may be pious" (2:179); "whoever acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on you" (2:194); "And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted" (16:126).[687] After this, he cites various Prophetic traditions (Hadiths) in which the Prophet Muhammad condemned certain people to

[684] See http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?146693 (accessed 7 September 2010); http://shamikh1.net/vb/showthread.php?t=51746 (accessed 7 September 2010).
[685] See http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?146693 (accessed 7 September 2010).
[686] Ibid.
[687] Ibid.

especially violent forms of execution (not the usual beheading but mutilation and multiple amputations) for heinous crimes that they had committed. These severe penalties, the author states, were for exceptional circumstances, such as the one in Iraq today, and consistent with serving God's purpose of deterrence so as "to send a clear message to the enemies of this religion that they reconsider several times [their schemes] before crossing the red lines against the Muslims."[688] The point of all this is that none of the usual rules of warfare, such as discrimination in targeting and proportionality, obtain for the Shi'a of Iraq; their women, children and civilians are all fair game unless it is deemed that such killings will prove harmful to al-Qa'ida's media and public relations efforts (*al-siyasa al-shar`iyya al-i`lamiyya*).

The last section of the document quotes from the leading Salafi scholars of the past (Ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab, Sulayman ibn `Abd Allah Al al-Shaykh) to make the case that *all* Shi'a are indeed infidels and deserve to be killed as would an infidel enemy (*kafir harbi*). Here is how the author describes them:

> The ordinary folk of the Imami Twelver Rejectionists (= Shiis) are infidel polytheists. They worship the dead among their imams of the Prophet's family and believe that these have attributes of Lordship such as knowledge of the unknown and power to determine events in this world. They dedicate to them worshipful acts by invoking them without mentioning God and by seeking their aid in times of distress and ease, asking them to remove worry and to forgive sins, as well as making vows and sacrificing to them.[689]

This amounts to a complete rejection of the arguments that Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi had made about differentiating between ordinary civilian Shi'a and the learned leaders of the community, as well as the claims that Ayman al-Zawahiri had made that ordinary Muslims would be put off by such violent acts against Shi'a.

Conclusion

Al-Qa'ida is indelibly tarred by its association with attacks on Shi'a and is therefore identified strongly in the minds of many Muslims as a radical sectarian

[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid.

movement that cannot claim to be the defender of Islam. Unlike the days after 9/11, when al-Qa'ida could claim to have struck a blow at the enemy of Islam, today its association with Zarqawi cannot be easily forgotten or fully understood. Clearly, al-Qa'ida has not been able to transcend its ideological roots in pre-modern Salafism; in fact, when confronted by resurgent Shi'a, it clung more forcefully to this tradition and used it instrumentally to accomplish its political aims. These were the radicalization of fellow Sunni Muslims and the control of territory in order to establish an embryonic Islamic state. The fight was no longer about resistance to American imperialism; instead, the defeat of more ancient enemies took precedence. Al-Qa'ida's affiliates, such as al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, have adopted a similar anti-Shi'a rhetoric when referring to the Zaydis in northern Yemen, and this has perhaps become a permanent feature of its ideology and strategic thinking.[690] Zawahiri, with his Muslim Brotherhood background, was clearly worried about this sectarian hard edge and was appealing to Zarqawi to think more broadly than Iraq, of the larger Muslim world and what harm his violence was doing to al-Qa'ida's reputation and pan-Islamic claims. He was not able to prevail.

One region where al-Qa'ida's anti-Shi'ism might resonate and draw supporters and recruits is Arabia. Here, a living tradition of anti-Shi'ism persists and is not being confronted or contained sufficiently by the governments of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Countries. If, in the end, al-Qa'ida's appeal is restricted to Arabia and to parts of Pakistan where the Taliban have developed anti-Shi'a views similar to Zarqawi's, this would be far from ideal but it remains better than a movement that can generate mass sympathy and potential supporters from across the Islamic world. It is clear that al-Qa'ida cannot do the latter in part because its hatred for the Shi'a is not shared by most Sunni Muslims. Al-Qa'ida's anti-Shi'ism, like its suicide attacks that kill innocent and civilian Muslims, is an important chink in its ideological armor.

[690] See *Sada al-malahim*, no. 11, 25-26, and no. 12, 20-21. I would like to thank Gregory Johnsen for directing me to these articles.

Chapter 10: Do Jihadi and Islamist Divisions Matter? Implications for Policy and Strategy

Brian Fishman and Assaf Moghadam

> To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself. Thus the good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat, but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy. Hence the saying: One may know how to conquer without being able to do it.
>
> -- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Introduction

Nine years after 9/11, the United States still does not have a clear understanding of who its enemy is, who it is not and what the enemy's key strengths and weaknesses really are. That failure has inhibited effective strategy and counterterrorism operations by obstructing detailed analysis of enemy vulnerabilities. Moreover, an incomplete understanding of al-Qa'ida and its militant jihadi allies prevents U.S. policymakers from knowing when the enemy is defeated, and hence, when the war provoked by the attacks of 11 September 2001 should conclude. This report was designed to improve our understanding of the enemy by focusing on the jihadi movement's endogenous problems: the internal divisions within the jihadi camp and divisions rending jihadis from other Muslim and Islamist groups.

There are plenty of historical examples suggesting that fault lines among jihadis weaken the overall movement in exploitable ways. Usama bin Ladin sold out the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group when the Libyan regime pressed Bin Ladin's suitor, Sudan's President Hasan al-Turabi, to evict it. More recently, ideological and strategic (as well as personal) fault lines between al-Qa'ida in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunnah prevented two major jihadi groups from cooperating fully, while criticism of AQI from inside Iraq created major dissension within the global movement. Jihadi conflict with Hamas has provoked a backlash that has handicapped the jihadi movement in the Palestinian territories.

This study, however, suggests a less linear relationship between jihadi divisions and the weakening of the movement at large. Divisions have weakened al-Qa'ida, but neither in an automatic nor in an exclusive fashion. The divisions in the global jihadi movement create vulnerabilities along the ideological and organizational points of friction in the movement, but those same divisions increase resilience by preventing ideological or

military counterterrorism efforts from damaging the entire movement in one fell swoop. Long after al-Qa`ida will have been destroyed, a variety of jihadi groups will continue to fight in various places around the globe, in some cases with little interest in the United States, just as they did before 9/11. The United States will have to decide whether destroying those groups is in its interest and, if not, where to draw the line between those that may be tolerated and those that must be destroyed.

Stepping Back: Broad Findings

A core finding of this study is that drawing broad conclusions about any set of jihadi characteristics is bound to obscure important details, a lesson that suggests that humility is warranted when identifying broad trends regarding jihadi divisions. Nonetheless, several key ideas are worth attention and explanation.

The Ambivalent Effects of Jihadi and Islamist Divisions

One of the main findings of this volume is that the global jihad movement's dynamism and multi-dimensional nature—both hierarchical and flat, distinct and amorphous—makes it concurrently more susceptible, but also more impervious, to divisions. On the one hand, those characteristics render the global jihad movement particularly vulnerable to the splits and fissures described in this volume because the multiple layers of overlapping organizations increase the overall number of fault lines. Al-Qa`ida, for example, is an actor that is simultaneously a terrorist organization, a media organization, the hub of a network, and the inspirational leadership of a large transnational movement; disagreements can weaken al-Qa`ida on all of these fronts. Put simply, more exposure to potential fault lines at more levels of analysis heightens the potential damages these divisions can inflict on the entity as a whole. Less complex organizations, in contrast, are likely less prone to divisions, especially if they are small in size, limited in geographic scope, or hierarchical in nature.

On the other hand, the structure of al-Qa'ida and its associates offers this entity a certain degree of resilience as far as the impact of these fault lines on the jihadi movement is concerned. The variety of identities, functions, geographic concentrations, and overlapping networks that make up al-Qa`ida and its jihadi allies allow the movement to absorb divisions on one level without them necessarily affecting another, and successful exogenous pressure on one element of the organization may not matriculate to the entire entity. Divisions over strategy occurring within the leadership of one regional al-Qa`ida affiliate, for example, must not necessarily affect the leadership of another. Disputes over the merits of a particular attack may weaken a local al-Qa`ida organization but benefit the movement as a whole if al-Qa`ida's media arm can portray the attack as effective and legitimate. And conflict between various

jihadi media organizations is unlikely to disrupt networks supporting existing militant groups. Although other terrorist organizations build mechanisms to increase their resilience, the sheer size of the jihadi movement (especially if defined broadly), its geographic scope, and its overlapping sources of influence offer far more in-built resilience than can be found in traditional terrorist organizations.

The weakness and resilience endemic to jihadi divisions offers a key lesson for U.S. counterterrorism policy, namely that dividing and conquering the jihadi movement is not on its own a coherent strategy for destroying al-Qa`ida, but rather a useful way to understand the threat and tool that can be applied for operations with a limited scope, and in conjunction with other elements of counterterrorism strategy. In many cases, the United States will not be well positioned to actively exploit jihadi divisions, but it is important to recognize them in order to avoid actions that mitigate the endogenous challenges for jihadis. U.S. counterterrorism officials should resist the conclusion that active counterterrorism operations are always more effective than strategic patience at undermining jihadi organizations. If U.S. action alleviates the impact of jihadi endogenous problems that are already undermining jihadi ability to organize, U.S. policy can make things worse.

Jihadi Disputes with Other Islamists

The breadth of jihadi ambitions is one factor that brings them into conflict with so many other groups. Al-Qa`ida's leadership does not hesitate to pick disputes with groups from Indonesia to West Africa and Europe. That is important because the jihadi movement operates in a highly contested Islamist marketplace that forces the group to distinguish itself from a plethora of others. Jihadi groups typically achieve that task through the use of extraordinary levels of violence, in part because of an ideological predilection but also because they cannot compete with other groups that have deeper social bases and provide social services and participation in democratic processes.

At the same time, however, the fact that al-Qa`ida finds itself in a highly contested marketplace is not all bad news for the group. Precisely because it is the least powerful group when compared with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Hizballah, and Hamas, supporters have relatively low expectations about its ability to produce immediate victories. In addition, the global jihadis' recalcitrance in both word and deed affords them a higher degree of credibility among more extremist members of the *umma*. Jihadi groups point to the inherent 'flaws' of the other movements, such as accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of having sold out by accepting the legitimacy of apostate rulers; charging Hamas with being a nationalist movement in religious guise; and delegitimizing Hizballah due to its Shia identity.

Conflict with groups like Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood rarely strengthens the global jihadi movement or specific jihadi organizations, which usually do not have the means to counter stronger Islamist groups. There are some benefits however. Such fights can help jihadi organizations raise their profile within the wider jihadi movement, attract rhetorical and financial support, and rally jihadi supporters frustrated by what they consider the apostasy of more traditional Islamists. But those clashes likely alienate other would-be constituents, especially those that are attracted to Islamist or jihadi opposition movements because of grievances that these groups share—such as opposition to Israel—rather than their particular political vision for the future or specific religious teachings. Indeed, the disagreements about goals and strategy that differentiate jihadis from other Islamists may be clear to jihadi leaders but are likely far less obvious to jihadi followers who, research suggests, are often motivated by issues other than religious or ideological beliefs.[691] That matters because if jihadi foot soldiers and sympathizers do not have a distinct inclination for jihadi ideology, they may be attracted to groups that share grievances with jihadis but operate in very different ways—like the MB or Hamas. They may also be attracted simply to groups that are very visible, like Hamas and Hizballah. It would be a mistake to think that ideological conflict among movement leaders necessarily trickles down to all jihadi followers.

Jihadi conflict with other Islamists constrains the former's ability to attract broad-based support, but the tension may reinforce camaraderie among jihadis themselves. Such solidarity within small groups is critical for sustaining jihadi activism over the long run, especially because jihadi groups have relatively few operational or political successes to show for their efforts. Conflict with other Islamist actors is also useful for local jihadi groups trying to attract the attention, and support, of the global jihadi movement, as was demonstrated in the Palestinian territories.

It is important to understand that jihadis sometimes clash with competitors at one level of organization while cooperating with or accommodating them at another. In particular, factions that clash virulently at a broad ideological level are sometimes willing to collaborate in order to advance important operational goals. For example, the jihadi movement has consistently sparred with the Muslim Brotherhood at the movement level, but jihadi groups in Iraq worked collaboratively with MB-linked groups early in the insurgency there. It is thus not out of the question that specific jihadi groups or leaders will collaborate in a limited manner with Shi'a organizations, and

[691] The Hofstad group is a good example. This group, one of whose members murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, was described as more akin to a youth gang than to a terrorist cell, in part due to its members' ignorance of religious doctrine. See Lorenzo Vidino, "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 7 (2007).

even elements within the Iranian regime, despite the deep-seated ideological conflict between these entities.

The Counterintuitive Importance of Tactical Disputes

One of the more counterintuitive findings of this volume is that questions of tactics and strategy tend to be more damaging to jihadis than issues that are typically considered more fundamental to political movements—identifications of goals and views of the enemy. Debates over tactics and strategy both matter, but in different ways. Disagreements over tactics—and especially ongoing protests at al-Qa'ida's killing of Muslims—have greater potential to shove al-Qa'ida further toward the margins of the Islamic community than they have potential to split jihadi organizations. Ongoing leadership debates over strategic questions, on the other hand, can pose direct threats to the group itself, but do not necessarily further marginalize al-Qa'ida from the mainstream.

In practice, tactics tend to be more controversial for jihadis than broader questions because they ultimately come down to discrete choices with easily measurable consequences. That means that a wider range of jihadis and non-jihadis can easily form a strong opinion about these issues. Very few jihadis have the wherewithal to debate the finer points of Islamic theology relevant to the proper conditions under which an Islamic state may be declared, but virtually anyone can form a strong opinion on whether or not suicide attacks against civilians are justified. Nonetheless, the jihadi insistence on justifying their behavior in ideological and pseudo-legalistic terms means that tactics often reflect—or are believed to reflect—critical ideological differences between groups and can be seen to provide key insight into the basic ideological disposition of particular jihadi groups.

Whereas jihadi tactics are often extremely heavy-handed, broader jihadi concepts about the political endstate of violence are often described in abstract terms. Instances where jihadi goals actually matter are rare because jihadis have only occasionally had enough success to actually implement a social or political vision. Those cases have resulted in disaster for jihadi groups. When al-Qa`ida in Iraq declared the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006 it was roundly criticized by a variety of prominent jihadis and attacked by would-be supporters inside of Iraq. The group remains in place as an important terrorist network, but not as a viable kernel for a jihadi polity. Similarly, many jihadi groups considered the Taliban regime overly liberal and prioritized other goals besides improving governance in Afghanistan, most famously Osam bin Ladin's desire to split the U.S. from Arab regimes by attacking American soil. Because of those beliefs, bin Laden went ahead with the 9/11 attacks despite Mullah Omar's objection. His decision to do so cost the Taliban its regime.

Thinking Forward: Key Ideas for Combating the New al-Qa`ida

The global jihadi movement is not a singular, cohesive threat to U.S. interests, and neither can the variable dangers it poses be eliminated by a single military, political, economic or geographic solution. This study, therefore, does not offer a silver bullet recommendation for undermining the jihadi movement.

This section of the report, however, highlights three findings that result from this report and may be particularly useful for those formulating and implementing counterterrorism policy. First, the jihadi movement can be usefully divided into three categories—global, classical, and hybrid—based on the combination of factors that mobilize jihadis initially and the strategy jihadi groups use to achieve their goals. This is important because counter-radicalization and de-radicalization techniques that might be effective with global jihadis, for example, may not be as effective with classical or hybrid jihadis. Moreover, efforts to disrupt global jihadi operations may exacerbate the threat from classical and hybrid jihadis. Second, the practice of *takfir*—declaring a Muslim to be outside the community of believers—and attacks on Muslims are the jihadis' most consequential weakness and should be actively exploited. Third, the jihadi community is increasingly divided about its leadership, especially as a younger generation of virtually-connected fighters usurps traditional sources of strategic and ideological authority.

Fault lines matter, and governments have exploited them to weaken and manage jihadi movements, though not without paying certain costs. Until recently, Pakistan depended on its ability to play jihadi groups against one another in order to maintain authority over them. Saudi Arabia has exploited Salafi divisions for years to weaken various jihadis in the kingdom. Egypt tolerates barely veiled Muslim Brotherhood participation in elections in part to separate non-violent Islamists from jihadi groups. These examples suggest both the opportunities and risks of a strategy to divide jihadi groups from one another. The U.S. cannot and should not copy the efforts of these governments, but it should better understand the enemy it is fighting and develop finer tools and concepts for magnifying the jihadi movement's self-inflicted wounds.

Distinguish Between Classical Jihadis, Global Jihadis and Hybrid Jihadis

Jihadis can be usefully divided into three broad categories: classical jihadis, global jihadis and hybrid jihadis. To better grasp the differences between these groupings, it is important to recognize the difference between jihadi mobilization on the one hand, and jihadi strategy and tactics on the other. Mobilization describes the reasons for initial jihadi activism. Strategy and tactics are the means by which jihadi groups attempt to achieve their objectives. Jihadis using similar strategies and tactics may be mobilized by

very different circumstances, while jihadis mobilized by similar circumstances may choose very different strategies and tactics. For that reason, failure to assess both elements of jihadi development can result in poorly devised counterterrorism policy.

In Chapter 4, Vahid Brown refers to a "double bind" to distinguish global jihadis from the more prevalent "classical" jihadi trend. It is a "double bind" because global jihadis disagree with their classical counterparts on both the reasons for mobilization and the strategy and tactics that should be used to achieve their goals. Whereas classical jihadis mobilize primarily because of the presence of foreigners on Muslim territory, global jihadis mobilize around a wider range of grievances, including perceived Western cultural imperialism and financial support for regimes they deem unacceptable.[692] In terms of their strategy and tactics, classical jihadis focus on violent activism in the country they believe is being occupied, while global jihadis perceive a much wider assault on Islam and aim to strike at Western states to compel them to cease a wide range of objectionable activities. The hybrid jihadis described by Steven Brooke in Chapter 3 split the difference. They are motivated by the more limited goal of pushing foreign troops out of Muslim countries, but consider strikes against targets in the West part of a cohesive campaign to achieve that end.[693]

The presence of Western troops in Muslim countries minimizes the strategic and tactical differences between classical, global and hybrid jihadis, which makes devising counterterrorism mechanisms focused on their mobilization patterns more difficult.[694] It is hard to know whether a foreign fighter in Afghanistan was motivated simply by a desire to evict foreign forces from a Muslim country (classical jihad) or the broader set of grievances evinced by al-Qa`ida (global jihad). That difference may not even matter from the limited perspective of military operations in Afghanistan. But it matters a great deal for programs to counter violent extremism (CVE) outside of Afghanistan and for gauging al-Qa`ida's ability to recruit terrorists after the U.S. withdraws from Afghanistan and Iraq. Judgements about these issues should be important inputs for decisions about the U.S. approach in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other jihadi hotspots such as Yemen and Somalia.

The U.S. campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have both positive and negative consequences from a counterterrorism perspective. One of the negatives is that these

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[692] In addition to Vahid Brown's chapter in this volume, see Hegghammer (2010a). Hegghammer also distinguishes between global and classical jihadis. Hegghammer's framing of the subject includes some important differences with those in this volume. In addition to classical and global jihadis, he also refers to socio-revolutionary jihadi groups such as the GIA and EIJ, which aim to overthrow existing political hierarchies in a given territory.

[693] See also Hegghammer (2009c).

[694] For a similar argument, see Fishman (2006).

wars have almost certainly brought a number of classical jihadis into the fight against the United States that would not have been attracted by general al-Qa`ida propaganda but were mobilized by large numbers of U.S. troops on the ground in Muslim countries. Some of those people are classical jihadis aiming to fight in Afghanistan or Iraq, but others—like Najibullah Zazi and Major Nidal Hasan—have exhibited their support for the fight against U.S. forces abroad by plotting against the U.S. homeland, a hybrid jihadi operational model. Comprehensive judgments about the impact of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on U.S. security must take into account the impact of those fights on radicalization patterns in the West and elsewhere. Such studies must answer two related questions: First, how many people are being radicalized by the presence of U.S. combat troops in Muslim countries as opposed to the wider set of grievances espoused by al-Qa`ida? And, second, of those radicalized by the presence of U.S. troops, how many of them are hybrid jihadis that aim to attack in the West? These are very difficult questions to answer, but they must be addressed for clear decisions to be made about the impact of fights abroad on U.S. security at home. Unfortunately, the U.S. intelligence community in general is not designed to answer questions like these. That must change if the United States is to make smart strategic judgements going forward.

There is a variety of anecdotal evidence suggesting that, by and large, classical jihad remains more appealing for jihadis than al-Qa'ida's vision of global jihad. The evidence lies in al-Qa'ida's trouble motivating would-be jihadis to act against the West without first having travelled to an arena of jihad to fight. Jihadis remain drawn by the pull of jihad on Muslim territory occupied by foreigners, rather than by a determination to attack the West immediately.[695] A number of Western plots, most recently Najibullah Zazi's effort to bomb the New York City subway, have hinged on jihadis who originally traveled to Muslim countries to help repeal occupations of Muslim territory but, once they arrived, were then convinced by al-Qa'ida commanders using hybrid jihadi arguments to return to the West.[696]

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[695] This argument owes much to conversations with our colleague Bill Braniff.

[696] Although there is no definitive count, it is likely that several thousand jihadis have traveled to Iraq or Afghanistan to fight or train since foreign forces entered those countries in 2003 and 2001, respectively. See Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *Al-Qa`ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2008). There is also anecdotal evidence that many more jihadis were initially mobilized by the prospect of traveling to Iraq or Afghanistan, but wound up operationalizing elsewhere. That seems to have been the case in Saudi Arabia, for example, where "a number of people who joined the QAP [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula], usually individuals who had not been to Afghanistan, initially wanted to go to fight in Iraq, but were convinced to stay by QAP recruiters." See Hegghammer (2010a)a), 193. On Zazi, see Curt Anderson, "New Al-Qaida Leader Knows U.S. Well," *Associated Press*, 6 August 2010. Global jihadi recruiters have come to expect that the initial instinct of new recruits will echo Zazi's. A handbook for global jihadi recruiters operating in Arab or

The pervasiveness and valence of classical jihadi themes for radicalizing young Muslims creates a dilemma for global jihadis like al-Qa'ida. Those themes seem the best means of mobilizing young recruits, but using them risks obscuring al-Qa'ida's strategic imperative to attack the far enemy and apostate states, as opposed to merely defending Muslim territory from overt foreign aggression.[697] Given the extent to which al-Qa'ida is defined as an actor that has struck against the West on its home turf, a complete shift in al-Qa'ida's strategic priorities toward classical jihad would almost amount to an admission of defeat. Whether an organic evolution, purpose-driven ideological reform, or a decision based on need, the growth of hybrid ideological concepts is a useful response to that dilemma, and al-Qa'ida has embraced it.[698]

Al-Qa`ida exhibits its hybrid strategy in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most important is by convincing local militant groups angered by the presence of western troops that out-of-area attacks are a legitimate and strategically useful endeavor. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan's plots against Barcelona and New York are prime examples of this phenomenon. A second illustration of al-Qa`ida's hybrid strategy is its endeavor to turn foreign fighters in zones of jihad toward targets in the west. Although these fighters seem to have mobilized because of their desire to fight a classical jihad, al-Qa`ida aims

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Western countries acknowledges the draw of classical jihad and established battle zones for new recruits. The author, who calls himself Abu Amro al-Qa`idi, warns would-be recruiters "not to be surprised" if "you see a youth who wants to join jihad but the last thing he would think of is jihad in countries like Jordan, Libya, the Arab Peninsula, or Egypt." Instead, that jihadi is more likely to be focused on traveling to either Iraq or Afghanistan. Abu Amro worries that new recruits will be willing to join a defensive jihadi movement fighting an "infidel," but will not accept al-Qa'ida's imperative to attack "apostate" leaders in the Middle East. Abu Amro may only have himself to blame. Even as his handbook laments the impulse of jihadi recruits to travel to established jihad zones when they want to operationalize, he explains that images of defensive jihad and classical jihadi tracts are most effective at radicalizing new recruits in the first place. An article by Samir Khan in the Fall 2010 edition of the jihadi *Inspire* magazine warns Western, classically motivated jihadis that al-Qa'ida leaders will likely try to convince them to return to the U.S. or Europe if they arrive in an arena of jihad such as Yemen or Pakistan.

[697] For a recent jihadi argument expressing a similar sentiment, see: Abu Jihad al-Shami *The Vision of the Jihad Movement and the Strategy for the Current Stage* November 2010; For commentary, see: Mark Stout *The Vision of the Jihaadi Movement* On War and Words November 4, 2010 http://onwarandwords.wordpress.com/2010/11/04/assessing-the-vision-of-the-jihaadi-movement/

[698] Hegghammer has offered four possible explanations for increasing ideological hybridization among jihadis, though he describes hybridization a bit more broadly because he distinguishes between a wider range of jihadi groups, including sectarian and ethno-nationalist groups. The first is changes in political context, particularly Western troops in the Muslim world, and increased hostility toward jihadi groups from Muslim regimes, especially in Saudi Arabia. The second is changes in the media environment, especially the proliferation of propaganda online, which has allowed groups to interact, debate and come to consensus in ways never before possible. The third is structural and ideological cleavages between ethnic or geographic factions within jihadi movements that have required hybrid ideological constructs to disentangle. The fourth is increased marginalization of jihadis that may compel groups to hedge their ideological bets in order to attract a broader range of recruits. Hegghammer (2009c).

to reappropriate their energy for its own global purposes. This dynamic is particularly relevant for Somalia, where Somali-Americans have traveled for seemingly classical jihadi (or even nationalist) purposes, but may be co-opted and indoctrinated by al-Qa`ida elements. A third instance of this phenomenon is al-Qa`ida-linked propaganda urging individuals in the west to conduct indivudual acts of terrorism on behalf of their religious brethren in Iraq and Afghanistan, rather than because of broader global jihadi grievances.

Exploit Jihadi Weaknesses Created by the Use of Takfir and the Killing of Muslims

Regardless of their strategic disposition, the most important and far reaching disagreements among jihadis concern the permissibility and wisdom of killing Muslims. Between 2004 and 2008, some estimates suggest that 85 percent of al-Qa`ida's victims were Muslim—a statistic that goes a long way toward explaining the group's inability to attract widespread support in the Muslim world.[699]

In chapter 2, Mohammed Hafez explains jihadi disagreements over takfir. He finds that many jihadis believe that it is appropriate to judge individuals (especially so-called tyrants) *kuffar* based on a strict and detailed accounting of their supposed crimes by a qualified jurist, some jihadis argue that entire categories of people can be collectively labeled non-believers and thus be subjected to jihadi violence. Some supporters of collective *takfir* believe that only security forces and government personnel can be included in such a declaration, but other jihadis would include virtually anyone that does not actively support a jihadi movement. Collective *takfir* is complicated not just for its breadth, but because it often does not allow for a strict accounting of an individual's purported unbelief and relies instead on that individual's associations or general activities.

Explaining the killing of innocent Muslims caught in mass-casualty jihadi attacks is even harder for jihadis than parsing *takfir*. In addition to questions of legitimacy, these attacks provoke an entirely prosaic debate over their strategic utility. Hafez points out that Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Ayman al-Zawahiri and 'Atiyah 'Abd al-Rahman all urged Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi to refrain from attacks on Muslims on strategic rather than ideological grounds. Hafez finds three basic camps within the jihadi community: those who maintain that such attacks estrange Muslims that might support jihadis; those who argue that attacking Muslims creates unnecessary enemies and distracts from the fight against the West; and those who believe that such attacks tarnish the image of Islam and weaken calls for people to join the Muslim faith. These disputes are

[699] Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah and Muhammad al-Obaidi, *Deadly Vanguards: A Study of al-Qa'ida's Violence Against Muslims* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009).

particularly damaging for jihadi groups because disagreement over attacks that kill Muslims throws into question core jihadi claims, most importantly that they aim to serve as a vanguard movement for Muslims everywhere.

Recognize the Diffusion of Hierarchy and Control in the Jihadi Movement

Operational pressure, generational change, and technology have made al-Qaeda today much less hierarchical than it was before 9/11. The Afghan training camps are dispersed. A large number of senior figures in the movement have been killed or captured. Technology has lowered the reputational and intellectual standards for people to project their ideas widely. Most importantly, extended fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq has raised a younger generation of jihadis with operational experience that are sometimes suspicious of dictates from traditional ideological leaders far from the battlefield. In general, al-Qaeda leaders have embraced (or at least tolerated) the distribution of decision-making authority across the movement, but the dispersion has nonetheless created some lasting divisions, especially over the thorny tactical questions of *takfir* and violence against Muslims.[700]

The ability of traditional ideological authorities to direct operational behavior is in decline both in primary locales of jihad—Afghanistan and Iraq—but also in terms of the global movement. Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi famously rejected advice from Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, one of the most important contemporary jihadi ideologues. And younger generations of Taliban reject the relative political pragmatism of older Taliban figures.[701] In both cases, the younger fighters have been prone to violence considered excessive by traditional leadership.

The tendency toward extreme violence is particularly notable because of al-Qaeda's recent efforts to increase its global relevance by encouraging ideologically aligned groups and individuals to operate independently of central decisionmakers.[702] Although the shift may faciliate violence in the short-run, the evidence from Iraq and Afghanistan suggests that al-Qaeda may come to regret the behavior from some independent actors over the long-run. Such a backlash seems less likely if al-Qaeda supporters act in the

[700] The most important of these arguments occurred between the now-deceased amir of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, and his former mentor, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a senior jihadi cleric who urged Zarqawi to reduce his violence in Iraq. When al-Maqdisi questioned the wisdom and legitimacy of Zarqawi's brutal tactics, Zarqawi replied that battlefield commanders must make the ultimate decisions, not scholars far from the fight. See: Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, *It is Allah You Should More Justly Fear*, 14 October 2005.

[701] See Matt Waldman, *Remarks at the New America Foundation*, 21 September 2010.

[702] For example, see Abu Jihad al-Masri al-Hakaymah, *How to Fight Alone* (2006); Abu Amro al-Qa`idi, *A Course in the Art of Recruitment*, Jihadist Websites, November 2008.

west, but they are not inconceivable. Such concerns are far more likely if the victims of violence are Muslim.[703]

In addition to the aggressiveness of youth, there may be a structural explanation for the predilection for violence among younger jihadis, especially when that violence is directed toward Muslims. More restrictive understandings of *takfir* tend to emphasize the role of qualified scholars investigating an individual's supposed indiscretions. Because declaring large numbers of people *kuffar* simultaneously removes the possibility of investigating and justifying each in depth, sweeping declarations of *takfir* based on minimal standards undermine traditional juridical authorities. This is the understanding that has been favored by younger jihadis in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and it both justifies broader violence but empowers them to make sweeping decisions without guidance from traditional authorities.

The balkanization of the jihadi movements and devolution of authority within the movement to less well-established jihadi figures has been encouraged by the digital terrain online, which shapes jihadi disagreements by allowing ever-smaller groups of like-minded people to find one another. Particularly as jihadi groups attempt to recruit westerners, communicators that can translate obscure concepts for the relatively uninformed will be important. These intermediaries should not be confused for true ideological authorities, but neither can they be dismissed. Jihadi ideas are not dangerous unless they motivate people to act and these pundits facilitate that mobilization.

Increasingly, flat jihadi mobilization patterns pose difficult challenges for counterterrorism professionals trying to control jihadi groups, primarily because of the challenge of gathering intelligence on amorphous entities. On the other hand, the empowerment of individuals and small groups to make operational decisions diffuses intellectual and ideological authority among jihadis, which makes projecting a cohesive political message more difficult. In many ways, this is a return to normalcy for jihadis; a return to the discord that reigned before the relative unity among jihadis in the wake of 9/11. Not only does this structure limit resource-sharing among groups, but it increases the likelihood that an un-vetted leader will take counterproductive action. Activism—violent or otherwise—without coherent leadership is useful for disrupting opponents,

[703] Such backlashes have already occurred, most notably in Iraq, but also in Jordan, where public opinion turned sharply against al-Qa'ida following al-Qa'ida in Iraq's attacks on three Jordanian hotels in late 2005, which resulted in scores of Jordanian civilian casualties.A similar dynamic seems to have affected Fatah al-Islam's short-lived uprising in Lebanon. Brian Fishman, "Using the Mistakes of al-Qaeda's Franchises to Undermine its Strategies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (July 2008).

but inadequate for building sustainable political structures, which jihadis state is their goal.

Recommendations and Risks

The United States already exploits a variety of militant fault lines in order to advance U.S. interests. The surge strategy in Iraq was predicated on the idea that some Sunni militants were not driven by the same ideological concerns as AQI and could be persuaded to work with the United States and the Iraqi government. The program worked because militants were distinguished from one another rather than lumped together. Such insights can be applied in other arenas, but there are risks to such an approach, most worryingly that weakening jihadi groups might require overlooking or promoting less violent Islamists that nonetheless pose important challenges to U.S. interests.

In practice, dividing jihadis against themselves implies prioritizing kinetic, financial, political, and other forms of pressure on one set of actors rather than another, which likely means making the hard decision that some jihadi groups will continue to organize and even thrive. This is a major part of the choice facing policymakers in Afghanistan. If various Taliban elements were willing to abandon al-Qa'ida because of strategic or ideological differences—or even just the conviction that violence against the West is counterproductive—might it be worth accepting the dangerous or distasteful elements of their ideology and goals?

A similar dilemma also faces policymakers assessing jihadi conflicts with Hamas and Hizballah. There should be little disagreement that preventing al-Qa'ida from using violence against Israel to raise its popularity in the Muslim world is a good idea. But the groups most responsible for preventing jihadi mobilization on Israel's periphery are Hamas and Hizballah. Should their activities against jihadi groups be countenanced or supported?

A similar conundrum exists regarding the MB in Egypt or Islamist political parties in Pakistan that espouse extreme social policies but resist the violent activism of jihadi groups in both countries.

Determining whether—and how—to play jihadi or Islamist groups against one another must meet the same standard as other counterterrorism measures, including kinetic ones: does the expected benefit outweigh the expected cost to U.S. interests, defined broadly? The costs are potentially serious. They include legitimizing actors hostile to U.S. interests despite their antipathy to jihadis, angering allies frustrated by relative U.S. tolerance for certain groups over others and a public relations backlash against the

United States resulting from the application of covert means to disrupt internal machinations in the jihadi movement.

Further, U.S. efforts to promote certain messages to discredit jihadis faces the so-called "kiss of death" problem, i.e., the idea that any appearance of U.S. influence is bound to delegitimize the message itself. This is a real problem, forcing many U.S. operations to conceal the U.S. influence. But, often, full transparency is even more useful than covert efforts. For example, U.S. officials should be reticent to publicly explain jihadi weaknesses and divisions without providing raw intelligence and data that substantiates their conclusion. U.S. efforts to critique and divide jihadis must be substantive and backed by hard evidence that is open and available to friend and foe alike.

These are serious concerns, but not so serious that the possible benefits of exploiting jihadi fault lines should be abandoned outright. Rather, exogenous efforts to exploit the jihadis' endogenous problems should be subtle, careful and designed to produce discrete results.

Specifically, the U.S. should:

1. Continually and repeatedly highlight the jihadi tendency to kill Muslims. Such programs should be opportunistic and event-driven, rather than constant. When jihadis kill Muslims, the instance should be highlighted and tied directly to jihadi ideological statements justifying such violence and historical instances when such violence has occurred. Abstract arguments made outside of an immediate news cycle are likely to be less impactful. Use relevant historical examples in particular locales to indicate the consistency of jihadi brutality. For example, in North Africa reference the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in the 1990s; in the core Mideast, use the ISI's rampages in Iraq; in Afghanistan, compare current atrocities to the emirate developed by Jamil al-Rahman.

2. Attack jihadi vulnerability to killing Muslims even in cases of attacks where there are likely to be fewer Muslim victims, such as those in the West. Whereas communications in the wake of jihadi attacks in the West tend to emphasize the religious identity of the attackers, a more effective approach to discredit jihadis would emphasize the Muslim victims of jihadi violence, as there almost certainly will be in any large-scale attack, even those in the West. In attacks with no Muslim victims, communications should emphasize that the terrorists are actively trying to disrupt a society that protects the right of Muslims to practice their religion freely.

3. Attack the new hybrid jihadi ideology. Al-Qa'ida's global jihadi ideology is dangerous, but its appeal is fundamentally limited. Setting aside the benefits of retaining troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are also costs, and one of them is increased jihadi radicalization for the purpose of repelling non-Muslim invaders of Muslim land, the grievance that mobilizes classical jihad. Some of those people are likely to be identified and redirected by al-Qa`ida for attacks in the West. Some will focus on attacks in the West independently. Both patterns reflect the hybrid jihadi model that jihadis continue to rely on to generate attacks in the West. A comprehensive strategy to maintain troops in either Iraq or Afghanistan should address this problem (and inform decisions about Western strategy in places like Yemen and Somalia).

4. Tailor CVE campaigns to deal with specific grievances motivating jihadi mobilization in particular regions. Global jihadi mobilization patterns are much more susceptible to delegitimization, but such campaigns are generally less important because classical and hybrid jihadi mobilization is more common. Classical or hybrid jihadi mobilization based on the occupation of Muslim lands almost certainly represents a far larger problem numerically, though the threat from such mobilization is still primarily on western troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan rather than Western homelands. CVE campaigns to discredit classical and hybrid jihad are likely to have limited success because these ideas are more broadly accepted and have a much deeper lineage in the Islamic world than global jihad. The United States can insulate itself from the hybrid jihadi threat to the U.S. homeland by amplifying other ideological concepts, such as the covenant of security (which argues that a Muslim in the west cannot attack their host).

5. Exploit the tendency of younger jihadis to reject traditional sources of authority by culling the former for controversial ideological and strategic statements. In the Internet age, jihadi military commanders and lay pundits are extremely influential. Counterterrorism officials should carefully parse their statements that dispute mainstream jihadi thinking. Just because these voices are not jihadi ideologues in the traditional mold does not mean they do not have a critical influence on the current movement.

6. Err on the side of disrupting, rather than monitoring, jihadi communications. Jihadis cannot work out their differences if they cannot communicate effectively.

7. Use the anonymity of the Internet as an advantage. Increasing jihadi paranoia about security online will reduce the overall effectiveness of communications in that milieu. Actual operations—including honey pot websites, careful

monitoring and selective disruption—should be supplemented by information campaigns to stoke mistrust between jihadi supporters, forum managers, and militant organizations. The United States should not only endeavor to control and monitor jihadi websites, but to make jihadis believe that they control them in order to inspire paranoia that will impede jihadi communications.

8. Quietly amplify jihadi conflict with popular Islamist movements like the MB, Hamas, and Hizballah as widely as possible. Avoid communications that imply that these movements are included with jihadis as part of a cohesive Islamist campaign. Nonetheless, avoid overtly acknowledging the utility of these movements for limiting jihadi expansion so long as they continue to threaten important U.S. interests. Hurting jihadis should not always be prioritized if doing so requires damaging other U.S. security interests.

9. Seize opportunities to separate global jihadis and their classical jihadi counterparts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recognize that operational collaboration between groups—such as al-Qa`ida and the Afghan Taliban—does not necessarily imply strategic harmony. Efforts to negotiate or reason with classical jihadi groups, however, should be tempered with the knowledge that strategic discord between jihadis is often not enough to convince groups not to work with one another.

10. Quietly encourage credible proxies and friendly governments to promote discussion of jihadi ideological extremism and jihadi manipulation of theological concepts.

11. Quietly amplify recantations and critiques by former jihadi figures, but target such content to minimize the blowback from these operations. Jihadis capable of credibly attacking other jihadis are likely to include some noxious content in their material and so the impact of amplifying such material should be carefully considered. There are several ways to achieve that effect, but the impact depends on the intended audience and desired impact. Shorter critiques that challenge specific jihadi ideas are better than broad texts touching on a wide range of issues, especially if the purpose is public consumption. Such texts are less likely to contain counterproductive content unrelated to the desired message. If the purpose is to create internal dissension within jihadi leadership groups, longer texts may be more useful but distribution of those texts should be more limited. Distribution of those texts should match the impact it is intended to create.

12. Quietly amplify recantations by existing jihadi figures to jihadi audiences based on geographic, ideological, or historic ties. Even recantations by ideologues like

Dr. Fadl that are relevant to the entire jihadi movement probably have greater impact in the Egyptian jihadi community whence he and Zawahiri originate. For example, in the Iraqi arena it would be useful to re-issue documents produced by militant groups that list and explain the brutality of the Islamic State of Iraq. Avoid trying to pick winners in jihadi debates because the results of such victories are likely difficult to predict, and focus instead on promoting internal jihadi discord. Doing so will expose as hypocritical al-Qa'ida's attempts to present itself as a movement united by a common ideology.

13. Avoid over-simplified analytical judgments about the impact of ideological critiques on the jihadi movement. Two of the most common constructs are actually contradictory: that jihadis respond to criticism when it has damaged them and that jihadis avoid engaging critics that they are afraid to confront intellectually. Neither trope is accurate in all cases. The context in which jihadis decide to engage or ignore their critics and the content of their response says more about their perception of vulnerability than behavioral assessments focused solely on their willingness to engage critics.

14. Highlight the failure of the jihadi movement. The history of jihadi failure is long and it is concern that jihadi violence will produce strategic failure that forms the basis for most internal critics of jihadis, not the legitimacy of various jihadi tactics and strategies. Although the message that jihadi violence is not productive (as opposed to the message that jihadi violence is illegitimate) may be unfulfilling to some in the West, emphasizing jihadi failures may be more impactful.

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Recognizing that the jihadi movement is divided internally offers new avenues for weakening various jihadi groups, but it will not produce a grand solution to the problem of jihadi militancy. Indeed, acknowledging the divisions means acknowledging that the challenge posed by jihadis has accompanied us since long before 9/11 and will be with us long after.