

CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY

Edited by
Hillel Fradkin
Husain Haqqani
Eric Brown

Volume 2

*Center on Islam, Democracy, and
The Future of the Muslim World*

HUDSON
INSTITUTE

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Preface

THE FIRST ISSUE OF *CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY* received a most appreciative response. The editors and authors were most gratified by this. On behalf of my colleagues, let me express the hope that the present issue will enjoy a similar reception.

What is certain is the importance of this publication's subject: the current state of Islamist ideology. Since the publication of our first issue, there has been a dramatic increase in the appreciation of the importance of the ideological dimensions of Islamism and radical Islam. This is in large measure a result of the London bombings of July 7, 2005 and the attempted bombings of July 21, 2005. In response to those attacks, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the ideological component of the struggle with radical Islam was as important as the military and operational aspects—if not more so. President Bush has recently expressed similar views.

In Britain, Blair's pronouncements have received nearly universal assent across the entire political spectrum from left to right. This is very striking, especially in light of the fact that popular opposition in Britain to its role in the war in Iraq remains strong and widespread. It might have been thought that reaction to the bombings in Britain would have seized on British policies in Iraq both to explain the bombings and as a basis for addressing the terrorist challenge in general. But this has proved not to be the case. It is difficult to say exactly why, but it certainly has a lot to do with the fact that the London bombers were either British-born or longtime residents rather than foreign terrorists. Consequently, their path toward terrorism was necessarily linked to a process of radicalization that had occurred within Britain and through an ideological dynamic operative in Britain itself. This was consonant with and perhaps reinforced by the view that such a dynamic is also operative in Western Europe more generally—a view that was brought increasingly to the fore by recent events elsewhere, including the murder of Theo Van Gogh by a Dutch born and educated Muslim, and signs of ideological radicalization in other countries such as France, Belgium and Germany.

Already, there has been much talk in the press that a fundamental intellectual and policy reorientation has occurred, with significant implications for how both the American and British administrations will continue to prosecute this conflict. In Britain, Blair took the dramatic step of proposing to ban two organizations—Hizb ut-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun—known to be more or less exclusively ideological organizations, rather than ones that have a direct jihad and terrorist operation. This step was coupled with a proposal to deport radical Islamic preachers. The drama of these actions was made possible by the fact that for some time London—or “Londonistan,” as it has come to be called—has served as one of the principal centers of radical ideological activity. At the same time, it underscores the increase in the focus on ideology.

As in our first issue, we trust that the present collection of articles and analysis will help illuminate the current character and dynamic of Islamist ideology in both its local and global dimensions.

Two of the reports in this issue address the European scene directly. The article by Michael Whine provides an analysis of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain and the significant inroads it has made into British political life. Eric Brown’s report provides an account of the debate currently raging in Islamist circles concerning the formulation of a so-called “Euro-Islam.” As the article makes abundantly and brilliantly clear, part of this debate is actually occurring outside of Europe (in America and the Middle East, for example). This is for two reasons. The first reason, hardly surprising, is the interest of Islamists generally in advancing their agenda within Europe. The second reason is more surprising: the Islamists are concerned that ideological developments within Europe might adversely affect the ideological dynamic within the worldwide Muslim community and the political universe of Muslim-majority countries.

A third report by Zeyno Baran brings needed focus to an important but often neglected region: Central Asia. The article also concerns indirectly the European scene, inasmuch as one of the most important radical groups in Central Asia, Hizb ut-Tahrir, has been active in the UK.

We also continue in this issue our reporting on Islamist ideology in Southeast Asia. Angel Rabasa writes about the structure of religious education in Southeast Asia.

Finally, three reports in this issue are devoted to more general and even global topics. Shmuel Bar provides an overview of the Sunnite and Shiite division that sheds some light on the ideological and religious drivers of the current conflict in Iraq. Nibras Kazimi writes about the recent and dramatically bitter debate between Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, now well-known as the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and his former mentor Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi. Fi-

nally, Reuven Paz offers an analysis of new trends in the Islamist discussion about the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction.

These three articles have, for somewhat obvious reasons, a direct relation to certain operational dimensions of radical Islam. However, as all three articles attest, they also have an important bearing on the ideological dynamic of radical Islam and Islamism globally. They confirm the fact that despite the role that “practical” imperatives play in shaping radical Islam, the overall strategy and choice of tactics of radical Islam continues to require ideological justification and argumentation, including the development of jurisprudential arguments and pronouncements (ie., fatwas.) These debates thus draw upon and reflect back on radical ideology with a variety of long-term consequences.

One other point should be noted here. As many of the articles in this volume make clear, there are increasing signs of a generational struggle within Islamist ranks as younger and newer leaders challenge the established leadership—including, for example, Zarqawi’s challenge to his own teacher in matters of strategy and tactics. As always with any ideological movement, these challenges entail not merely self-assertion but argumentation as a means of either gaining or maintaining the support of the movement’s present and future members. In combination with other factors, the quality and persuasive force of these arguments and counter-arguments will have an important impact on the future shape of Islamism and radical Islam as a whole.

In addition to these new pieces, we have decided to reprint the introduction to our first issue. This endeavor is still sufficiently new to warrant the explanation of the ideological dimensions of Islamism and radical Islam that this introduction provides. We would only add that since our first issue, the need for this kind of independent research endeavor was emphasized and championed in the final report of the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. That report argued that one of the sources of weakness within the American intelligence community prior to September 11, 2001—and even after—was insufficient attention to open source material, especially in the ideological sphere, and a lack of a variety of analyses. Apart from internal governmental measures that should be taken, the commission recommended the use of independent, non-governmental research efforts as a vital source of fresh analysis and ongoing critical appraisal. This publication is designed to address these needs.

–Hillel Fradkin
Washington, D.C.
September 2005

FOREWORD

*Islamism and Terrorism:
The Ideological Dimension*

CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY is addressed to the ideological dimension of America's current struggle with its terrorist adversaries and its potential implications for the successful prosecution of that struggle.

As the 9/11 Commission said in its final report, the war that was inaugurated by the attacks of September 11, 2001 on New York and Washington is not best described as a "War on Terror." Rather, it is a war with terrorists who have a specific origin and agenda. They derive from "a radical ideological movement (commonly known as Islamism or radical Islam) in the Islamic world... which has spawned terrorist groups and violence across the globe." As a result of this, it has become commonplace to say that the war on terror is also a war of ideas. This is a war that is being fought among Muslims themselves, as well as a war between the radicals and the non-Muslims upon whom they have declared war. This understanding conforms to that of the Islamist terrorists themselves. For as they frequently declare, they regard their enemies as both Muslims and non-Muslims, the "near enemy" and the "far enemy"—with the former often seen as the corrupt agents of the latter.

This understanding of the two-fold character of the "enemy" was recently underscored by the leading terrorist authority Osama bin Laden. According to bin Laden, the current struggle is essentially a worldwide struggle between the ideas and principles of "heresy" and those of "the Islamic Nation." If the struggle with Islamist terrorism is in part a war of ideas, it follows that a proper understanding of Islamist ideology must play an important role in our prosecution of the war. In part this is because the objectives and tactics of the terrorists derive to some extent from their ideological orientation.

In part it is because ideology plays a very large role in the recruitment and training of new members of terrorist organizations. This is true whether or not their initial exposure to this ideology comes through contact with terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, or with the much wider universe of organizations

that espouse a radical vision but do not directly engage in terrorist activities, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. This is so for at least two reasons.

First, existing radical Islamist organizations have historically often been offshoots of other radical organizations that were sometimes more violent in the past. Second, such organizations that today may espouse an agenda defined by educational or political concerns often prove to be the entry point for young people who go on to join terrorist groups. Their ideological training in these organizations is what first points them towards this path. As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has observed, our current operations to defeat terrorist groups, which have enjoyed some considerable success, may well prove to be Sisyphean if the recruitment of new generations cannot be impeded. An understanding of the ideological dimension of Islamic terrorism is therefore crucial to any strategy that seeks to contain and defeat it.

There is an additional consideration that recommends a focus on ideology. The threat posed by Islamism or radical Islam to American interests is not solely embodied in the phenomenon of terrorism. Islamism or radical Islam poses to America a political threat as well. This problem has both a foreign and a domestic aspect.

The foreign aspect involves the potential radicalization of existing Muslim states as occurred in the case of Iran and obtained for a period in Sudan and Afghanistan. Such potential continues to exist in a variety of places in the Muslim world—for example, in Pakistan. There are a number of reasons for this, but among them is the fact that many existing regimes lack popular support and legitimacy whereas radical Islamist ideologies enjoy substantial sympathy. Within the Muslim world, the so-called war of ideas, an ideological war, is to date decidedly one-sided. This is also the case for minority Muslim communities in Western countries, including in the United States. The potential radicalization of these communities would pose important political problems to the future of Western democracy.

Just how this war of ideas might issue in an outcome favorable to the United States and its interests remains an open question. However, any serious consideration of the issues and stakes involved in this war of ideas requires as thorough and serious understanding of contemporary radical Islamist ideology as possible. In general, this necessity has come to be acknowledged and has found some expression in studies and accounts of Islamist ideologies. What is still lacking, however, is a concerted and consistent focus on the ideological component akin to that which other recent ideological struggles solicited in their time—for example, the struggles with Communism and Fascism.

This and future reports are intended to contribute to the remedy of these deficiencies. In particular, these reports will aim to provide an up-to-date

accounting of the present state of radical Islamist ideology. For as in all politically-oriented ideological movements, Islamist ideology has a dynamic character. While certain premises of Islamist ideology do not change, certain conclusions have and may be altered in response to various events...

(From the introduction to the first volume)

–Hillel Fradkin and Husain Haqqani

Washington, D.C.

February 2005

After the Ramadan Affair: New Trends in Islamism in the West

ERIC BROWN

IT IS COMMONLY SAID THAT THE WEST HAS EMERGED as a key battleground in the war of ideas with radical Islam. Some even say, perhaps with a little exaggeration, that the West is today the primary theater of ideological conflict. This analysis expresses both a fear and a hope.

The obvious fear is that various ideological forces—emanating from abroad, but also from within the West itself—will conspire to radicalize portions of the Western Muslim population, resulting in a range of possible threats to the future of European and American democracy, from political challenges like the growth of “parallel societies” to the related security threat of “homegrown jihad.” Such threats are clear and present, as the September 11 attacks, which were piloted by Muslims radicalized in Europe, and most recently, the bombings in the UK, carried out by British-born jihadis who received their ideological indoctrination in the mosques and prayer circles of “Londonistan,” have each demonstrated. They are also threats that are here to stay for as long as radical ideology continues to hold even the slightest sway over the minds of Western Muslims.

The hope is that Western Muslims will develop an Islamic solution to radicalism, one that combines religious fidelity with an allegiance to the principles, institutions, and sovereignty of liberal democratic government. This solution—a “European Islam” or “American Islam,” as many have called it—would serve as an ideological bulwark against both internal and external sources of extremist ideology. Some speculate it might even provide a moderate and democratic alternative to extremism that could, in time, be “exported” to the strongholds of radical Islam in the wider world.

With so much at stake, the future of Western Islam has been the subject of much discussion in recent years. Surely, many Western Muslims have come forward against radicalism to defend their countries and their faith. It is also clear that the majority of European and American Muslims simply seek to live and worship freely, and to participate, in their own unique way, as equal citi-

zens in the life of Western democracies. And yet, progress toward the development of a politically moderate and well-organized Western Islam has met with stiff resistance from Islamists abroad as well as from within the West itself.

Within the West, resistance has largely come from two separate and often deeply conflicting strains of ideological Islam—that of the Salafists, and that of the mainstream or “Wassatiyya” Islamism of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. The differences between these two Islamisms are several, but perhaps foremost are the disparate ways in which they interpret the Sharia and how this, in turn, structures their respective attitudes toward assimilation and citizenship in the West.

The Salafists adhere to a “literalist” interpretation of Islamic scripture and to a political theology that views Muslims in the West as travelers in enemy territory, a realm they variously speak of as a “Land of Kufr” or as a “Land of War.” Some Western-based Salafist groups openly espouse jihad, whereas others, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, concentrate on ideological activities, believing that fulfillment of the religious duty of jihad should be postponed until the day when their numbers are sufficient enough for a full offensive. They reject all participation in the life of Western societies; for them, the unity of the Muslim Nation is paramount, and any Muslim who endeavors to divide it—religiously or politically—is guilty of apostasy, that unforgivable Islamic sin.

In contrast to the Salafists, mainstream Islamists have followed a more conciliatory course in their dealings with the West. Nowadays, this stream is commonly associated with its most prominent spokesperson, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Qatar-based Egyptian Sunni cleric, popular Al Jazeera preacher, and reputed spiritual steward of the International Muslim Brotherhood. Qaradawi describes his faith doctrine, “Wassatiyya,” a broad intellectual movement that emerged with Egypt’s “New Islamists” in the 1990s, as a “middle way” between rejection of Islam and extremism.

Ideologically speaking, the Wassatiyya movement is rooted deeply in the Salafist thought of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and his teachings on the “wholesomeness of Islam,” which holds that Sharia must dominate every realm of human activity and thought, from culture to politics. Unlike the Salafists, however, the Wassatiyya scholars emphasize the use of *ijtihad*, or discernment in Sharia matters independent of what is literally prescribed in Islamic scripture. As a result, Wassatiyya jurisprudence reflects a certain modernist orientation, one that has allowed its adherents to adopt a much more pragmatic approach to the task of assimilating to the realities of life in Western democracies. It has also allowed a certain intellectual creativ-

ity to develop within Wassatiyya circles, which has included, among other things, a revaluation of the traditional Islamic concept of the West as a Land of War. Instead, based on the idea that Islam is a universal message, available and open to all, the Wassatiyya Islamists speak of the West as a realm for Islamic proselytizing, or as a land of the religious call, a “Land of Dawa.”

Salafists doggedly rail against what they perceive to be Wassatiyya Islamism’s “compromise” with the West, asserting their use of *ijtihad* takes too many liberties in the interpretation of Sharia and erodes the religious and political unity and authenticity of the Muslim Nation. Or, as one European Salafi emphatically expressed it—after praising the slayer of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh and calling for jihad against the country of Sweden—in a recent posting online: “This is Islam, not a lunch buffet.”¹

With such nasty co-religionists as this (Qaradawi has personally drawn the ire of Salafists worldwide, including Zarqawi of Mesopotamia), the Wassatiyya scholars have been able to deflect much of the blame for Islamist militancy and radicalism on the “conservative” and “reactionary” views of the Salafists—or as they frequently call them, (mirroring Western discussions), the “Wahhabis.” In turn, the Wassatiyya scholars have been able to ingratiate themselves to Westerners, non-Muslim and Muslim alike, as the peaceable and moderate face of Islam.

But that is a reputation sorely undeserved. Though many mainstream Islamists have renounced jihad against the West (as it is a realm for proselytizing, not for war), they have compensated by making especially cold-blooded juristic and political pronouncements backing the “defensive jihad” in majority-Muslim countries of terrorist groups like Hamas and of the insurgency against American and allied forces in Iraq.

Nor has the Wassatiyya “compromise” with the West moderated the underlying ideological antagonism of mainstream Islamists toward it. As part of their Dawa effort, Qaradawi and others, sometimes with the assistance of Saudi financial-backers (the late King Fahd proclaimed Wassatiyya his official brand of Islam), have built-up a vast web of ideological institutions in the West: think tanks, media outfits, educational centers, and Sharia councils. The purpose of this endeavor, Qaradawi has said, is the conquest of the West not by “the sword or armies, but by preaching and ideology.”² And although some mainstream Islamists pepper their politics with salutary declarations about the benefits of democracy, equality and human rights, it’s clear that many do not juristically or ideologically accept the sovereignty of Western liberal government. Qaradawi, for instance, has said that short of full conquest, a more realistic goal would be the establishment of autonomous Islamic societies within the West, operating

not in accordance with Western law, but under Sharia law and reflecting Islam's wholesomeness. "Were we to convince Western leaders and decision-makers of our right to live according to our faith—ideologically, legislatively, and ethnically—without imposing our views or inflicting harm upon them, we would have traversed an immense barrier in our quest for an Islamic state."³

Such pronouncements should be of paramount concern, especially given the fact that the self-enclosed Muslim ghettos of France, the Netherlands, Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe have proven highly susceptible to penetration by radical preachers and ideology.

And yet, the Wassatiyya Islamist's campaign to "Islamize" the West has proven an inherently difficult one. For one thing, it assumes not only that non-Muslims, but that Muslims, too, will acquiesce to their particular religious and political agenda. But due to a variety of factors—including the tremendous diversity of Western Islam, not to mention the religious and political freedoms available to Muslims living in the West—the Wassatiyya's efforts to define Western Islam religiously and politically have been frustrated time and again.

Perhaps most significantly, the "opened gates of *ijtihad*" have allowed Western Muslims to re-discover Islamic scripture and to bring forth new interpretations that speak more directly to the novel complexities of modern and democratic life. Increased engagement with the West has also led to the emergence of a similar variety of ideological and political orientations. In its encounter with the West, some deep, possibly irreparable, fissures have emerged within mainstream Islamism, resulting in increasing friction among its offspring—from "born-again" radicals and neo-Salafists such as Qaradawi, to those with ostensibly more "progressive" even "liberal" inclinations. How this dynamic develops will have far-reaching implications for the struggle of ideas for the future of Islam in the West—both with regard to the potential growth of a moderate and democratic Western Islam, and in terms of Western Islam's relationships with the wider Muslim world.

Ramadan's Call

In recent years, the leaders of mainstream Islamism have demonstrated an increased urgency and willingness to crack-down on the internal forces of dissension at odds with their larger political and ideological agenda in the West. Last spring, in fact, a public and, at times, rather vicious intellectual quarrel broke out among several prominent Wassatiyya scholars and intellectuals.

At the eye of the dispute was a most unlikely personality: Tariq Ramadan, the ubiquitous Swiss Islamist intellectual and political activist. In so many ways, Ramadan embodies the internal contradictions within mainstream Is-

lamism today. To his boosters, he is a leading Muslim moderate and proponent of an anti-dogmatic, hybridized form of “Euro-Islam” who seeks to rethink Sharia in terms that make sense to modern, democratic European life. To many—and especially to Europe’s alienated Muslim youth and anti-globalization crowd—he speaks with a special authority about the future of Western Islam: The grandson of Hassan al-Banna, and son of Said Ramadan, an important Islamist theoretician in his own right who established the Muslim Brotherhood’s first European outpost in the 1950s, Ramadan has established himself as the sole executor of their intellectual legacies in Europe.

To others, Ramadan is carrying on the family tradition in other ways. Last year, US homeland security officials revoked his visa to teach at Notre Dame citing a Patriot Act clause that denies entry to anyone who uses a “position of prominence to endorse or espouse terrorist activity or to persuade others to support terrorist activity.” Ramadan disputes such charges, saying he’s been misquoted in the press—and then, with a moral vacuity that’s simply breathtaking, clarifies those “journalistic fabrications” by saying Muslim violence against Israel and American forces in Iraq is “explicable” and that it is “legitimate for Muslims to resist fascism that kills innocent people.”⁴ (The “fascists” that he’s referring to here are not, to be sure, Hamas or al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia.)

In his latest bout with controversy, however, Ramadan is drawing heat not from Western security agencies but from the Islamists themselves. In March 2005, Ramadan published a manifesto calling for an “immediate moratorium” in Muslim-majority countries on the application of the so-called “hudud” punishments prescribed in Sharia law, including “corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty.”⁵

Presented as a religious “call,” Ramadan’s manifesto provoked a passionate response from Muslims worldwide. It was, to begin with, an inherently controversial call. The hudud penalties—including public stoning for adulterers and apostates, and for thieves, the amputation of the guilty hand—are explicitly sanctioned in the Quran and the Sunna. A proposal to debate them—let alone one to suspend them—is seen in some circles as a challenge to the authority of the Divine Sovereign Himself.

But Ramadan insisted a debate was necessary. Describing horrific violations of human rights in the Muslim world, he wrote that thuggish powers have usurped the Sharia penal code to pursue their own ends. These “repressive powers” issue amputations, public stonings, and death sentences, “to oppress women, the poor and their political opponents in an almost complete judiciary vacuum which turns into a hot-bed for mass executions of people without trial and with no respect for human dignity.”

These injustices, “made legal in the name of Islam,” were in actuality flagrant betrayals of Islam’s true and universal message of equality and justice, Ramadan said. And yet, nowhere in Muslim-majority countries were their legal and political systems in place to rein in these abuses, or to insure the equal and just application of the hudud penalties. Moreover, Islamic jurists and thinkers have demonstrated little inclination to address these human rights conditions. In these extreme circumstances, a moratorium on the application of the hudud is necessary to relieve the oppressed, and to initiate a worldwide debate among the Muslim faithful to recover and clarify the Sharia’s true purposes.

While some, especially in the West, were enthusiastically supportive of the call, the reaction from others was not nearly as appreciative. In the Sunni Arab world—(where, incidentally, European Muslim thinkers like Ramadan are very seldom taken seriously)—the rejection of Ramadan’s proposal was especially blanket. “The hudud are a part of the religion, they are Quranic, and they can be neither subject to debate nor discussion,” said Mustapha ash-Shuk’a, one of the muftis on Egypt’s Al-Azhar Legal Research Commission. The commission’s collective opinion implied even proposing a suspension of the hudud was a violation of Islam tantamount to apostasy. “Whoever denies the hudud recognized as revealed and confirmed or who demands that they be cancelled or suspended, despite final and indisputable evidence, is to be regarded as somebody who has forsaken a recognized element which forms the basis of the religion.”⁶

Some of the more ideologically-laden rejoinders to Ramadan were fired, disturbingly, from quarters closer to home, including from the pages of the mainstream Muslim website *Islamonline.net* (IOL). An English-language website with Western Muslims as its target audience, IOL is a key component in the massive internet, television, and publishing empire presided over by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In addition to offering news coverage and opinion, IOL provides another unique service: a live and archived “Fatwa Bank” wherein religious scholars offer legal guidance to Muslim minorities in the West on what is permitted and forbidden. Many of the scholars are members of the leading Wassatiyya institutions, including the two largest Western-based Sharia councils—the Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA), established in 1988, and the Dublin, Ireland-based European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), which was co-founded in 1997 by Qaradawi, who presently serves as president.

Ramadan clearly struck upon a nerve in the establishment. With great alarm and alacrity, IOL convened a full symposium of scholars and jurists addressed to Ramadan’s call, its content and meaning. The reaction of the scholars was unanimously negative. Most declared the call an “unfounded

innovation” or “juristically baseless,” and enjoined Ramadan to reconsider or retract it “for the sake of the Umma.” “If we call today for an international moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty,” wrote Sano Koutoub Moustapha, a professor of Islamic jurisprudence in Malaysia, “then tomorrow I am so worried that they may ask Muslims to suspend their Friday Prayer.”⁷ “When this call comes from a respectable scholar like Dr. Tariq Ramadan,” worried Muzammil Siddiqi, president of the FCNA, “it may encourage others also to disrespect the laws of Allah.”⁸

But what in fact seemed to command the most attention from the IOL scholars was less the religious content of Ramadan’s call than its ideological and political import. One of the IOL respondents, Salah Sultan, the head of an Ohio-based Islamic research organization and member of both the FCNA and ECFR, attested to the fact that the Sharia penal code was being misapplied in many parts of the world. But, he said, instigating a moral and political debate on the subject will “only stir too much ado about an issue that is by no means a priority.” “When things are upside down in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, and other places,” Sultan fumed, “we cannot make the wrongdoing of some Muslims in applying Islamic rulings a reason or justification for making it a worldwide issue of public opinion.”⁹

Still others saw in Ramadan’s proposal the work of entirely malicious motives. One especially blistering attack came from Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, a close associate of Qaradawi’s, who, as president of the FCNA and of the Graduate School of Social and Islamic Sciences, a Leesburg, Virginia-based educational institute for the training of religious scholars, is arguably the most influential mainstream Muslim preacher in the United States. It “is by no means acceptable or reasonable,” al-Alwani wrote, “that one of the members of the Muslim Nation comes today to fabricate allegations that contribute to the demolition of the Nation.” “The proposal of deactivating the Islamic legal penalties,” he explained, “is a *trial to remove the barriers between liberalism and Muslim man*, for the purpose of getting belief and Sharia out of his mind (emphasis added.)” Al-Alwani came very close to indicting Ramadan for apostasy: “There is not a believer, believing in Allah, His Messenger and the Last Day, who can support such a plot or claim that we Muslims are in no longer need of Sharia.”¹⁰

Why All the Fuss?

After the IOL symposia aired, Ramadan published rejoinders to several of his Muslim critics on his personal website. Responding to the first broad set of charges leveled against him—that he had chosen to selectively cancel

the Sharia; that his call for a moratorium was “juristically baseless” and “unfounded innovation”—Ramadan wondered, and with understandable reason, whether his detractors had taken the time to read the text of his call with any care. A moratorium, after all, is not a ban—and Ramadan has consistently argued (and very much to the chagrin of his non-Muslim boosters) that the Sharia penal code is an essential and irrevocable part of the Islamic religion.

Moreover, whereas some secular Muslims argue that the hudud are historic and even barbaric relics with no relevance to modern life, Ramadan insists the selective cancellation, or “rational abrogation,” of the Sharia penal code is not his personal intention. Rather, he seeks to demonstrate that the proposal for a moratorium is in fact not “juristically baseless,” but supported by the same principles of jurisprudence that have been regularly employed by mainstream *Wassatiyya* scholars, including Qaradawi and al-Alwani, in the fatwas issued by Western Sharia councils.

Ramadan’s principal concern is what he calls the “instrumentalization” of Sharia—a process that he describes as the reduction of the Sharia from the “path of faithfulness” revealed by a richer appreciation of Islamic scripture, to a mere legal code of criminal punishments. He attributes this instrumentalization in part to the political theology of the Salafists, which commands a strict and “literalist” application of the Islamic scripture in order to purge the Muslim Nation of its “un-Islamic” impurities, the perceived cause of Islam’s present weakness and malaise, and to restore the rule of Sharia and Islamic government.

Though he insists the Salafists are only a minority, Ramadan says their influence is increasing among Muslims worldwide. This is because ignorance of the Sharia is so widespread that Muslims are too easily beguiled by the Salafist claim to represent true and authentic Islam. It is also because the Salafist ideology preys on the fears and anxieties shared by many Muslims over losing their way, their religion and identity in a world ravaged by the omnipresent onslaught of what are perceived to be corrupt and corrupting Western influences. There is then a popular willingness to obey the Salafist message, partly because it provides psychological comfort in a topsy-turvy world, and partly because it provides a rough but ready way to resist the irreverent call of the West. As Ramadan elaborates,

- 1) The literal and immediate application of the hudud legally and socially provides a visible reference to Islam. The legislation, by its harshness, gives the feeling of fidelity to the Quranic injunctions that demands rigorous respect of the text. At the popular level, one can infer in the African, Arabic, Asian as well as Western countries, that

the very nature of this harshness and intransigence of the application, gives an Islamic dimension to the popular psyche.

2) The opposition and condemnations by the West supplies, paradoxically, the popular feeling of fidelity to the Islamic teachings; a reasoning that is antithetical, simple and simplistic. The intense opposition of the West is sufficient proof of the authentic Islamic character of the literal application of hudud. Some will persuade themselves by asserting that the West has long since lost its moral references and became so permissive that the harshness of the Islamic penal code which punishes behaviors judged immoral, is by antithesis, the true and only alternative “to Western decadence.”¹¹

This “formalistic and binary reasoning” according to Ramadan is “fundamentally dangerous” for it gives an “Islamic quality to a legislation, not in what it promotes, protects and applies justice to, but more so because it sanctions harsh and visible punishment to certain behaviors and in stark contrast and opposition to the Western laws, which are perceived as morally permissive and without a reference to religion.”¹²

The outcome of this literalist and formalist approach to Sharia is pure judicial pandemonium and nihilism. In some instances, Ramadan reports, jurists with practically little knowledge of the Sharia are compelled by fear of even more ignorant and zealous masses to apply the hudud. In many places, the hudud are applied simply to satiate some uncompromising, uneducated desire to be faithful to Islam, but seldom with any regard for the Sharia’s true aims or objectives.

“In resigning ourselves to having a superficial relationship to the scriptural sources, we betray the message of justice of Islam,” Ramadan asserts. In proposing a moratorium on the application of the Sharia penal code, he says he seeks to initiate a debate among Muslims designed to recover a richer, more wholesome understanding of the Sharia and its true aims—aims that include, first and foremost, the protection of the integrity of the human person and the establishment of justice.

In contrast to the Salafists, the mainstream scholars offer a different approach, Ramadan says, one that also provides a warrant for his own activities. These scholars all agree that the hudud punishments are prescribed and commanded by Islamic scripture and cannot be canceled. But the scholars have also concluded that the hudud are only to be applied when the proper conditions are in place—that is, in the context of an Islamic government. When asked, for example, on IOL’s Fatwa Bank about whether the applica-

tion of the hudud can be abandoned in Western countries, Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustapha—the same IOL scholar, mentioned earlier, who worried about the implications of Ramadan’s moratorium initiative—responded that the enforcement of these punishments is ultimately “a duty upon Muslim leaders, not individuals.”

In other words, no Muslim individual is allowed to carry out the hudud without the permission of the leader. In the event that there is no Muslim leader in command—such as the case of communities where Muslims are minorities—then the enforcement or implementation of hudud law would have to be postponed and upheld, not to be abandoned as suggested in your question.

There is a big difference between abandonment and postponement or upholding. As Muslims we are not allowed to abandon hudud. To abandon means to reject or cancel it. But we are allowed to postpone or uphold due to the circumstances and situations.

Moreover, Muslims in these minority communities should focus on ways and means of preventing Muslims from committing the crimes that entail hudud through da`wah work, talks, lectures, etc. The community should work on pacific and positive enforcement of these penalties through the said method.

Thus, the true Muslim exerts every effort to apply the principle of commanding good and forbidding evil. If there are certain areas that he cannot enforce, he should direct his attention to other available and possible areas, adopting a gentle and wise approach.¹³

This reasoning is typical of the fatwas issued by institutions like the ECFR and the NAFC, both of which generally follow a special theory of jurisprudence that was formulated originally by al-Alwani and elaborated and popularized by him, Qaradawi, and many others. Known in Arabic as “*fiqh al-aqaliyyat*,” this jurisprudence was designed specifically to determine what is forbidden and permitted for Muslim minorities living in the West where Islamic government is not present.¹⁴ It concerns itself with the full array of issues that inevitably confront Sharia-abiding Muslims living in Western countries—from novel activities, such as how to vote in a democratic election, to issues that invariably arise when the full implementation of the Sharia would not be tolerated legally or morally by the West (as is obviously the case with the Sharia penal code.)

To deal with these conditions, the theory of *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* makes heavy use of legal principles like “necessity” and Muslim “public interests” which provide a basis for the exercise of *ijtihad*—(legal reasoning independent of what is literally prescribed by scripture)—in the pursuit of remaining faithful to the Sharia’s principles and aims. In a response to one of his critics, Ramadan provides a summation of this thinking:

in the absence of the required conditions (*ash-shurut*), necessity (*ad-darura*), doubt (*ash-shubhat*) and the public interest (*al-maslaha*) have always been invoked to suspend practices or to establish exemptions with regard to a literal application of Islamic regulations. This has been a classic practice among the *fuqaha* (scholars of law and jurisprudence) and there can be said to exist, in the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), a general rule that stipulates, “imperatives make permissible that which is forbidden” (a rule universally recognized in the principle that “necessity knows no law”).¹⁵

What exactly constitutes a legitimate “necessity” or “public interest” is naturally the subject of much debate among Islamic scholars, especially in the West. Salafists reject most use of these concepts completely, saying they lead to judicial creativity and infidelity to the Islamic scripture. In fact, Hizb ut-Tahrir ideologues attack *fiqh al-aqaliyyat*—a “European Fiqh,” as they call it—as an impermissible “innovation.”

In the theory of *fiqh al-aqaliyyat*, what exactly qualifies as a “necessity” or a “public interest”—and who gets to define them—is closely supervised by the scholars and Sharia councils. (Al-Alwani himself has demonstrated a reluctance to use the term “public interest,” some say so as not to appear as an “innovator” to his Saudi backers.) Generally speaking, the use of *ijtihad* in minority jurisprudence is normally sanctioned on the grounds of the “necessity” of placing no undue hardship on Muslims and easing them into life into un-Islamic contexts in the wider “public interest” of keeping them faithful to the true aims of Sharia. As such, for Muslim minorities in Western contexts, it becomes possible to do the forbidden, and to postpone the application of the *hudud*, focusing instead on enforcing *hudud* through *Dawa*.

And here’s the point of conflict. Ramadan describes the present, where the instrumentalization of the Sharia penal code has led to such widespread destruction of and injury to innocent human lives, as a “state of necessity.” He says that not only are the basic conditions of justice—Islamic government—absent in the West, they are also lacking throughout the wider Muslim world. Indeed, such a government has not ruled in the Muslim world

since at least the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 or by some accounts, even earlier. Moreover, Ramadan says, the majority of scholars agree that such conditions are “nearly impossible to reestablish.”¹⁶ What’s more, in this post-Caliphate age, the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence have not settled the question as to what new conditions are required for the proper application of the hudud: “positions remain vague and even nebulous, and consensus among Muslims is lacking...”¹⁷

Citing, then, the precedent set by the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, who reportedly suspended the application of the hadd penalty for thievery in a time of horrific famine, Ramadan concludes that to address the present “state of necessity” it is imperative to do what is forbidden—that is, to suspend the application of the hudud punishments, in the wider interest of oppressed Muslims everywhere, and to fulfill the responsibility of the faithful to the Sharia’s true aims, including the preservation of human life and limb. As Ramadan writes in his own defense to the scholars, “necessity”—or in Arabic, “darura”—

is very often put forward in order to ease the way for the Muslims living in difficult environment. Is it not possible to refer to the state of darura to avoid people being treated or killed unfairly? Should we not, in the name of darura, and because the basic conditions of justice are not gathered, suspend the application of punishments and irreversible sanctions as we all know that today they are a plain betrayal of the Islamic teachings? Is the notion of darura only referred to help the Muslims to adapt themselves to the requirements of an unjust world but not to allow them to stop the injustices perpetrated in the name of Islam?¹⁸

A Clash of Calls

What emerges from this dispute between Ramadan and the scholars is ultimately a debate over *ijtihad* or more precisely, how to define the key criteria for its use—“necessity,” and the concept of Muslim “public interests.”

This is a debate that turns on Ramadan’s analysis—that is, whether in fact a “state of necessity” exists in the Muslim world, and second, whether addressing this necessity constitutes a legitimate public interest or benefit to the Muslim Nation as a whole. Some scholars, such as al-Alwani, simply rejected Ramadan’s analysis, saying it contained “false allegations” against the Muslim Nation. Others, such as Shaykh Ali Juma, Egypt’s Grand Mufti and Ramadan’s former teacher, ruled that the matter of the application of the hudud was sim-

ply “not an urgent one” for the Muslim Nation, “and that it does not rank first among our priorities today.” “On the contrary,” the Mufti said, concluding his decision, raising the issue of the hudud at this time, and in the public manner in which Ramadan raised it, was “more harmful than profitable.”¹⁹

At base, then, this dispute is a deeply political one. This is so on two levels. It concerns first of all the authority of the *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* scholars to interpret Sharia and define Islam in the West. Secondly, the dispute reflects more broadly an emerging struggle between a certain Arabic conception of necessity and the Muslim Nation’s interests and a European Islam with its own unique definition of necessity and Muslim interests.

To explain, the IOL scholars unanimously agreed that Ramadan should first have consulted the recognized authorities on Sharia matters—themselves.²⁰ This was an assertion of their supreme authority and special role in defining Western Islam. It points to the fact that *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* is not simply a jurisprudence designed to help Muslim minorities adapt to life in un-Islamic environments. Rather, it seeks to provide a systematic way of organizing and defining Islam in the West that accords with the Muslim Nation’s larger agenda of transforming Western lands into Islamic ones.

Consider, for example, al-Alwani’s explanation of *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* in an essay entitled “Settling-down of Islam after the Settlement of Muslims in the West,” which appeared in 2000 in the UK-based Saudi paper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*.²¹ In that essay, al-Alwani related the delight that the late King Fahd expressed when he learned of the *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* project and the “enormous profit” to the Muslim Nation that would come from “settling-down” the Islamic call (*Tawtin al-Dawa*) in the West. Al-Alwani explicitly states two “necessities” or imperatives that warrant this grand enterprise.

The first “necessity” is the duty to “help the (Muslim) brethren” as they proselytize and expand Islam’s realm in the West. This “service to Islam” aims both at securing new converts to the religion and at instilling among the Muslim minorities a sense of political and cultural obligation to the Muslim Nation as a whole. This entails acquiring a “high level of cultural depth” by building a slew of Arabic “identity” institutions that reflect Islam’s wholesomeness—including mosques, language schools, political organizations, and educational and cultural centers. The second “urgent need” mentioned by al-Alwani is the duty “to protect the Islamic presence (in the West) from deviating.” Naturally, what qualifies as “deviation” is anything that the jurists determine to be at odds with the Muslim Nation’s larger interests and priorities.

For several years now, Ramadan has expressed deep reservations about the *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* project. When the IOL jurists reprimanded Ramadan

and challenged his credentials as a scholar, he responded by saying that he has in fact been asked several times to join the European Council for Fatwa and Research and similar institutions, but has refused because he disagrees with certain aspects of their jurisprudence. In the past, he has made vague theoretical and psychological references to the sense of “otherness” and feelings of “unhealthy schizophrenia” and “inferiority complex” that this jurisprudence and similar endeavors arouse and help to reinforce among Western Muslims. “I reject the mentality of the “other,” he said in a 2004 interview with *Egypt Today*. “That’s why,” Ramadan says,

I was critical of the title of (Qaradawi’s) book *Ahwal el-Muslimeen fil mujtama’at el-okhra* (*The Situation of Muslims in Other Societies*), because he doesn’t belong here. He lives in Qatar, it was normal for him to say that and to discuss *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* (the fiqh of minorities). I’m saying, “No. For us, these are not ‘other’ societies they are our societies.”²²

Indeed, the fundamentally Arab character of *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* and its underlying political and cultural agenda in the West is deeply antithetical to Ramadan’s own stated larger project of creating a “European Islam” and of rethinking Muslim jurisprudence in global terms in accord with his belief that Islam is a universal message with universal principles (and a complement to—some fear, a competitor to—universal Western values.)²³

Ramadan’s call and response to the IOL scholars provide his clearest challenge yet to the theory and legitimacy of minority jurisprudence. In fact, Ramadan suggests the IOL scholars have demonstrated the complete irrelevance of their jurisprudence when they fail to address the state of necessity in the wider Muslim world. “On the question of hudud,” he writes, the position of the European Council for Fatwa and Research

is that, since Muslim monitories do not have to apply the hudud, then this matter should not concern us. So why do you want me to direct this question especially to the European Council as the Council itself sees it as beyond its competence (even though I deeply disagree with this understanding)? It is an international question and it concerns in priority the Muslim world: this is the meaning of my approach.²⁴

Whereas the IOL scholars use the concepts of necessity and public interest for the limited purpose of settling down Western Islam and fulfilling their religious duties to the Muslim Nation, Ramadan uses them to argue on behalf of global priorities that affect the Muslim world more generally and concern remaining faithful to the Sharia’s true, universal principles of equality and

justice. In effect, by placing fidelity to Islamic principle above the Muslim duty to settle down the call in the West, Ramadan delivers a broadside to the mainstream Islamist's religious and political agenda.

Consider, for example, two of the IOL scholars' lines of attack against Ramadan. Muzammil Siddiqi said that Ramadan, rather than calling for a suspension of the Islamic penal code, "should have called for better and comprehensive application of the Sharia." Others said that the hudud are "almost never applicable" in the Muslim world; they said, in fact, that there has been a *de facto* moratorium on the Sharia penal code for over two centuries now, ever since Muslim-majority countries began replacing Islamic legal systems with Western law.

But both of these arguments, says Ramadan, evade the real issue—the superficial fidelity to Islamic scripture that produces such widespread human rights violations in the Muslim world in the first place. At the very best, people recognize this emergency but "express condemnation from afar without trying to evolve the mentalities." And to say the hudud are "almost never applicable" is, in Ramadan's view, partly complicit in the instrumentalization of the Sharia, as it leaves the Salafists and their literalist understanding in the dominant position by default, with no serious alternative argument to the contrary. What we are left with is a "heavy and troubling silence on the question."²⁵

Ramadan's call is designed to shatter this silence. And because he speaks of Islamic principles, not simply of Muslim duties, he describes it as a call to responsibility: "It is in the name of Islam's message of justice that we call upon and remind Muslims that it is the responsibility of each alim (scholar), of each conscience, every woman and man, wherever they may be to speak up."²⁶ In a way, Ramadan does propose a "better application" of the Sharia—one that he says is more faithful to Islam's objectives. But, he suggests Islamic government is not the best way to bring this about. In fact, he not only says such conditions are "impossible to reestablish," but his analysis would seem to suggest that dutifully calling, as the Islamists do, for Islamic government without first establishing the conditions for the Sharia's proper implementation is actually conducive to the further instrumentalization of the Sharia. Moreover, he clearly asserts that the kind of political conditions best-suited to address this state of necessity and to allow a discussion aimed at recovering the Sharia's true principles to unfold are democratic ones. "We need to set in motion a democratization movement that moves populations from the obsession of what the law is sanctioning to the claim of what it should protect: their conscience, their integrity, their liberty and their rights."²⁷

Western Islam vs. Authentic Islam

From the Islamist's perspective, what Ramadan manages to do is to reformulate the jurisprudential concepts advanced in the theory of *fiqh al-aqaliyyat* along moral lines. "Western values have clearly influenced the Muslim mind deeply," said Shaykh Muhammad al-Shinqiti, director of the Islamic Center of South Plains in Lubbock, Texas. "Such influence is not restricted to secularists only, but it has extended to the Islamists, especially those living in the West such as Ramadan and myself; and thus, the adaptation with other cultures has turned into a religious and ethical point of view."²⁸

Ramadan's adoption of this ethical approach to Sharia leads to some surprising results. First of all, he says that not only Muslims, but the "international community" has an "equal responsibility" in addressing the political conditions in the Muslim world. He criticizes the West in particular for being too selective in its condemnation of human rights abuses in the Muslim world, saying that the West rushes too quickly to censure extreme Sharia in, for example, Africa, while not condemning with the same resolve the abuses that occur in Muslim countries where strategic and oil interests are at stake.

The second interesting result is a new formulation of the obligations of Muslim minorities in the West to the wider Muslim Nation. Though Ramadan clearly believes that Muslims in the West are responsible as missionaries of the Islamic religious call, he has said that they are represented by their principles, not by their culture. On principle, then, he states that Western Muslims have an even greater and unique responsibility to address the state of emergency in the wider Muslim world. In fact, Muslims who "live in spaces of political freedom" have—"in the very name of the Islamic teachings—a major responsibility to attempt to reform the situation, open a relevant debate, condemn and put a stop to perpetrated injustices in their name."²⁹

Inviting Westerners, non-Muslim and Muslim alike, to enter into a critical discussion about the internal affairs of the Muslim Nation is certainly not what al-Alwani or Qaradawi had in mind when they first begun their venture of settling-down the religious call in the West. We are in a position now to appreciate more fully why the IOL scholars were so livid about Ramadan issuing his devious call in public, and over concerns that it would spark "needless religious sedition." And yet, the irony here is that by granting such a large role to the use of necessity and public interest in their jurisprudence, the Wassatiyya scholars have opened the door to this political sedition themselves.

Rolling-back these sources of deviation and sedition has become a paramount priority on Qaradawi's agenda in recent years. In 2003, for example, he issued a fatwa on IOL that defined, among other things, the problem of

“intellectual apostasy” in the Western context, and the crucial role that Islamic scholars and jurists must play in addressing it. As the Shaykh writes,

Intellectual apostasy is the kind of apostasy whose owners do not swagger as much as those who declare their explicit disbelief and openly wage war against everything that is religious. Actually intellectual apostates are far smarter than that. They wrap their apostasy in various coverings, sneaking in a very cunning manner into the mind the way that malignant tumors sneak into the body. These people are not noticed when they invade or begin to disseminate their falsehood, but they are mostly felt when they affect the minds. They do not use guns in their attacks, however, their attacks are fierce and cunning. Erudite scholars and well versed jurists well apprehend this type of apostates, but they can not take an action in face of such professional criminals who have firmly established themselves and have not left a chance for law to be enforced on them. They are the hypocrites whose abode will be in the lowest level of the Hell-Fire.

(Intellectual apostasy) needs a wide scale attack at the same level of strength and thinking. The positive religious obligation here is for Muslims to launch war against such a hidden enemy, to fight it with same weapon it uses in waging attack against the society. Here comes the role of erudite scholars who are well versed in Islamic Jurisprudence.³⁰

This idea of a religious duty to wage wide scale war against intellectual apostasy—an “ideological jihad,” if you will—was clearly foremost on Qaradawi’s mind in 2004, when he presided over the inaugural meeting of the International Association of Muslim Scholars (IAMS) in Dublin, Ireland. One of IAMS’s principle missions, as Qaradawi explained, is to provide a central location for the strategic coordination of mainstream Islamism’s worldwide ideological efforts through television, the Internet, publishing houses and other media outlets. The “general overall goal” of this endeavor, he said,

is to preserve the identity of the Islamic nation, and its essential entity—to protect it against the attacks that seek to tear it from its roots and change the identity of the Nation and turn it into a different Nation with a different philosophy that will make it merely a tail, while Allah has created it to be the head; make it a nation in vassalage to others, while (its destiny) is to be followed by others; and to preserve the message of the nation in its true Islamic face, and to counter the destructive currents that want to change the identity of the Nation.

For some analysts—including Reuven Paz, a contributor to *Current*

Trends in Islamist Ideology—Qaradawi’s ascension as head of the IAMS signifies a new phase in the development of the Muslim Brotherhood.³¹ This new phase entails both an “internationalization” of the Brotherhood’s agenda, as well as a new trend toward greater ideological radicalization. Indeed, considering the large scale ideological offensive launched against Ramadan’s devious behavior, it appears that the Wassatiyya scholars are moving sharply in the direction of a re-Salafization—or, to paraphrase Ramadan, they are becoming much more open about their fundamental embrace of the “formal” and “binary” ideology that views the West as a mortal enemy that threatens the “wholesomeness” or “essential entity” of the Muslim Nation.

The feud between Ramadan and the scholars highlights three general areas that are likely to become increasingly divisive sources of conflict within mainstream Islamism. By extension, they are also likely to affect in important ways the future trajectory of Western Islam. The first source of contention concerns the “ethical point of view” that Ramadan develops in his interpretation of Sharia. Such a view, as Shaykh al-Shinqiti put it, is not Islamic, but “saturated” with Christian “concepts of salvation, crucifixion, and redemption.” This ethical attitude personalizes religion, which “in the West has opened the door to liberalism that is not restricted by any ethical restraint...”³²

After detailing the negative and corrosive consequences of this personalized religion in Western liberal society, al-Shinqiti contrasts Ramadan’s Islam of principle with the forensic and harsh nature of Islamic law, citing the Quranic verse: “And let not pity for the twain withhold you from obedience to Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of believers witness their punishment.” In turn, Ramadan’s proposal of an “ethical Sharia” led to an emphatic counter-assertion by the scholars that Ramadan was guilty of selectively approaching the Sharia, whereas that law, as al-Alwani forcefully put it, “is a whole, unique entity that cannot be divided.”³³

The second and related area of conflict concerns the scholars’ assertion that not only had Ramadan challenged the unity of the Sharia through his indulgence of morality, but that he had compromised the Muslim Nation through his indulgence of democracy. According to Ahmed al-Rawi, chair of the Federation of Islamic Organizations of Europe, and a noted Muslim Brother, Ramadan’s call was the latest in a string of woefully misguided attempts by Muslims to combat “the vile campaigns that aim at distorting Islam in the West” by making Islam seem more agreeable to Western liberal democratic sensibilities. (Ramadan himself felt especially obliged to address this particular charge, saying that his call was not an effort to “beautify” Islam, but rather one made out of conscience.) But, al-Rawi said, this was a point-

less charade, as the “attack on Islam will never come to a stop by such calls.” Instead, simply having a public and democratic debate on such religious and political issues could stir up “needless religious sedition” within the Muslim Nation and “open a new front against the Muslim faith.”³⁴

Picking up on this line, one IOL pundit, Dr. Emad Shahin, a political science professor at the American University of Cairo, said that “Ramadan’s environment as a European has a great influence on his call.” Within such an environment, Shahin said that Ramadan, as with so many other Western Muslims today, has assumed a defensive posture, trying to demonstrate that Islam and democracy are compatible so as not to be discriminated against and to feel more at “harmony” with life in the West. But by doing this, Shahin says that Western Muslims are subjecting their religion to a process of “selective marginalization” that leads dangerously to a “dismantling of Islam.” Indeed, the very proposition of a European Islam is “tearing Islam apart from within.”³⁵

The third area of conflict concerns how this “moralization” and “democratization” of Islam in the West adversely affects in the minds of the Islamists the dynamic of the larger war of ideas between the Muslim Nation and Western liberalism.

The scholars, lamenting Islam’s embattled state, depicted Ramadan as either an inadvertent or willing accomplice in what they perceived to be the West’s campaign to undermine the essential religious, political and cultural identity of the Muslim Nation. For example, in addition to complaining that Ramadan’s call was grossly irresponsible when bigger political priorities—such as Palestine and Iraq—were at stake, Salah Sultan said that such a call to evolve the moral and political conditions of the Muslim world would only “further beef up seculars and enemies of Islam, who will step up their war on Islam.” For al-Alwani, tackling the application of extreme Sharia in the Muslim world was an especially egregious act of collusion with the enemy, as the destruction “of Islamic Law has always been a target, for our enemies are aware that Sharia is the real obstacle in their destructive schemes.”

But Ramadan’s call was also not an isolated incident for the scholars. They frequently referred to two recent events: the opening of an all-women’s mosque in the Netherlands and, in New York, the leading of a Muslim congregation in prayer as *Imam* by a female theologian, Amina Wadud. For them, these historic events and the proposal for a moratorium on the hudud are all symptomatic of a larger enemy offensive designed to carve-up the Muslim Nation by creating a religiously and politically distinct Western Islam. Islam’s enemies “are trying to pit Muslims against one another,” as al-Alwani said.³⁶

These various assertions by the scholars play skillfully on the prejudices, widespread in the Arab world, that the West is a place where Islam becomes spiritually impoverished and politically corrupted. But what this episode furthermore makes dramatically apparent is that Western Islam is increasingly viewed by mainstream Islamism not simply as a frontier religion to be settled-down by the emissaries of an authentic faith doctrine, but as an ideological competitor and threat to the wholesomeness of the Muslim Nation itself.

Based on these considerations, the scholars impugned Ramadan's faith and his loyalties to the Muslim Nation. And to steel other Western Muslims against the subversive influences of the West, they also sought to make an example of Ramadan, nearly declaring him an apostate. As al-Alwani put it, all who fear Allah should immediately disavow themselves of any form of self-examination and speculation on the morality of Islam's religious and political practices. A "wise Muslim," he said, "should never be lured into such traps, because this would make the Muslim nation more likely to be lured into more moral challenges."³⁷

Future Trends

The writer who reported on the Ramadan affair for IOL, Dina Abdel-Mageed, assured readers that while "Ramadan's call will be welcomed and manipulated by the West, in the Muslim world it is expected to generate little more than vociferous verbal assaults on Ramadan, and a heated, ultimately fruitless debate."³⁸

That's unlikely. Ramadan, to his credit, has not backed down under fire. And based on an unscientific survey of Muslim websites, he has generated much discussion among many who are agreeable to his cause. Certainly many more would welcome Ramadan taking up the topic of jihad as his next issue for critical reflection, and providing an account of how the instrumentalization of *that* aspect of Sharia is today destroying the innocent lives of so many Muslims and non-Muslims alike. His public statements concerning this emergency in the Muslim world are perhaps as revealing as is the ideologically-charged response and silence of the mainstream Islamists on the issue of the extreme application of the Sharia penal code.

What this episode clearly demonstrates is that mainstream Islamism views the West as a crucial and possibly even the foremost battleground of ideas between Islamism and liberalism. Insofar as they see victory on this Western front as crucial to preserving and restoring the "essential entity" of the worldwide Muslim Nation, they can be expected to spare no effort at stamping out developments within Western Islam that they deem to be at odds with their larger ideological agenda. Moreover, the surprising response

to Ramadan's call from abroad—from Al-Azhar, for example—indicates that the emergence of a self-critical and hopefully, one day, moderate and democratic Western Islam is likely to become an issue of great concern among more and more Islamists in the wider Muslim world, too.

In the near term, the Ramadan affair will likely elicit a more concerted effort by mainstream Islamists at home and abroad to define juristically what Western Muslims are permitted and forbidden to do intellectually and politically. “We need to stop blaming things on the Wahhabis,” said Abuz Zubair, commenting on Ramadan's call on *Islamicawakening.com*, a Western neo-Salafist website that, unlike IOL, has demonstrated little inclination to disguise its animosity toward the West. “There is a pressing need today for the mainstream Muslim scholars and thinkers to tackle fundamental questions about identity, citizenship and integration, preserving and practicing our faith in Western countries, before they are answered for us by the unqualified.”³⁹

And yet, some trends on the ground would suggest that ideological supremacy in the definition of Western Islam is likely to remain a difficult religious obligation for the mainstream Islamists to fulfill. Surely, the West has emerged not simply as a “Land of Dawa,” but a land in fact of many Islamic calls. Given their ideological commitments, Qaradawi and company will invariably ramp-up their ideological jihad to control the forces of sedition and to punish especially those Muslims who, in their political theology, have allied with the West against the Muslim Nation. If, however, that Dawa-effort to stem the growth of a moderate and democratic Western Islam fails, it puts mainstream Islamists in a position of extreme ideological urgency. It could force them, in fact, to seriously re-examine the juristic and political “compromise” with the West that led them to this place to begin with—including both their postponement of the hadd punishment for apostates and their larger idea that expanding and settling-down Islam's sovereign realm in the West will come not by force but by “preaching and ideology.”

NOTES

1 From a discussion thread posted in February 2005 on the website www.sindbad.se. Abu Mujahid, one forum participant, says in reference to the War in Iraq: “Wallahi I pray that Allah will severely punish all those who are involved in this war against Islam. And that Sweden will feel the punishment of the Mujahdiin that the USA and Spain and other countries have done for their involvement in Iraq. May Allah punish this hypocrite government, Ameen.” Forum member Abd al-Azeez then responds: “Please give me evidence that kuffar (infidels) should NOT be allowed to kill. Why should you not be allowed to call Sweden Dar ul-Harb (the House of War)? Ulama have

stated many times that every state that does not judge according to Sharia, and does not have a pact with the Muslims or is paying the Jiziya is a part of Dar ul-Harb, which is allowed to attack and their wealth permitted for all Muslims. Why not follow the example of what our Mujahid brother in Holland did with that pig Theo van Gogh? That brother's action really made a difference in the world, and because of it the Muslims now enjoy some respect and eminence among the kuffar. Sure, Muslims enjoy "protection" in Sweden as citizens. So what? There are Muslims in the USA and Israel, too, getting "protection". What difference does it make? Allah made Jihad compulsory. A Muslim has to enter fully into Islam, not just ignore issues as he feels like. This is Islam, not a lunch buffet." Originally cited in Internet Haganah, <http://haganah.org.il/harchives/004056.html>

2 Translated by MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series No. 447*, December 6, 2002. Available memri.org, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=jihad&ID=SP44702>

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The Advance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK

MICHAEL WHINE

SINCE ITS FORMAL ARRIVAL IN THE UK NINE YEARS AGO, the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al Islami—MB) has grown from having no organizational presence to being perhaps the most dynamic influence within the British Muslim population. It has done so by seizing the initiative on issues of concern to Muslims, whereas more moderate activists have dithered or failed to act effectively.

In 1996, the first representative of the MB in Britain, Kamal el-Helbawy, an Egyptian, was able to say that “there are not many members here, but many Muslims in Britain intellectually support the aims of the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹ He added that at that time, the object of the MB in Britain was only to disseminate information on Islam, Islamic issues and movements, and to rectify the distortions and misunderstandings created by “different forces against Islam.”

In September 1999, the MB opened a “global information centre” in London. A press notice published in *Muslim News* stated that it would “specialize in promoting the perspectives and stances of the Muslim Brotherhood, and [communicate] between Islamic movements and the global mass media.”²

The Arab Expatriates

London had been named “Londonistan” by the French security services during the 1990s, when they became alarmed and frustrated by the growing presence of Algerian Islamists who used London as a rear base from which to conduct their terrorist campaign against France. They were mostly, but by no means all, members of the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armeé—GIA). France sought the extradition of some of them in connection with the bombings that terrorized Parisians during the 1980s. The British authorities took the view, however, that they should be granted asylum, provided they had committed no crimes on British soil. Since extradition requests take many years to work their way through the British courts, and since defendants are granted the right to appeal to a higher court at every

stage in the process, the French authorities openly voiced their dismay.

Among the Arab Islamist ideologues who had been granted asylum—and in some cases, the indefinite right to stay, or even British citizenship—was Rashid Gannouchi, the leader of the Tunisian *an Nahda* party who had left Tunisia on completion of a prison sentence for terrorism offences, and members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Another leader was the Syrian expatriate Omar Fostock (aka. Omar Bakri Mohammed—OBM), who with another Syrian expatriate, Farid Kassim, founded a branch of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Islamic Liberation Party—HT) in 1986. He had arrived in Britain, after being expelled from Saudi Arabia, to where he claims he had fled after the late President Assad's crackdown on the MB. In Saudi Arabia he claims that he was active in another group with a similar ideology, *Al-Muhajiroun* (The Emigrants—AM).

HT was founded by Shaykh Taqi Uddin Al Nabahani, an Islamic court judge, in Jerusalem in 1953, after he had left the Palestinian branch of the MB. HT follows a similar ideology as the MB, but Nabahani promoted the resurrection of the Islamic Caliphate, which had been destroyed in 1924 on the dissolution of the Turkish Empire, as the main priority. He believed that Muslims may only live in a Muslim state governed by Sharia law. This goal takes precedence over all others and explains why, for example, HT's members have generally refrained from campaigning on other Islamist and MB issues, and been criticized for so doing. Nabahani had also been much influenced by Haj Amin Al Husseini, then living in exile in Egypt, and as a consequence had introduced an even greater element of anti-Semitism into HT ideology than it had inherited from the post-war MB leadership under Said Qutb.

HT first began public activity among Arab students studying at the colleges of London University, notably Imperial College and Queen Mary College. It rapidly gained notoriety within student circles for its anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist, anti-Hindu, anti-Sikh and homophobic campaigning. However, most of its activity was focused on moderate Muslim students. HT's confrontational stance led to it being banned by the National Union of Students in 1994, and eventually, after numerous complaints from the Union of Jewish Students and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, to the publication of guidelines against religious coercion for all university heads, by their umbrella body, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (later renamed Universities UK).³

OBM's publicity-seeking stunts, however, drew criticism from the HT leadership based in Jordan and Lebanon. In 1996 he left the party with the majority of its active members to form AM. In doing so he joined up with

Shaykh Mohammed Al Mas'ari, the Saudi Islamist exile whose own high-profile activities led to his split from the Campaign for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), a group that Al Mas'ari had co-founded with Saad Al Fagih, a fellow Saudi. As a consequence of CDLR's criticism of the Saudi royal family, the British Government sought to extradite Mas'ari to the Caribbean. But he had successfully appealed his case, and was eventually allowed to stay.

Although publicly shunned by many Muslim community leaders, OBM and Mas'ari have maintained links to MB and *Salafi* group leaders and activists. In particular, they have cooperated in the recruitment of young Muslims for jihad training in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya. Initially, this may have been done by sending volunteers on the aid convoys to Bosnia, where they were recruited and dispatched onward for terrorism training.⁴

After the 1996 split, HT resumed its more normal mode of operation focused on clandestine recruitment, usually on a one-to-one basis, and building the organization. Following its ban on campus activity in 1994 and again in 1995 (the NUS ban was to be repeated again in 2004), HT developed the use of front names and indeed barely slowed its pace of activity as it was able to successfully hoodwink most university administrations and the National Union of Students. Among its front names have been the Muslim Current Affairs Society, the Young Liberating Party, the Islamic Front, the 1924 Committee, and the New World Society.⁵

The Internationalization of the Brotherhood

The repression by the Egyptian authorities which followed the attempted assassination of Gamal Abdel Nasser, and their suppression in Iraq and Syria, prompted many MB leaders to flee to Saudi Arabia; some also fled to Europe, primarily to Germany. As a consequence, and to maintain links, an international council was created in 1982, but later developments in the 1980s and 1990s spurred a more effective international liaison.

The Palestinian branch recreated itself in 1987 as Hamas, and the need arose to secure funding for its social and terrorist activity. The deportation by Saudi Arabia of MB leaders in 2002, the arrests of many leaders in Egypt in 2003, the eclipse of MB scholar Hasan al-Turabi in the Sudan, and the transfer to London of part of its public relations machinery all prompted a greater need for coordination. This all came about against a backdrop of concern over the ageing leadership in Egypt, and indeed for the future of the Brotherhood itself.

Central to the regeneration efforts at the international level is Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Egyptian scholar living in exile in Qatar. Qaradawi's high profile and leadership role is maintained by his popular weekly satellite

television programme on Al Jazeera and the judicious use of two web sites: www.islamonline.net and www.qaradawi.net, through which he issues guidance to MB members, and millions of other Muslims. To some, Qaradawi is seen as a leading moderate, at least in the sense that he helped to instigate the condemnation of the 9/11 attack signed by prominent Islamist leaders and published in the London-based *al Quds al Arabi* newspaper, and for his regular criticism of the *Wahabi*-influenced obscurantism and rigidity that guides the *salafi* wing of the Islamist movement. But in another sense, Qaradawi is also the leader of the MB's activist wing moving the MB beyond the immediate control of the ageing leadership by virtue of his religious leadership of *Hamas*. Specifically, he has been active in raising money for it by his founding chairmanship of the Union for Good charity (*I'tilafu Al Khayr*—Union for Good and *Aathlaf Al Hin*—the Charity Coalition) and issuing *fatwas* that support the use of suicide bombings against Israel and Coalition forces in Iraq, including justifying the use of women and children for these missions.⁶

Another issue which may be prompting the internationalization of the MB is the action taken to freeze the assets and close the operation of its bank, Bank Al Taqwa, in the wake of the Al Qaeda attack on the US. This leaves it without its main financial arm and without the benefit of a funding mechanism. A review of the shareholders' list of the bank provides a list of its international leadership and senior membership, and it is reasonable to assume that the size of the shareholding is some indicator of the individual's seniority within the organisation.⁷

As a consequence of the above, the MB convened a conference in the Gulf in late 2004, out of which emerged the World Council of Muslim Clerics (aka. The International Association of Muslim Scholars.) Attending the meeting were Qaradawi, Muhammad Mahdi Akef, the elected General Guide, and Mahmad Izzat, the Secretary of the Brotherhood who were both allowed to leave Egypt for the purpose.⁸

Reports from the conference suggest that the MB is refocusing some of its activity on international growth and moving away from violence. This may be for two reasons. Firstly, the organization intends to evangelize among Europe's growing Muslim population (thought to be at least 16 million). Here, it is instructive to note that many Muslim leaders now refer to Europe not as a land of war (*Dar al-Harb*) but as Muslim territory (*Dar al-Islam*), within which *Sharia* law should prevail.

Secondly, the MB leadership sees the necessity of confronting the *salafi* trends within Europe, which have, in part, led to its becoming a command and control center and recruitment arena for terrorism elsewhere. At the same

time, Europe has also become a target for terrorism after the successful attack in Madrid (March 2004) and the foiled attacks in Strasbourg (December 1999) and Germany (September 2003). This is no longer al Qaeda-directed terrorism but rather the product of the emerging *salafi jihadi* ideology that promotes individual acts of terrorism by local groups acting in accordance with a larger strategy of attacking American and Israeli targets, as well as countries supporting the Coalition in Iraq, but without any central direction.

As the MB renounces salafi-driven violence and focuses on recruitment in Europe, it also seeks accommodation with the Arab states that formerly persecuted its members. The Gulf Conference had been preceded by the release from prison of approximately 300 Syrian members who had been incarcerated since the 1980s. Their release followed meetings between President Assad, Qaradawi and Sudanese and Jordanian MB leaders.⁹ Shortly thereafter, the MB's Syrian branch released a "political programme" in London, in which they renounced violence and declared their willingness to participate in political life.¹⁰ At the same time, the MB's Iraqi branch announced that it was coming to terms with the situation in Iraq and intended to participate in the electoral process.¹¹

The French scholar Gilles Kepel notes that there are two opposing trends within European Islam. The first includes both *wahabi salafi* and *tablighi* influences which reject European identity and cultural norms and promote either secession or terrorism. The second allows the creation of a dynamic Muslim community blending what Europe has to offer with Islam and adherence to *Sharia*, and allowing the building of bridges with the Middle East and South East Asia. This is the trend best exemplified by Geneva-based Tariq Ramadan, grandson of the MB founder Hassan al-Banna.¹²

Europe, however, has pre-existing trans-continental institutions which serve to advance MB ideologies. The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), known in France as the Union des Organisations Islamiques de l'Europe (UOIE) acts as the main vehicle. The FIOE is headquartered at Markfield, Leicestershire, which is also the UK center for the Pakistan Islamist movement, *Jamaat e Islami*. In this fashion, the two organizations have advanced the ideological link made between them after the Second World War by Said Qutb and Mawlana Maududi. The trustees of the FIOE include Ahmed Jaballah, director of the European Institute for Human Science, and Ahmed al-Rawi. Two associated entities are the European Trust and the European Council for Fatwa and Research, the members of which are the MB leadership in Europe and the Arab world, and include Qaradawi, Rashid Gannouchi, al-Rawi and Shaykh Faisal Mawlawi (Lebanon's MB leader).

All these linked bodies should be seen both as a challenge to the ageing Egyptian-based MB leadership, and as an attempt to extend MB influence in Europe, by the most prominent activists within the organization and by those who are not constrained by the circumscribed atmosphere that exists within most Arab states.

In a November 2002 interview the then acting General Guide Ma'mun al-Hudaybi admitted this problem and pointed towards the future when he stated:

The International Organisation of the Brotherhood is not something that is trivial, it is a symbol that has value and importance. Nevertheless there are some things it could have done even though it was not able to meet. But we must be realistic. This organisation will not govern a state someday. This is something that is not coming.....we do not have anyone from the state (Egypt) with whom we can talk. If only they would create a channel between us and them. We have often called for this, but it has not happened.¹³

It is for this reason perhaps that the World Council of Muslim Clerics is headquartered in Dublin and that its first meeting took place in London, in July 2004.

The Growth of the MB in Britain

Two issues gave impetus to the growth of the MB in Britain: Muslim opposition to the second Gulf War and the Islamist campaign for Palestine.

The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), which is in effect the MB of Britain, was founded in 1997 by Arab migrants, some of whom had been MB leaders in their countries of origin. Their activism has revolutionized the impact of political Islam in Britain, shifting it to a more anti-Western, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic outlook.

The public first became aware of the MAB in April 2002 when it organized a large pro-Palestinian rally in central London. One Islamist website promoted the event as "the Muslim Brotherhood launch biggest Palestine rally in the UK."¹⁴ At the rally, some demonstrators signified their approval for terrorism by dressing as suicide bombers; others carried placards that had been downloaded from the MAB website equating Israel with Nazi Germany.

Kemal Al Helbawy, the founding president of the MAB, was a speaker at the rally. Other MAB leaders include Mohammed Sawalha, a former Hamas military commander, and Azzam Tamimi, a former official spokesman for the Jordanian MB and director of the Islamic Action Front's parliamentary office

in Amman. From 1989 to 1992, Tamimi had edited *Al Ribat*, the Jordanian MB weekly paper. A fourth prominent MAB leader at the event was Anas Al Tikriti, the son of the Iraqi MB leader Osama Al Tikriti.

Their existing infrastructure was augmented by the transfer of the “political office” of the Syrian MB branch, from Amman to London, in 2000.¹⁵ The MAB hosted numerous meetings for visiting MB leaders, including Qaradawi and Anwar Al Awlaki, the Yemeni leader and former Imam at the San Diego and Falls Church, Virginia mosques, and who was described by a US House Intelligence Committee member as “more than a coincidental figure in the 9/11 plot.”¹⁶

Opposition to the second Gulf War provided the opening that the MAB needed to move to center stage. It had already established its growing presence within the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the representative Muslim body, and indeed had been subjected to internally-imposed limits in order to avoid undue MB influence within the MCB. But, its involvement in the Stop the War Coalition, led by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Communist Party of Britain, gave it real power. The anti-war coalition organized a series of rallies in 2003 that proved to be Britain’s biggest ever political demonstrations. The MAB influence resulted in the slogan “Don’t attack Iraq/Free Palestine,” thereby conflating two different issues, but seen by Islamists as part of their joint concern. Complaints by some demonstrators that anti-Semitic leaflets and placards equating the Star of David with the Nazi swastika on the first rally had no place on an anti-war demonstration were initially brushed aside by the organizers, but appear to have had some effect as they did not reappear on the subsequent rallies.

In this manner though, the MAB took over, in part, the leadership of both the anti-war lobby and the pro-Palestinian lobby, and should be contrasted with earlier, much less effective Islamist campaigns to ban Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*. Having forged this alliance with the non-Muslim Left, the MAB went on to build another tactical alliance with George Galloway and his RESPECT Party, campaigning for withdrawal from Iraq and against Labour Party foreign policy. Staffed mainly by the SWP and other hard left groups, but attracting votes from the substantial (Asian) Muslim population, it won a parliamentary seat in Bethnal Green for Galloway, who unseated the Jewish black MP Oona King, and also established itself as a genuine force in some other seats.

RESPECT’s performance in each of the twenty-six constituencies contested was directly related to the number and proportion of Muslim voters in that seat. Their best five results came in seats that were ranked by the MCB as being in the top ten constituencies in the country, according to the size of

their Muslim electorate. By the time of the General Election, however, the MAB's close association with the Labour Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, had drawn them away from any formal association with RESPECT, preferring instead to focus their efforts on supporting anti-war elements within the Labour Party.

MAB influence on Livingstone provides a case book example of political manipulation. Ostensibly a Labour Party member, albeit a maverick one with a lifetime's association with the far left and a capacity for annoying those in power by his public support for terrorists he deems to be freedom fighters (as with his embrace of the IRA when a Member of Parliament), Livingstone hosted the annual meeting of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, and Qaradawi, its leader, in July 2004, in City Hall. Despite public criticism from a coalition of diverse interests, including many Greater London Assembly members, the Jewish community, Hindu, Sikh and gay organizations, he went on to host and promote other MAB interests. Among these was a press conference where he was the only speaker to mention the French *hijab* (headscarf) ban, which was the subject of the session. Neither Al Tikriti nor Qaradawi mentioned the ban; both concentrated instead on promoting the leadership role that the Fatwa Council and its members play in relations between Muslims and the rest of society.

It is clear from the transcript of the conference that its substantive purpose was to promote Qaradawi and the Fatwa Council, and that the headscarf ban debate and the use of the Mayor was just a means to this end.¹⁷

In another move to secure their presence in the UK, the MAB also took over the management of the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park in February 2005. The Mosque itself had formerly been taken over by Abu Hamza al-Masri, and used by him as a center for preaching jihad and for recruitment for terrorism. This now gives them a new base from which to operate. It should also be noted that the MB has additional connections to the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales at Lampeter, thereby giving it an influence within tertiary education.

In so doing, the MB could be said to have reached a degree of maturity, the lack of which had been lamented by Helbawi in an important interview in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. In this he had lamented that "the international organization isn't an organization at all, it's just a coordinating body. It needs to work openly and meet with public figures; as it is only the secret services that know when its main figures come and go. There's no proper research center anywhere in the West, or a TV channel. We need to create a global forum for dialogue and to increase our activities."¹⁸

What differentiates the *modus operandi* of the MB and the MAB from other Islamist organizations is their establishment of corporate structures underpinning their finances, and extending their reach within other communal structures. Their attitude is exemplified by the slogan “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally,” which is used on MAB banners and publications.

The MB now operates through a series of interlocking companies managed by those listed above, and others, of Palestinian, Syrian, Libyan, Somali, Iraqi and Egyptian origin. These entities include: the MAB itself, the Muslim Welfare Trust, Interpal (listed by the US Treasury as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity), the Palestine Return Centre, the Institute of Islamic Political Thought (of which Tamimi is Director), Mashreq Media Services (which publish the Hamas newspaper *Filisteen Al Muslima*), Palestine Times (the English language pro-Hamas paper), the Centre for International Policy Studies, and others.

The creation of such a large scale, interdependent financial infrastructure to resource public, educational and media activity spread across the UK and Ireland suggests a long term strategy designed to keep it safe from Arab states’ (and American and Israeli) investigations. Indeed, it was in anticipation of this, and as a consequence particularly of US investigations of their funding structure, that Israeli commentator Uhud Yaari noted that “there may be an effort to set up new centers in Europe.”¹⁹

Conclusions

MB ideology in the 21st century should not be seen as monolithic. Rather, it presents a spectrum ranging from the extremes of Salafi jihadists committed to the violent removal of Western influences and presence in Muslim lands (and there is disagreement as to how far this extends: is it the Arab world or does it extend as far as the Muslim expansion in the thirteenth century and to the extension of *Dar al-Islam* by violence if necessary), to the modernizing ideas of Tariq Ramadan and others who seek a Europeanized version of Islam that nevertheless remains separated, evangelical and living according to Sharia within European society.

What is apparent is that the MB is making determined and successful efforts to influence Britain’s diverse Muslim population and many of its communal organizations. In doing so they are representing themselves as middle of the road, though they are not. They are influencing and taking the lead in representing Muslim “political” interests, as opposed to the existing organizations such as the MCB and the councils of mosques which have focused on ‘faith’ issues. The MB have recognized the political power of Muslim demog-

raphy and have begun to exploit the fear of that power among politicians, but have not yet managed to actually mobilize the Muslim vote. This they clearly aim to accomplish in due course.

NOTES

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 5. "The Mode of Operation of Hizb ut Tahrir in an Open Society," Michael Whine, February 2004, International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Herzliya, www.ict.org/articles
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18. A row in the family, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 2000, www.monde-diplomatique.fr/en/2000/04/03tanzion
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ADDENDA

1. The High Court decision upholding the right of a Luton schoolgirl to wear the full length jilbab was overturned on appeal by the House of Lords in March 2005. (Part 1, page 55)
2. The government withdrew the clauses from its police bill which would have banned incitement to religious hatred in April 2005, just prior to calling the General Election. In May, following the Election it announced its intention to present the draft legislation to Parliament again. (Part 1, page 55)

Radical Islamists in Central Asia

ZEYNO BARAN

RADICAL ISLAMISTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED in Central Asia, a historic center of classical Islam located today in a region of strategic importance.¹ Yet, only in recent times have radical Islamists entered the region, as it had been closed off to the rest of the Islamic world by decades of harsh Soviet rule. By the 1970s, many clergy members had begun to move away from the traditional Hanafi school of Islam to Wahhabism—thanks in part to the initial work of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood).² The first *Ikhwan* group to arrive in Central Asia consisted of an ethnically diverse collection of Muslim students from countries such as Jordan, Iraq and Afghanistan. These students created the “Tashkent Group,” which sought to establish clandestine cells in Central Asian universities with the goal of recruiting local students into their movement and ultimately establishing the Caliphate. While at first they operated secretly, the *Ikhwan* and other Islamists began to act more openly as the reforms of *perestroika* were implemented. They were further emboldened in their openness by the Taliban takeover of neighboring Afghanistan in the 1990s.

For most radical Islamists, the main point of entry to the region was the Ferghana Valley, an area densely populated with deeply religious people, and which is shared among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. At first, four radical Islamist groups were active there: Adolat (Justice), Baraka (Blessings), Tauba (Repentance), and Islam Lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam).³ These groups existed underground during the Soviet period, but emerged in the era of Gorbachev’s reforms. Over time, other groups also became active in the region, including Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and its splinter groups Akramiylar and Hizb un-Nusrat, as well as Uzun Soqol (Long Beards), Nurcular, Tabligh Jamaat, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Hizballah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), and the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG).

While their methods and strategies may differ, almost all of the groups listed above have as a shared goal the overthrow of the secular government

and society and the establishment of an Islamic state. Hizb ut-Tahrir, however, is the only group with a coherent ideology. Neither Osama bin Laden, nor former Taliban leader Mullah Omar, nor IMU leader Tahir Yuldashev has come up with an ideological and theological framework that justifies their actions. Instead, these and other leaders have relied on the comprehensive teachings of Hizb ut-Tahrir—which is currently the most popular radical movement in Central Asia. This article will first introduce HT and its splinter groups, and then discuss several other groups most active in Central Asia today.

Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islamiyya (The Islamic Party of Liberation)

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) was founded in 1952/1953 by Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani in Jordanian-ruled East Jerusalem. Al-Nabhani died in 1977 and was succeeded by Abu Yusuf Abdul Qadim Zallum, another Palestinian cleric.⁴ Zallum left HT's leadership in March 2003, due to his deteriorating health, and died in April 2003. He was succeeded by Ata Ibnu Khaleel Abu Rashta, who previously served as the party's official spokesman in Jordan.⁵ Abu Rashta, alias Abu Yasin, is a Palestinian who is believed to have lived most recently in the West Bank. Under his leadership, HT activities have become more aggressive. During fall 2003, the governing body (*kiedat*) is believed to have instructed members to engage in acts of aggression towards the diplomatic representations and other buildings of those countries that supported the Iraq War. Today it is active in over 40 countries, with its ideological "nerve center" in London, and official headquarters in Jordan.

The main goal of the HT movement is to recreate the Caliphate, the Islamic state formally brought to an end in 1924 following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Although it claims to be nonviolent, HT acknowledges that violence may eventually be necessary in order to overthrow the regimes standing in the way of the Caliphate. It is viciously anti-Semitic and anti-American, and disseminates a radical Islamist ideology fundamentally opposed to democratic capitalism and to Western concepts of freedom. While HT as an organization does not engage in terrorist activities, it does operate as an ideological vanguard that supports and encourages terrorist acts.

HT may be the only self-described political party that calls for the unity of the *umma*—a unity which it seeks to bring about by emulating the steps that the Prophet Muhammad took to establish the original Caliphate. According to al-Nabhani, the Prophet's work was performed in "clearly defined stages, each of which he used to perform specific clear actions" that led, in the end, to the creation of a Sharia-based Islamic government.⁶

HT effectively combines Marxist-Leninist methodology and Western slogans with reactionary Islamist ideology to shape the internal debate within Islam. As an organization, HT also bears striking similarities to the early Bolshevik movement. Both have an ultimate, utopian political goal (whether “true communism” or the Caliphate), and both show an intense dislike for liberal democracy, while seeking to establish a mythical “just society.” Both also function with a secretive cell system. And while it insists on non-violence until the third stage, HT does justify the use of force, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

Its partly leaflets, accessible over the Internet in various languages, provide the *umma* with timely and coherent explanations of current events that fit HT’s ideological framework. The language of these leaflets is simple and direct; for instance, many repeat the call to Muslims to “kill Jews wherever you find them.”⁷

The tight compartmentalization of HT ensures that little information is known about its financial structure. Its members take oaths of secrecy on the Quran—oaths that are generally not broken even under interrogation. The “need-to-know” basis on which information is transmitted in the party ensures that data obtained from all but the most senior members is of little importance. This is why, until today, neither Central Asian nor Western authorities have been able to deny the group access to its funding sources.

Moreover, HT does not require a great deal of money to sustain its activities. Its ability to create a virtual Islamic community on the Internet has allowed the movement to reach the hearts and minds of many without investing in an elaborate communications network or in party offices. Interviews with arrested HT members indicate that local entrepreneurs, party members and other sympathizers tend to make individual donations to HT’s local organs. Meanwhile, more detached businessmen and Islamic charities are most likely to direct their money to HT’s leadership committee, which in turn sends money to the movement’s various regional branches. Funding is essentially drawn from a combination of private donations and the dues of party members. The latter is particularly significant, since in Central Asia each member is obliged to donate between 5 percent and 20 percent of monthly income to the party.

Unlike many Islamist movements that shun female participation in politics, women are thought to make up 10 percent of HT’s membership.

The Radicalization of Hizb ut-Tahrir

There has been a clear and consistent trend towards the radicalization of HT, especially since 2001. In June of that year, in its publication *Al-Waie* (Consciousness), Hizb ut-Tahrir stated clearly that it is acceptable to carry

out suicide attacks with explosive belts. In March 2002, HT argued that suicide bombs in Israel are a legitimate tactic of war, given that the enemy has sophisticated weapons and hence can only be defeated through attacks on so-called “soft targets,” such as women and children. Over the next two years, HT leaflets and writings continuously emphasized that in the context of a clash of civilizations, offensive jihad against the Americans and the Jewish people is acceptable. It went as far as declaring, in a May 2003 leaflet, that jihad against unbelievers is the only type of jihad. At the time, an HT website displayed an image of American soldiers superimposed over the burning of the twin towers, carrying the legend “U.S. Troops: Die Hard.”

It is yet to be established whether HT has already formed a militant wing or whether it is simply “inspiring” members independently to engage in terrorist acts. Regardless, many observers believe that in the long run, HT will move away from its policy of nonviolence in order to accomplish its ultimate goal. After all, as HT itself admits, Central Asian governments would most likely use force to protect themselves against any such coup attempt. It seems clear that HT would like to respond to any such measures with force, as well. Indeed, as suggested by the capture of armed HT members en route to a planned attack on the US military base in Kyrgyzstan, HT may well be forming a military wing—or worse, the organization as a whole may have turned to radicalism.

What is even more troubling is that, since 2003, HT has paid increased attention to weapons of mass destruction. The fact that no WMD were found in Iraq only strengthened the group’s interest in such weapons. With its emphasis on the inevitability of the clash of civilizations, HT may further “inspire” some Muslims to take this next step.

HT has the best chance for success in Central Asia, which is its main battleground. Many Central Asian governments are illegitimate and cannot provide their people with opportunities for socio-economic improvements, which would evaporate support for possible coup attempts. HT has already succeeded in diverting the world community’s attention away from its activities in Uzbekistan thanks to its brilliant public relations campaign. As a result of this propaganda effort, more observers are concerned with HT supporters’ prison conditions than are alarmed by the possibility of a successful HT coup d’état. Also assisting HT’s campaign in Central Asia is the proximity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, two primary bases for terrorists and radical sympathizers. And, since Pakistan, Russia and India also have nuclear weapons, the possible availability of loose WMD material makes Central Asia a very attractive place for HT.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's Splinter Groups

To date, known HT splinter groups include (with dates of founding in parentheses):

- *Palestinian Islamic Jihad* (1958)—Shaykh Assad Bayyoud Tamimi, a former HT member, founded both PIJ and a second splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Organization (also known as the al-Aqsa Battalions), which was created in 1982. PIJ has no known presence in Central Asia.
- *Al-Muhajiroun* (1996)—Omar Bakri Muhammad, a former HT member, founded this extremely radical organization. Bakri has claimed to be “the eyes of Osama bin Laden” and reports indicate that communication between the two men dates back at least as far as 1998. Al-Muhajiroun was headquartered in London; when Bakri realized that the British authorities were going to take action against the organization, the group announced its “dissolution” in an October 2004 press release. This announcement merely signifies that the group has gone underground, and like al-Qaeda, al-Muhajiroun will now have its recruits globally dispersed, working for the same goal. Bakri recently fled London after the bombings there, and was arrested recently in Beirut. Al-Muhajiroun has no known presence in Central Asia.
- *Akramiylar* (1996)—Formed in the Uzbekistani section of the Ferghana Valley, as a group with a primarily local focus (mentioned below)
- *Hizb un-Nusrat* (1999)—The Party of Assistance (mentioned below)

HT material was first brought to Uzbekistan in the late 1970s, by Jordanians and Palestinians who were studying at the region's higher-education institutions. The second wave of HT expansion began in 1992 but took off in earnest in 1995, when a Jordanian named Salahuddin brought HT's literature to the Ferghana Valley and disseminated it among the ethnic Uzbek population. While HT is still most active in the Ferghana Valley, over the last decade it has successfully spread to the rest of Uzbekistan and to all other Central Asian countries.

The movement found many recruits following the February 1999 attacks in Tashkent, especially after the authorities in Uzbekistan wrongly accused HT of participating in the explosions. (This charge was later retracted.) In order to respond to the government's accusations, Hizb ut-Tahrir published its first leaflet about Uzbekistan in April 1999. The group then began to regularly issue leaflets, at times releasing over 100,000 copies of each leaflet twice monthly.

As a result of the repressive methods used by the authorities, many HT members have left Uzbekistan since early 2000, and have moved to more open Central Asian states, thus becoming excellent missionaries for the movement. At first, many settled in the ethnic Uzbek regions of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and through person-to-person contact were able to win people over to HT's cause. Over time, non-ethnic Uzbeks have also joined the movement; today, even ethnic Russians and Koreans are found among arrested HT members. Geographically, the group also broadened its scope: While it initially confined its operations to northern Tajikistan, the Osh area of Kyrgyzstan, and the southern areas of Kazakhstan (all areas with large Uzbek populations), it has since expanded. Within the last year, Hizb ut-Tahrir members have been arrested in northern Kazakhstan, the Bishkek area of Kyrgyzstan, and in the Tajikistani capital of Dushanbe—areas that are neither near the Uzbekistani border, nor known for significant Uzbek minority populations.

The precise number of Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Central Asia today is difficult to estimate. In general, like other Islamist movements, HT has been less successful in recruiting the traditionally less-religious, nomadic peoples (for instance, the Turkmen and the Kazakhs), and more successful among the more settled Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik peoples. It is therefore not surprising that as of early 2005, HT is numerically strongest in Uzbekistan, with estimates ranging from 7,000 up to 60,000 members. There are 3,000–5,000 members in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The number is much smaller in Kazakhstan, where there are estimated to be no more than 300 HT members. HT has also yet to establish a noticeable presence in Turkmenistan. As recent arrests indicate, support for HT is growing throughout the region, including among teachers, military officers, politicians (especially those whose relatives have been arrested), and other members of the elite. Given that HT aims to penetrate political power centers as a method of obtaining power, even several hundred recruits in the right places can make a significant difference.

The pattern of HT's activity—whether in terms distribution of materials or in approaches to recruitment—does not vary significantly from country to country within Central Asia. HT first begins its recruitment drive by approaching individuals most likely to embrace radical Islam, communicating and establishing links with them, and disseminating propaganda literature translated into local languages. HT distributes party literature, including its publication, *Al-Waie*, all across the region. For Central Asian target audiences, leaflets are convenient propaganda tools as they can be printed locally and distributed easily. This is especially true in regions where Internet access is limited or nonexistent. Local HT branches download materials from the

group's principal website and disseminate them after translation into local languages.

The implementation of HT's three-stage method can easily be seen in Central Asia. During the first stage (early 1993–February 1999), the group mainly engaged in religious and socio-economic propaganda activities to recruit new members. These new members were organized into self-reliant groups of three to seven people, called *halkas*. These and other members were ordered to bring all their family members, including females, into the organization. The second stage (February 1999–April 2003) followed the terrorist attacks in Tashkent. HT began to fill its ranks with new members, using open agitation and propaganda methods such as the distribution of leaflets in public places (all over Central Asia), and the organization of mass picketing at buildings of government agencies (mainly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). Under the leadership of Abu Rashta, HT has now entered the third stage, during which it will attempt to overthrow governments.

There is little confirmed information about the HT leadership in Central Asia. According to Central Asian government sources, after 9/11 HT leadership decided that members in the CIS countries should carry out a propaganda campaign in support of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, due to the shared ultimate goal of recreating the Caliphate.

In light of the recent events in Andijan, which will be described in more detail below, it is interesting to note that Abdurashid Kasymov, whom the Uzbek government had long claimed was the HT leader in Uzbekistan from 1990 to 1996, as well as the alleged current HT leader, Abdurakhim Tukhtasinov, are both said to be natives of the city.

Akramiylar

The movement's name comes from its leader, Akram Yuldashev. However, this name is not used by members themselves, who call each other "brothers." Yuldashev is believed to have been a member of HT from 1986–88, before leaving due to a disagreement.⁸ He is also believed to be profoundly influenced by al-Nabhani, and in 1996 founded Akramiylar in his native Andijan region, preaching widely among the youth of the area. He was first arrested in 1998, and charged with possession of narcotics. He received amnesty later that year, but after the bomb attacks in February 1999, was re-arrested and sentenced to 17 years in prison.

In 1992, Yuldashev wrote a theological pamphlet in Uzbek titled "Yimonga Yul" (The Path to Faith), which aims to call people to Islam.⁹ According to Uzbek scholar Bakhtior Babajanov, there is a supplement to this more philo-

sophical piece, in which Yuldashev outlines a five-stage process to establish an Islamic leadership. Those few analysts who have read the supplement believe that Akramiylar shares HT's conspiratorial methodology and its multi-stage process for achieving the ultimate objective of the Caliphate. The aim of Akramiylar is to gather enough strength to greatly influence the regional authorities, if not to control them directly. With this aim in mind, Akramiylar promotes a simplified version of Islam, in order to maximize its potential support base. For this reason, the group tolerates cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption and temporary marriages. However, its structure is communal and cult-like, and members have limited exposure to outsiders.

Akramiylar seems to have been rather successful in developing a following by delivering on socio-economic promises that the Uzbek government has been unable to deliver: jobs and money. Wealthier followers set up small businesses such as bakeries, cafeterias, or shoe factories, in which they employ young males who are then required to attend study groups after work. The owners of these businesses contribute about a fifth of their profits to a fund, which then assists poorer members of the group. This is one of the most successful examples of the bottom-up approach of pro-Islamic social engineering.

Hizb un-Nusrat

Hizb un-Nusrat (the Party of Assistance) was founded by a group of HT members in Tashkent, in 1999. Its current leader and founder is believed to be Mirzazhanov Sharipzhon Atoyevich. Like HT, this group is fundamentally clandestine in nature, and prospective members must undergo six months of training in *The System of Islam*, HT's guidebook. Members are also required to donate money to the party's communal fund. Unlike HT, however, this group does not spread propaganda among the general public. Instead, it only recruits those whose backgrounds are first investigated. The group is thus mainly comprised of former members of other Islamic fringe groups, and those accused by the Uzbekistani government of engagement in radical Islamic activities. Its supporters also include HT sympathizers who fear public exposure.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The IMU was formed in 1992 by Tahir Yuldashev, an underground Islamic cleric who operated out of the Otavaliyon mosque, in the Namangan region of Uzbekistan. Yuldashev's views were shaped by extensive travel to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, where he was influenced by Wah-

habism and Deobandism. His radical message spread throughout the network of mosques and *madrassas* in the Ferghana Valley. With the help of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Harakat ul Ansar and al-Jihad, Yuldashev unified the four radical Islamist groups mentioned above (Adolat and Islam Laskarlari, both of which he led, as well as Barak and Tauba), under the framework of the IMU. At first, all four groups consisted of only a few hundred members, but in the absence of decisive action by the Uzbekistani government, they were able to disseminate their propaganda in the Ferghana Valley and recruit many more followers.

Yuldashev's ally, Juma Khodjiev Namangani became the military commander of the IMU. Along with the Saudi-trained militant, Abdul Ahad, Namangani was Yuldashev's main supporter.¹⁰ By 1998, there were reports of hundreds of Uzbek *mujaheddin* training in and operating between, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—taking advantage of Tajikistan's civil war and Uzbekistan's battle with the Islamists.

The first instance of IMU violence occurred in August 1999, when Namangani and his associates abducted Japanese geologists, along with Kyrgyzstani government officials and military personnel, near Osh, Kyrgyzstan, thus expanding its activity to a third country. The IMU was also believed to be launching carefully orchestrated attacks against Uzbekistan from neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, most notably the 1999 Tashkent bombings. Soon thereafter, when Namangani declared his aim to seize the region by force, thousands of refugees fled the Ferghana Valley. Namangani then headed for Afghanistan where, with the permission of the Taliban, he established an IMU training camp. Militants from all over the Ferghana Valley began to flock to the camp to receive instruction in terrorist tactics, under the guidance of the Taliban. In the only interview he has ever given, Yuldashev declared, "The goal of IMU activities is the creation of an Islamic State. We declared a jihad in order to create a religious system and government. We want the model of Islam which is nothing like in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia."¹¹

In late 2001, the IMU joined forces with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against U.S.-led forces during the Afghanistan campaign. After suffering grave losses (including the death of Namangani in Afghanistan), some IMU fighters fled to South Waziristan (a region divided by the Pakistan-Afghanistan border), along with other jihadists who also escaped U.S. entrapment at Tora Bora. On orders from Bin Laden, IMU militants have taken control of South Waziristan, with Yuldashev in command of military activities. Since the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU's infrastructure and man-

power has been significantly weakened, but today there are approximately 150 IMU militants who still have the capacity to fight.

Yuldashev, his son-in-law and chief lieutenant Dilshod Hodzhiev (who is believed to be in charge of IMU finances), and Ulugbek Kholikov, alias Muhammad Ajub (who is believed to head the IMU's military section) are reportedly hiding in Wana, Pakistan. Yuldashev is thought to be in negotiations with other international terrorist organizations and illegal arms traffickers in order to purchase Russian-manufactured "Igla" portable anti-aircraft missile launchers to use against American targets in Afghanistan. According to the most recent intelligence reports, he may already have acquired them.

HT and the IMU do not have a formal alliance—after all, it runs contrary to HT's interests to be directly associated with a terrorist group—but the two organizations share a similar ideological foundation. Some also assert that HT "delivers" staff for the IMU. The main difference between the two groups is one of focus: The IMU openly advocates and carries out militant operations, while HT concentrates on the ideological battle. The two nonetheless admit to the closeness of their goals, and both are propelled closer to the achievement of their ends by state failure.

The United States State Department originally designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in September 2000. It was designated a second time as a terrorist organization in September 2002, and once again in September 2004. The statement in 2004 noted "Islamic Jihad" to be an alias for the IMU. (See below for more on Islamic Jihad.)

Tabligh Jamaat (TJ)

TJ was established in India in the 1920s by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas as a direct response to Hindu proselytizing. The group claims to follow the Prophet's *sunna* (way of life), which to Tabligh members means wearing long beards, robes, and leather shoes to replicate the Prophet's dress; the group firmly believes in outwardly showing that one is Muslim. Members are also required to conduct "Tabligh," that is, to try and convert others to Islam, on a regular basis. They each devote a certain amount of time to this *dawa* ("cause"), which, depending on the individual, could be one hour per day, one day per week, one week per month, or one month per year. Members can spend this time camping in small groups in order to preach "the Prophet's way" in mosques. In Central Asia, they also preach in bazaars.

Often, local young men in search of an identity join the group for a few days or even for a few weeks. While the group does not involve itself in politics (and has been criticized by radical Islamists for being apolitical), over

time Tabligh has become an international movement, active mostly in South and Central Asia.

TJ has also succeeded in introducing Islamic networks to Europe and the U.S., and often functions in parallel to the Wahhabi Muslim World League. In recent years, like many other Islamic movements, TJ has also become radicalized. Consequently, those who learn about Islam via the TJ are today at risk of supporting or joining terrorist groups. The group has been accused of having indoctrinated its followers to fight for the Taliban and Al Qaeda. TJ came to the attention of US terrorism experts after it became known that American Muslim terrorist John Walker Lindh was inspired to go to Afghanistan after first traveling to Pakistan with Tabligh.

TJ can also be easily infiltrated by terrorists. Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups are believed to have used TJ as their cover to travel and smuggle operatives across borders; because the group is apolitical, TJ's members can fairly easily travel between countries. Other terrorist groups may have used the movement as a recruitment pool; its failure to discuss politics leaves room for others to provide a political message.

Today, TJ has offices and schools in Canada and the UK—though its main centers are on the Indian subcontinent. Its principal mosque and spiritual center is at Basti Nizamuddin, in New Delhi, while another major facility is located in the village of Raiwind, outside Lahore, Pakistan. Its annual gatherings in India and Pakistan attract hundreds of thousands. TJ annually holds a summit in Raiwind with over a million people; it is the largest Muslim gathering in the world after the annual *hajj* to Mecca.

In Central Asia, TJ is currently most active in the Ferghana Valley, especially in Andjian. Following their arrest in the summer of 2004, 14 members of TJ have been sent to prison. The government of Uzbekistan has accused them of organizing an extremist radical group in 1998, with the purpose of establishing an Islamic state in the country. In their defense, the Tabligh members claimed that they were apolitical, and devoted themselves solely to reading the Quran and the hadiths. As they explained, violence was unnecessary to the establishment of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, since it can be achieved by proselytizing.

The Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA)

Central Asian governments believe that in 2002 the region's Islamic radicals decided to unite in a framework of a new underground organization called the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), which would bring together the IMU, Kyrgyz and Tajik radicals, and Uighur separatists from China, whose East Turkestan Islamic Movement had recently broadened to

include Afghans, Chechens, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Kazakhs who share its new goal of forming an Islamic state in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstani authorities believe that the IMCA was indeed formed in 2003, with the immediate goal of creating a Caliphate in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, while reserving expansion to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northwest China for a second stage. The headquarters of IMCA, which is led by Yuldashev, are believed to be located in Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan province. This unified, militant Islamic force seeks to destabilize Central Asian governments by attacking American and Israeli targets. The main insurgent targets are the American bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the embassies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

While many other radical Islamist organizations have mushroomed in the region over the last two years, they can all be considered, in one way or another, to be under the IMCA umbrella and will be treated as such in the section below.

Recent Developments

In light of Central Asian governments' inability to deal with corruption, poverty, injustice and basic governance issues more than ten years after independence, it is not surprising that the well-organized and focused ideological work of HT is producing results. Following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, the Islamists seem to have decided it is also time for them to rise.

In fact, since the spring of 2004, radical Islamist and terrorist activity in Central Asia has increased markedly. In 2004, Uzbekistan was hit by two waves of terrorist attacks. Between March 28 and March 31, 2004, there were four straight days of explosions, bombings, and assaults in Tashkent and Bukhara—including the region's first ever female suicide bombings. The attacks, which caused 47 fatalities in total, were aimed primarily at police and Uzbek private and commercial facilities. A second attack, on the American and Israeli embassies as well as the prosecutor general's office, took place on July 30, killing seven.

The scale and level of preparation for these attacks indicated that support was received from outside Uzbekistan. The country's chief prosecutor alleged that all 85 individuals (including 17 women) arrested had been trained as suicide bombers. Uzbekistani authorities believe that female suicide attackers are trained in Pakistan, possibly by an Uzbek woman. In the home of one suspect, authorities also found computer files detailing information on certain terrorist training camps located in Pakistan and Kazakhstan; these camps

were administered by Arab instructors who were themselves taught by al-Qaeda. Other suspects reportedly testified that they had come to Uzbekistan via Iran and Azerbaijan, in order to target police stations and prisons. They are also believed to have revealed plans to attack embassies and the offices of Western organizations.

Uzbekistani authorities labeled the attackers as “Jamaat” members and accused them of being influenced by HT’s ideology and by the radicalism of the IMCA. The name was very confusing at first, as “Jamaat” simply means community or society, and members of various radical Islamist movements have “Jamaat” as part of their name. The two principal groups are the Tabligh Jamaat (TJ) and the Jamaat Tabligh (JT). Another, less central group is the “Jamaat of Central Asian Mujaheddin,” which was also accused of involvement in the 2004 Tashkent attacks. Over two dozen of this group’s members were arrested in Kazakhstan in November 2004, and are currently on trial. According to Kazakh government sources, this group is also tied to al-Qaeda and trains women suicide bombers. It is also active in Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Uzbekistan.

Yet another group, the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), released a statement claiming responsibility for the Uzbek attacks, which was followed by a May 2005 State Department designation of “the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG) also known as Jama’at al-Jihad, also known as the Libyan Society, also known as the Kazakh Jama’at, also known as the Jamaat Mojahedin, also known as the Jamiyat, also known as Jamiat al-Jihad al-Islami, also known as Dzhamaat Modzhakhedov, also known as Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan, also known as al-Djihad al-Islami” as a terrorist organization. This designation gives one an idea of the proliferation of names by which some organizations are known. However, one must also note that the number of groups is sometimes inflated as a ruse, to make it seem as though more exist than actually do.

In the State Department’s statement, IJG is described as a splinter of the IMU, and is held responsible for the July 30, 2004 “coordinated bombing attacks in Tashkent, against the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, and the office of the Uzbek Prosecutor General, killing at least two people and wounding nine.” The statement further added that the IJG “continues to target Americans and U.S. facilities overseas and is a dangerous threat to U.S. interests.”

The statement went on to provide further information: “After an explosion at a safe-house in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, IJG suicide bombers attacked a popular bazaar and other locations in Tashkent in March and April 2004, resulting in the deaths of more than a dozen police officers and innocent bystanders and dozens of injuries. The attackers in the March and April 2004

attacks, some of whom were female suicide bombers, targeted the local government offices of the Uzbekistani and Bukhara police, killing approximately 47 people, including 33 terrorists. These attacks marked the first use of female suicide bombers in Central Asia...Those arrested in connection with the attacks in Bukhara have testified to the close ties between the IJG leaders and Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. Kazakhstani authorities have declared that IJG members were taught by al-Qaida instructors to handle explosives and to organize intelligence work and subversive activities. Kazakhstan has arrested several IJG members and put them on trial.”

The Kyrgyz Revolution

Following the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, opposition forces in Kyrgyzstan overthrew their government in March 2005. Unlike the Georgians and the Ukrainians, however, the Kyrgyz opposition used violence, and in the post-revolutionary period failed to bring stability and order to the country. There is now a serious risk that if the new government does not establish democratic order and address popular needs, HT and others will take advantage of people’s disappointment with secular politics.

While the picture of Islamist activity in the Kyrgyz revolution is not yet fully clear, it is known that, for some time, Islamist groups have identified the Central Asian country as the weakest and easiest to destabilize. Already in October 2004, the US State Department issued a travel advisory for Kyrgyzstan, stating that “Extremist groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a terrorist organization with links to Al Qaeda, may be planning terrorist acts targeting US government facilities, Americans, or American interests”

In November 2004, in Jalal-Abad, where some of the strongest anti-government protests took place in March 2005, HT reportedly collected some 20,000 signatures on a petition calling for more Islamic instruction in schools and segregation of sexes. In the February 2005 parliamentary elections, candidates who supported this view received backing from HT.¹² While there was almost no overt Islamist activity during the revolution, the events began and gained momentum in the southern part of the country, which is where HT and other groups have, for several years, been urging people to rise against poverty, corruption and injustice—all of which were blamed on the government.

The March 24 revolution ushered in a period of chaos, with the new government unable to control the country’s borders or to bring about internal stability. This chaotic situation is of course a perfect opportunity for the Is-

lamists, especially since there is a US military base in Kyrgyzstan. The State Department warned on April 29, 2005 that “terrorist groups in Central Asia may be planning terrorist attacks in the region, possibly against US Government facilities, Americans or American interests...Elements and supporters of extremist groups present in Central Asia, including the Islamic Jihad Group, Al-Qaeda, the IMU, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, have expressed anti-US sentiments in the past and have the capability to conduct terrorist operations in multiple countries.” It is clear that Kyrgyzstan will remain a major target in the coming months.

The Provocation and Massacre in Uzbekistan

The next big event of lasting importance to the region took place in Andijan in May 2005. Andijan is close to Osh, where the Kyrgyz uprising began, and also to Namangan, where Wahhabis are strong. In many ways, Andijan is the heart of Ferghana Valley, which itself is the heart of Central Asia. The conclusion is simple: If Islamists take advantage of the instability in Andijan, then they can easily reach out to the rest of Central Asia.

As Akram Yuldashev realized, Andijan is also the first stop along the path to power in Uzbekistan. With a population of 26 million, nearly 90 percent of which is Muslim, and with its central geographic location, Uzbekistan can influence events all across Central Asia, as well as in Afghanistan and Pakistan. 300,000 ethnic Uzbeks live in Kazakhstan, and Uzbeks constitute 9.2 percent of the population of Turkmenistan, 12.9 percent of Kyrgyzstan, and 25 percent of Tajikistan. There are also significant minority populations within Uzbekistan; for example, more than 2 million Tajiks live in Bukhara. Uzbekistan is also a prize for Islamists due to its historic and cultural position in the Islamic world, and is becoming an increasingly easy target, since its government has not provided its citizens with the most basic requirements of life, such as jobs and education.

On June 23, 2004, 23 businessmen and followers of Akramiya were arrested. Their trial began in February 2005. Peaceful demonstrations in support of these businessmen took place for several weeks. All of the 23 arrested were trying to establish an alternative social system, as described above. Akramiya organized the uprising in a very carefully planned way: the accused businessmen promised to pay staff a full day’s salary if they attended the protests. Moreover, these businessmen’s relatives organized transport for others to come from other regions.¹³ The protesters were orderly and asking merely for “justice” for their relatives and friends. By May 12th, the presumed final week of the trial, there were already several thousand peaceful demonstrators.

That night, the Uzbek government arrested some demonstrators. This arrest marked the start of the uprising. On the morning of May 13, armed militants first seized a police station, then a military base, then a local prison, collecting weaponry in each place and killing the officials along the way. Negotiations between the government and the militants broke down, in part because the release of Akram Yuldashev was the latter's main demand of the insurgents. Expecting a harsh reaction from the government, the insurgents then formed human shields with women and children. While it is yet to be determined who shot first, by the end of the day, the government had killed several hundred civilians.

Looking Ahead

As of July 2005, the number of dead was still contested. OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) report estimated between 300-500 people may have been killed. The Uzbek government, however, announced that 176 people were killed—79 militants, 31 security officials and 45 civilians.

The real number of dead seems almost irrelevant now, as groups like HT have yet again won the information war. While the insurgency was an attempted coup d'état, international media have very little coverage of the armed insurgents' acts, but instead framed the story as the massacre of innocent civilians, à la Tiananmen Square. While many in the West condemned Uzbek President Islam Karimov, leaders from the Muslim world either remained silent, or, in the case of the Great Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, focused on the threat of a radical takeover. He reportedly stated that the methods and tactics used by Andijan extremists resemble acts of terrorism in Egypt in 1974, when commandos of Salah Sirriya, the former chief of the military wing of the Hizb ut-Tahrir division in Egypt, attacked the military technology institute in an effort to obtain enough weaponry for a coup.¹⁴

Russian government officials have publicly supported the Uzbek government, and declared that foreign groups wanting to overthrow the government planned the uprising. On June 4th foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, "we have data showing that various extremist groups may have been involved, among them the Taliban and Chechen terrorists, who, and we do know this, periodically meet with the Taliban on the territory of Afghanistan." Russia also backed the government's claims that about 50 foreigners were detained or killed. It also noted the ideological similarities with Chechen terrorist groups, citing the posting on a Chechen website of the IJG's call for jihad.

They also noted that the tactics which the militants used in Andijan were similar to the tactics used in Budenovsk and Pervomaysk. Moreover, they mentioned that women and children were used as human shields in Beslan and the Moscow [Dubrovka] theatre siege.

Following his meeting with Putin, in Moscow, Karimov said that the attacks were planned from abroad, by mercenaries who “were trained at military training camps...We have enough facts to prove that the operation was prepared several months and perhaps several years in advance from outside Uzbekistan.”¹⁵ Putin backed Karimov and even added that Russians had information that militants were crossing from Afghanistan into Central Asia before the Andijan uprising.

Today, Uzbekistan has become a major source of instability for the whole region. Around 500 Uzbek refugees fled to Kyrgyzstan; If there is another major clash, more are expected to flee, including to Kazakhstan. As mentioned above, there are many ethnic Uzbeks in the other Central Asian states, which is an additional source of tension.

Over the last several months, there have been numerous reports of Uzbek militants trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan going back to Uzbekistan. The militants are using networks of terrorists as well as Islamist sympathizers to cross borders, traveling either via Tajikistan or Iran. Former IMU members have identified Mashhad, Iran’s second largest city, as the transit center for Uzbek militants.¹⁶

The US has authorized the departure from Uzbekistan of its non-essential personnel as “the United States Government has received information that terrorist groups are planning attacks, possibly against US interests, in Uzbekistan in the very near future.” After the American announcement in June, Israel also evacuated all non-essential staff from its embassy in Tashkent.

It is too early to tell if Central Asia has entered a major chaotic period, during which terrorists and radical Islamists decide that the time has come for an all-out struggle. Yet, the recent increase in attacks in Afghanistan, ongoing instability in Pakistan and Iraq, the inability of Western countries to deal with the ideological element of this war, and the failure of the region’s governments to meet their citizens’ basic socio-economic needs, all indicate that the chance of success for groups like HT, IMCA and others is increasing with each passing month.

NOTES

- 1 Material in this article draws in part on the author's *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam's Political Insurgency* (Washington, D.C.: The Nixon Center, December 2004).
- 2 Bakhtiyar Babdjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, *Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892–1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan* (n.p., n.d.) p. 200.
- 3 Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation Between Traditional and Extremist Islam in Central Asia", (presentation at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).
- 4 Ahmed Rashid, "Reviving the Caliphate", in *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 119.
- 5 "Weak and Discredited Uzbek Regime Fails to Malign Hizb ut-Tahrir", August 10, 2004. http://www.1924.org/press/pressreleases/index.php?id=1337_0_28.
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- 7 Michael Whine, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Open Societies", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004).
- 8 Saidjahon Zainabidinov, "Community of "Akromiya"—tendentious art of Uzbek special services and political scientists," April 5, 2005 <http://Ferghana.Ru>
- 9 "Yimyonga Yul" (translated into Russian as "Put' k Istinye"), www.centrasia.ru, August 25, 2004.
- 10 A. Abduvakhitov, "Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation"
- 11 Marina L. Pikulina, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Organization and Financing" (paper distributed at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).
- 12 Kathy Gannon, "Islamists See Opening in C. Asia Chaos," Associated Press, March 24, 2005.
- 13 Igor Rotar, Forum 18 News Service, "Uzbekistan: What is known about Akramia and the uprising?" 16 June 2005.
- 14 "Cairo Sheikh: Extremists Act in Andijan Like Terrorists in Egypt in the 1970s," RIA Novosti, Moscow, May 27, 2005. .
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- 16 Kathy Gannon, "Uzbeks find their way home through network of terrorist trails," Associated Press, June 12, 2005.

A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi

NIBRAS KAZIMI

IN LATE JUNE, THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT THOUGHT they had a good thing going in the war against terror: they intended to release Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi and have him express his views to the press. Maqdisi was the spiritual and ideological mentor of Abu Musaab Al-Zarqawi, as well as a whole generation of those who call themselves Salafi Jihadists. The Jordanians thought that a public ideological rift between Maqdisi and Zarqawi would be broadcast to the whole jihadi world and shake it to its foundations—but they were mistaken.

Maqdisi had been an ideological pioneer for radical Islam: it was he who laid the theological foundation for the concept of *al-wala' wel-bara'* (*loyalty and renunciation*). He was also the first prominent Islamist scholar to brand the House of Saud as unbelievers, and to hold forth that the adoption of democracy is tantamount to apostasy. But while in prison over the last couple of years, Maqdisi had taken issue with some of the tactics employed by Zarqawi in Iraq, such as the excessive use of suicide bombers and the targeting of Shias, and was counseling moderation.

It was thought that re-introducing Maqdisi into the picture as a more moderate foil to Zarqawi would cause confusion and spiritual drift within the camp of the fundamentalist insurgents fighting in Iraq. After all, Maqdisi is the more learned of the two, and was throughout Zarqawi's formative years in Afghanistan, as well as in the brief prison stint they shared in Jordan, the acknowledged ideological figurehead of Salafi-Jihadism. Surely, the reasoning went, Maqdisi will set the tone and re-assert his dominance by putting the upstart Zarqawi in his place, but everyone had underestimated the rapid morphing of radical Islam.

Today, something new has emerged as the cutting-edge, hardcore version of jihad, and Zarqawi is its master. It is a sign that even the most radical notions of Salafi-Jihadism are entering new, uncharted ideological territory.

The back-and-forth between the two men painted Maqdisi as an armchair, bookish fatwa wonk, while Zarqawi emerged as the man who tests theory in

real time and in a real war. All that Zarqawi needs to justify jihad as he sees it is his own literal and selective interpretation of the Koran, since he does not have the luxury of getting entangled in opaque scholarly obfuscations; he has thus carried the theological debate into a simpler, more murderous realm.

In an odd twist of events, Zarqawi—who was a virtual nobody in jihadist circles two years ago—has surfaced as the leading ideologue of jihad. His ideas are not even faintly rooted in Islamic reasoning and precedent, but rather sketched-out in battlefield-mandated rationale. One notable innovation of his that deviates from what was known before is the concept of unselective targeting of Shia civilians, which is a precursor to policies of mass murder.

This paper aims to give a cursory overview of Maqdisi's prolific writings and ideological path that apparently began with a strong influence from Ju-haiman Al-'Uteibi's organization. It is a trajectory that is very different from neo-Salafist trend influenced by Seyyid Qutub's later writings, and Saudi Arabia's neo-Wahhabism of the late 1980s and early 90s. Understanding the current concepts driving Zarqawi must be inferred from his former tutor; Maqdisi's life and ideas deserve further study.

Who Is Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi?

Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi speaks for himself in an interview with Nida' Al-Islam magazine in 1997:

I am your brother Abu Muhammed 'Issam or 'Assim (this is more preferable to me) son of Muhammed son of Taher Al-Barqawi by birth, Al-Maqdisi by reputation, Al-'Uteibi by origin.

Muhammed is the eldest of my sons and he is 12 years old and I am known by his name [Abu Muhammed], and I have two other sons, 'Umar and 'Ibrahim, and a daughter too. Al-Maqdisi is the name I have come to be renowned by in the beginning of my preaching and writing and it has stuck to me, and it is an honorific relation to the Bayt Al-Maqdis [Jerusalem] that is nearby to my birthplace which is the village of Barqa, in the environ of Nablus...I was born there is 1378 AH which corresponds to the year 1959 AD¹, and I left after three or fours years with my family to Kuwait where I stayed until I completed my secondary education...And it was my wish at the time to study shari'a in the Islamic University in Medina...But I went to study science in the University of Mosul in Northern Iraq according to the wishes of my father.

This was the period of finding my path...I participated and communicated with different movements and groups, some of which were reformist offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood. I also communicated with the Salafists for a while, and with a section of Juhaiman's [Juhaiman Al-'Uteibi] group for another lengthier while, and visited with some of the leading lights and sheikhs of the Qutbiyeen [Seyyid Qutub's followers]...and some other jihadi trends...And from most of these I had kindly brothers and teachers whose aid I will not begrudge them, especially since it was the beginning of my path and seeking...Even though I contradicted them on matters that I was clear with them about."²

The influence of Juhaiman bin Muhammed Al-'Uteibi³ seems to have made the most profound mark on the early formulation of Maqdisi's outlook. Maqdisi was connected to 'Uteibi's network through Abdel-Latif Al-Derbas (Abu Haza'a), a Kuwaiti national who had been involved in the Mecca uprising and spent several years in a Saudi prison before his release and return to Kuwait. Maqdisi and Derbas were married to two sisters.⁴ The extent of 'Uteibi's influence can be gauged from what is considered Maqdisi's groundbreaking book, *Millet 'Ibrahim wa da'awet al-anbiya' wel murseleen (The Sect of Abraham and the Preaching of the Prophets and the Deliverers)*,⁵ which is an exegesis and expansion on the theme of the first chapter of what is believed to 'Uteibi's last letter, "Raf'a al-'iltibas 'an millet men ja'alahu Allahu 'imamen 'ala al-nas" ("Removing the Confusion over the Sect of He Whom God Has Made a Leader Unto the People").⁶ According to Maqdisi, the foundation stone for the concept of *al-wala' wel bara'* (*loyalty and renunciation*), is the following verse in the Koran (Sura: Al-Mumtehana: 4):

You had an admirable example in 'Ibrahim [Abraham] and who was with him for they said to their nation we renounce you and what you pray to in lieu of God, we brand you unbelievers, and enmity and hatred is apparent between us and you forever until you believe in God alone.⁷

The concept of *al-wala' wel bara'* (adopted later by al-Qaeda⁸) as defined by Maqdisi was an essential tenet of the Islamic faith that revolved around a clear and unambiguous renunciation of anyone and any state that does not rule through the laws of sharia, or that introduces legal elements from beyond the realm of sharia in administering the public and private lives of Muslims. Whereas 'Uteibi was opaque and muddled in making the case, Maqdisi takes the matter further in *Millet Ibrahim* by putting such regimes and governments that do not rule through shari'a in the damned station of the unbelievers: the

kufr. Maqdisi makes the case that it is inherent upon all Muslims to vocally state, and thence act upon, their renunciation of the unbelievers.⁹ In a sense, Maqdisi was the pioneer of this concept, that has since come to dominate radical Islamist thinking and he is recognized as its leading ideologue. At this point the ideology is given a name by observers: Salafi Jihadism.¹⁰

Interestingly, Maqdisi only mentions 'Uteibi once in *Millet Ibrahim*: He credits him with being on the right path but uses him to denounce the Saudi authorities that had banned his writing even before his uprising. Maqdisi questions why the authorities feared 'Uteibi's writing even though he had not branded them as unbelievers.

After *Millet Ibrahim*, Maqdisi's largest early treatise was *Idad al-qadeh al-fawaris bi hajr fesad al-madaris* (*Preparing Courageous Leaders by Leaving the Corruption of Schools*) which he wrote in Kuwait.¹¹ By drawing on the curricula and activities of schools in Kuwait, he argues that state schools corrupt the youth and are thus inherently un-Islamic. He counsels home schooling and apparently applied his theory on his own children.¹²

Keeping track of Maqdisi's travels in the late 1980s and early 1990s is hard to pin down. He traveled widely between Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. During a six month stay in 1989 in Afghanistan, Maqdisi further focused his ideas by extrapolating the concept of *al-wala' wel bara'* to prove that the Saudi royal family and government should be branded as unbelievers.¹³ The book he produced, *Al-kawashif al-jaliyyeh fi kufr al-aawleh al-Saudiyyeh* (*The Illuminating Evidence of the Kufr of the Saudi State*), was considered too radical by Osama bin Laden at the time, and was not disseminated by al-Qaeda even during the late 1990s.^{14 15} In this book, Maqdisi claims that he is "a true Sunni Arab from Najd," probably drawing on his 'Uteiba tribal origin. He clearly revels in this connection by starting the book with an anecdote related by an elderly Saudi about one of the chief Ikhwan leaders in 1920s, Sultan bin Nejad, the head of the 'Uteiba tribe, who at the time was being attacked by 'Ibn Saud. He relates a quote from the tribal chief that "if [the Ikhwan] are eradicated, then you will be mingling with crowds of Christians in the markets of Riyadh."

Maqdisi gives tribute to the founder of Wahhabism, Muhammed bin Abdel-Wahhab, and his descendants in the early two Saudi states, but then argues that the destruction of the Ikhwan was the marker point at which the House of Saud turned into unbelievers. His case is made on the plethora of non-shari'a based regulations that are in effect in the Saudi kingdom, and colorfully uses the letters of Sheikh Muhammed bin Ibrahim Aal-Al-Sheikh, former head mufti of the Kingdom, in the 1960s and 1970s to show how far the state had

deviated. He also argues that by the very act of allowing the sale of tobacco, receiving foreign diplomatic representations (especially ones with crosses on their national flags), or participating in the United Nations Charter and the like, then the Saudi regime had gone beyond the pale of Islam. This book is said to have inspired Abdel-Aziz Al-Ma'athem, the Saudi mastermind behind the attacks on the National Guard training headquarters in November 1995.¹⁶

One also finds in *Al-kawashif Al-jaliyyeh* a hint as to why Maqdisi parted ways with Juhayman Al-'Uteibi's group: The latter had claimed that the oath of allegiance given to the Saudi royal family was ungrounded in Islam since this allegiance can be only made to a member of the Quraish tribe, whereas Maqdisi was already veering towards renouncing the Saudi state as idolatrous.¹⁷

The Tutor and His Pupil

Maqdisi first met Ahmed Fadheel Nezzal Al-Khalayleh, better known as Abu Musa'ab Al-Zarqawi, in Peshawar, Pakistan, in the early 1990s.¹⁸ It was a brief introduction to what later became a very important relationship in both their lives. Maqdisi had relocated to the Palestinian refugee camp of Ruseifa near Zarqa (Al-Khalayleh's hometown, from which he derived the nom de guerre, Al-Zarqawi) in Jordan after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. After Zarqawi's return from Pakistan, the two met up again and began to work together in the summer of 1993, and called their organization "Tawhid wel Jihad."¹⁹

Although both Maqdisi and Zarqawi felt that their primary task was to proselytize the wayward youth of Zarqa and convert them to the notion of *al-wala' wel bara'*, there is evidence that they were planning for terrorist activities. Maqdisi possessed a sack full of hand grenades that he had brought from Kuwait hidden among his furniture, and handed them over to a group planning a raid on Israeli targets over the Jordanian border.^{20 21}

It was in this early period, and as a reaction to the Jordanian parliamentary elections underway at the time that Maqdisi authored a polemic entitled *Al-Deemoqratiyya Deen (Democracy is a Religion)*, in which he argued that turning to democracy constitutes the equivalent of conversion from Islam into another religion and hence is tantamount to apostasy.^{22 23} Again, this is a pioneering work whose arguments Zarqawi and al-Qaeda would later use to discredit the Iraqi elections of January 2005.

Zarqawi and Maqdisi were separately arrested in late March and early April 1994 by Jordanian authorities in light of what became known as the Baya'at Al-Imam Group, although Maqdisi denies that his organization had ever carried this name.^{24 25} They were tried, convicted and given life sentences.

About fourteen men were convicted in the Baya'at Al-Imam case. They initially spent their sentences in Jordan's Mukhaberat prison, mostly in solitary confinement. They were later shunted around individually to many state prisons around Jordan before being re-united in April 1995 in the Suwaqa prison.²⁶ There, the organizational model of Tawhed wel Jihad, with Maqdisi being the ideologue of the group while Zarqawi served as its 'operations' leader or emir, was replicated. Maqdisi argued that since Zarqawi was an East Bank Jordanian with strong tribal roots in the Bani Hassan tribe, then he would be in a better position to confront Jordanian authorities than someone with Palestinian origins like himself.²⁷ However, in the Al Jazeera interview, Maqdisi minimizes the importance of giving allegiance to Zarqawi at the time by saying it was only for the limited scope of regulating prison life.²⁸

The various prisons Maqdisi and his group were detained in contained an eclectic group of Islamist dissidents, and Maqdisi was busy at work arguing and refuting their ways of thinking, while Zarqawi provided the muscle and protection for such an ideological turf war in a confined space. A hint of such an encounter is evident in an updated introduction to *Millet Ibrahim*, where Maqdisi claims that he was accused by the Hizbul Tahrir as someone who is trying to reconcile with Jews and Christians because Maqdisi had chosen the Jewish prophet 'Ibrahim, or Abraham, as his spiritual guide.²⁹

These experiences of arguing with other currents of radical Islamic thought led Maqdisi to expand on an earlier treatise called *Ishba'a al-nadher fi kashf shubuhah Marji'et al-'asr* (*Exposing the Vagaries of Today's Marji'eh*).³⁰ A common vitriolic theme in Maqdisi's work begins to emerge after his first stint in prison, one of railing against the Marji'eh, or prevaricators, and "those who delay" action against the unbelievers. This line of thinking has also influenced authors sympathetic to al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia (Zarqawi's new organization since October 2004) to denounce neo-Salafist groups such as Muslim Clerics Association and the Iraqi Islamic Party (an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood) as Marji'eh.³¹ However, the pioneer of re-introducing the concept of Marji'eh and relating it to contemporary Salafist groups is Sheikh Safar Al-Hawali, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the topic.³²

After four years together in prison, Maqdisi and Zarqawi were released by royal pardon in March 1999 upon the ascension of King Abdullah II. They met briefly one last time after their release, before Zarqawi went off to refuge in Afghanistan under the Taliban.³³ Maqdisi was not in favor of his followers going off to jihad in Afghanistan, and lamented the loss of some of his more astute students. But in Zarqawi's case, Maqdisi felt that although he could be of some use in Jordan, he was not a critical element in proselytizing for Salafi-Jihadism.³⁴

The Rupture

After they had parted ways, Maqdisi found himself hauled back into prison on charges of inspiring terrorist activities against Jordanian targets in 2000, while Zarqawi was allowed by the Taliban to set up a training camp for Jordanian, Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese jihadists near Herat. Apparently at the time, Zarqawi was still true to his teacher and carried pronounced ideological differences with al-Qaeda's leadership. But that did not prevent them from hosting and supporting him in a bid to recruit more disciples from areas other than Egypt and the Persian Gulf, which was their forte.³⁵

Zarqawi's trajectory led him from Afghanistan to Northern Iraq and then, after the American invasion and toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, he became the leader of a nascent jihadist group called Al-Tawhid wel Jihad.³⁶

The first signs of rupture between Maqdisi and Zarqawi appeared in a letter titled "Al-Zarqawi, munaseha wa munasera" ("Al-Zarqawi: Advice and Support"), and in a simultaneously published booklet, *Waqafat me'a themerat al-jihad* (*An Appraisal of the Fruits of Jihad*) dated Rabi' Al-Thani 1425 AH (July 2004) and written in the Qefqefa prison.³⁷ This was Maqdisi's first critique of what he had been hearing of Zarqawi's tactics in Iraq. In the Al Jazeera interview, Maqdisi claims that he only wrote the two tracts after learning that Abu Anes As-Shami had been arrested.³⁸ Shami was one of Maqdisi's star pupils, and when he initially joined Zarqawi, Maqdisi felt relieved that the jihadist group would have an able theological arbiter to clarify thorny issues of religious legality. However, it seems that Shami was still alive and free when Maqdisi went public with his criticism, according to Zarqawi who wrote that he cannot forget the tears Shami shed when he saw the look of sadness upon Zarqawi's face while reading the text.³⁹

Zarqawi did not respond to the criticism at the time. However, Maqdisi's stinging disparagement might have contributed to Zarqawi changing tack and pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden in October 2004, and renaming his organization as al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. This response came almost a year later; after Maqdisi's release and subsequent publicizing of his disapproval of his former student during a very important interview with Al Jazeera.

The Back and Forth

On December 28, 2004, the Jordanian State Security Court found Maqdisi innocent of the charges leveled against him four years earlier.⁴⁰ He was released on June 28, 2005 and it was hoped by Jordanian authorities that a public rift between him and Zarqawi would dent the latter's leadership of the jihadists in Iraq.⁴¹

Shortly after his release, Maqdisi taped an interview with Al Jazeera that was aired on July 5, throughout which he re-iterates most of what he had written by way of earlier criticism and defends himself by saying that these ideas are not new and that they are enshrined in a lengthy treatise he had written earlier titled *Al-risaleh al-thalathiniyeh fi at-tahdheer min al-ghilow fi at-takfir* (*The Thirtieth Letter on Cautioning Against Excesses in Rendering the Verdict of Unbelief*).⁴²

Maqdisi's key point in the interview was:

My project is not to blow-up a bar, my project is not to blow-up a cinema, my project is not kill an officer who has tortured me...My project is to bring back to the Islamic Nation its glories and to establish the Islamic state that provides refuge to every Muslim, and this is a grand and large project that does not come by small vengeful acts. It requires the education of a Muslim generation, it requires long-term planning, it requires the participation of all the learned men and sons of this Islamic Nation, and since I do not have the resources for this project then I will not implicate my brothers...in a small material act that is wished for by the enemies of our nation to throw our youths behind prison bars...

...Every stage has its priorities, and at this stage I do not want Iraq or any other place to become a furnace for the sons of this movement...

...They may call these retractions or re-evaluations, let them call it what they may, this talk is not new for us and since when did we say otherwise? Since when did we speak of killing women and children? Since when did we speak of killing the laymen of the Shia? Since when did we say anything of the such?⁴³

Maqdisi criticizes overindulgence in employing suicide bombings against the 'enemy' and that such means should only be used under conditions of necessity. "I do not shut the door on these missions, but I also do not fling the door wide open," he says. Maqdisi puts suicide bombings in the category of 'exceptional' and not 'original' in the realm of jihad. He argues against taking one's life in the first place and cautions against collateral damage by drawing a *qiyas*, or analogy, that had been employed by previous Islamic scholars in taking the middle-ground on the issue of the *tirs*, or those who the enemy uses as human shields.⁴⁴

The issue of the *tirs* or *tatarrus* has become one of the most important points of contention among radical Islamists since Zarqawi issued his letter entitled

“Wa ‘aad ahfad Ibn Al-‘Alqemi” (“The Grandchildren of Ibn Al-‘Alqemi Have Returned”), which is a diatribe against the Shias of Iraq.⁴⁵ Zarqawi provides a variety of justifications for wholesale casualties caused by suicide operations by pointing out that the Shias are reprobates and that if their status as unbelievers is in dispute, then it is lawful to shed their blood by the analogy of the tirs, since the Shia—willingly or unwillingly—are in the way of targeting the ‘crusaders’.

On the question of the Shias, Maqdisi says that he is of the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya in not declaring Shia laypeople as unbelievers, and that “as [Ibn Taymiyya] says in his fatwa under the section of fighting the rebels that one should not equate [the Shia] with the Jews and the Christians as to how they are fought.”⁴⁶ Maqdisi warns that taking the campaign against the Shia even further would lead to *fitna*, or upheaval, among the Muslims and would deflect energy and attention from fighting the enemy. He goes on to say:

The expansion of the field of killing Shias and sanctioning the spilling of their blood is due to a fatwa that emerged during the Iraq-Iran War from under the hands of regime clerics in order to justify that war at the time when the regimes of the [Persian] Gulf were all standing behind Saddam.

There is no justification according to Maqdisi in targeting the mosques and holy places of the Shia, since “the laypeople of the Shia are like the laypeople of the Sunna, I don’t say 100%, but some of these laypeople only know how to pray and fast and do not know the details of [the Shia] sect.”

The Triumph of ‘Battlefield’ Logic over Theology

A few days after the Al Jazeera interview, Zarqawi’s response began floating around jihadist websites.⁴⁷ He hit back with a vengeance. Although maintaining a respectful tone towards his former tutor, he comes back to say that Maqdisi is essentially a relic of the past, and that he is now “a soldier of Osama bin Laden.” Zarqawi hints that Maqdisi is being used as a tool by the enemies of Islam who are “waging the largest crusader campaign of our times.” Feigning hurt and bewilderment, Zarqawi says that it is now clear to him after viewing the interview, and from the earlier letters, that the matter is beyond being a lapse of judgment on the part of his former ‘friend’. Zarqawi goes on to say that Maqdisi was but one of several early influences on his thinking. He said that he never sought to emulate a teacher and if that had been his goal, he would have found someone more learned than Maqdisi.

Whereas Maqdisi claimed ownership to the name Tawhid wel Jihad, and that Zarqawi had been a follower of his doctrine, Zarqawi admonishes Maq-

disi for claiming to have brought about a new doctrine when he had claimed all along to following in the footsteps of the salaf.

After re-affirming some examples of Shia reprobation, Zarqawi says:

He who knows their situation in Iraq would surely realize that they are no longer laypeople in the sense you put, for they have become soldiers for the unbeliever occupiers, and the eyes that watch the true mujahedeen, and would Ja'afari and Hakim and other reprobates have come into power had it not been for the votes of these lay-people?! And it is unjust to cite a fatwa from Ibn Taymiyyeh's era and have it apply to the reprobates today without judging the differences between the two eras, and then there are scholars who have spoken of lay Shias as unbelievers like Sheikh Hmoud Al-'Aqla' may he rest in peace, and Sheikh Suleiman Al-'Alwan and Sheikh Ali Al-Khudhair (may God set them free) and Sheikh Abi Abdullah Al-Muhajir and Sheikh Al-Rashoud may he rest in peace, and others.

Zarqawi makes a play at internal Iraqi sensibilities by saying that his targeting of the Shia is in response to their own provocations of the Sunnis and alliance with the 'crusaders,' and that in this sense they were the transgressors.

Zarqawi tells Maqdisi that "I can strongly repudiate many of the errors in the judgment you had rendered, but this strength and harshness I save for the enemies of [our] religion and not to my brothers." He tells him that the 'crusaders,' secularists, the Shias, the Islamic Party, and the Marji'eh are gladly distributing these criticisms against jihad. He also strongly rebukes Maqdisi for calling the jihad in Iraq a 'furnace' by citing Bin Laden's and Dhawahiri's support for what he claims is a patent victory in Iraq. Zarqawi tells him:

You should have waited until you got a more accurate sense of the reality we live with here, then you could chose whichever theological avenues you would like to advise [us] on, and we would employ what is worthy [of your opinions], and what is otherwise then we would point out to you our theological opinion and exercise our judgment according to the reality we live in and which you are ignorant of due to your distance from it.

The Final Tally

Maqdisi was re-arrested by Jordanian authorities on July 6. What was intended as a public rift between tutor and pupil became a very big embarrassment to the Jordanian government. Not only did Maqdisi not forcefully denounce Zarqawi, but the latter appeared as the 'hero' with battlefield

credentials.⁴⁸ A couple of hours after he was hauled back to prison, a statement attributed to Maqdisi was broadcast on the web and he had this to say:

[Zarqawi] is the beloved brother and hero that is seeking to defend the sanctities of [our] religion...Our mujahedeen brothers in Iraq have their own interpretations and choices that they choose as they see fit in the battlefield that we are distant from.⁴⁹

Maqdisi—once on the cutting edge of radicalism—has been upstaged by Zarqawi, a man with very little tolerance for the intricacies of theology and hence even less hesitant to employ the most murderous methods for the most murderous justifications.

However, the arguments made by Maqdisi may re-appear in the internal debate of radicalized Islam should Zarqawi, who is currently riding high on success in Iraq, begin to falter and fail. Critics would begin to point to Zarqawi's excessive methods for such an eventuality; resulting in an inability to gather more support from mainstream Muslims. Maqdisi might still provide the ideological heft to firm up such critiques.

But for the time being, one struggles to give a label to the new phenomenon of Zarqawi. Should we call it Salafi-Jihadism Plus? Or just plain-old Zarqawism?

NOTES

1 Saudi writer Mishari Al-Dhayedi, who had met Maqdisi in the early 1990s in Mecca, puts Maqdisi's year of birth as 1962. He also claims to have seen an earlier handwritten manuscript of Maqdisi's seminal book *Millet Ibrahim* as signed by "Abu Muhammed 'Issam bin Taher Al-Barqawi Al-Hafi Al-'Uteibi Al-Maqdisi", *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper (London), "Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi... Rihlet fikir...(Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...The Journey of a thought that sows radicalism and reaps blood)", Issue no. 9718, July 7, 2005.

2 *Nida' Al-Islam Magazine* (Unknown), "Hiwar ma'a al-Sheikh...Interview with imprisoned Sheikh Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi; a meeting from behind the prison bars of the apostates", *Jumada Al-Aakhira*, 1418 AH (October 1997 conducted in Jordan's Balqa prison).

3 Al-'Uteibi was the leader of the 'Ikhwan movement that took over the Ka'aba Mosque in Mecca through an armed uprising on November 20, 1979, and was later captured and executed, see Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic opposition*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000

4 *Asharq Al-Awsat*, "Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...rihlet fikir...". Dhayedi also claimed in an earlier article that Maqdisi became an underground member of a Kuwait-based offshoot of 'Uteibi's group, *Ahl Al-Hadeeth Al-Thawriyeen*, but does not re-state this claim in later articles, see *Asharq Al-Awsat* (London), "Shuyukh al-'unf katheeroon...(The Sheikhs of Violence are Plentiful, but Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi Remains the Most Important)", Issue no. 9178, January 14, 2004.

5 Available in Arabic from Maqdisi's official website, Al-Tawheed wel Jihad, www.tawhed.ws. Millet Ibrahim, according to an introduction to the book Maqdisi wrote several years later, started out as a hand-written chapter that was given out by him to some Algerian jihadists in Pakistan. The completed manuscript was dated 1405 AH (1984 AD).

6 From www.tawhed.ws, undated.

7 Author's translation.

8 See Al-Sheikh Al-'Imam Aymen Al-Dhawahiri, Al-wala' wel bara', 'aqeeda manqouleh wa waqi' mafqoud, (Loyalty and Renunciation: A Mandated Ideology and a Missing Reality), dated Shawwal 1423H (December 2002), from www.tawhed.ws

9 Maqdisi cites a hadith attributed to Ali bin Abi Taleb that he and the Prophet Muhammed had 'vandalized' the idols of the Ka'aba even during what is called the Meccan period of Muhammed's revelations. They acted under cover of the night and hid later in the alleyways of Mecca, according to the hadith. In a later introduction to Millet Ibrahim, Maqdisi writes that this hadith is the cornerstone of his book.

10 See article by Saud bin Saleh Al-Sarhan in Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Al-wala's wel bara', al-ideologiyeh al-jadideh...(Loyalty and Renunciation...The New Ideology of Islamist Movements)", Issue no. 9192, January 28, 2004. Al-Sarhan tries to debunk this line of thinking through the traditional establishmentarian argument of putting the proponents of al-wala wel bara' in the league of the Kharijites. The Khariji epithet has been in use for decades by religious clerics loyal to Muslim regimes against radical Islamists, see Emmanuel Sivan, Radical Islam, pp. 107-113, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1985. Dhayedi says that Millet Ibrahim was similar to Seyyid Qutub's Ma'alim fil Tariq in the extent of its influence and enunciation of Salafi-Jihadism, see Asharq Al-Awsat, "Shuyukh al-'unf katheeroon..."

11 From www.tawhed.ws, dated 1407 AH (1986 AD). In an updated introduction dated 1422 AH (2001AD) Maqdisi lauds the Koranic schools of Pakistan under the tutelage of the Deobandi sheikhs that later spawned the Taliban.

12 A claim made by his son Muhammed cited in Al-Hayat (London), "Min menzil al-Maqdisi...(From Maqdisi's house hours before his arrest)", July 5, 2005. This home-schooling may have contributed to his teenage son 'Umar going to Iraq and joining the jihad. Maqdisi does not know the fate of his son who may have been killed or is in American custody, Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Al-Maqdisi la ya'arif...(Maqdisi does not know the fate of his son)", Issue no. 9718, July 7, 2005

13 Asharq Al-Awsat, "Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...rihlet fikir..."

14 From www.tawhed.ws, 2nd edition 1421 AH (2000 AD), the manuscript is dated 1410 AH (1989 AD).

15 Maqdisi claims that Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi tried to convince Bin Laden to employ Maqdisi's books as curricula for Al-Qaeda's youth, but that Bin Laden rejected this by saying that that would anger the Saudi government. Al Jazeera TV program transcript, "Interview with Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...Salafi Jihadism", presented by Yasser Abu Hilaleh, aired July 6, 2005, available from www.aljazeera.net

16 Maqdisi actually met Al-Ma'athem in Jordan prior to the former's arrest, see Asharq Al-Awsat, "Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...rihlet fikir..."

17 Maqdisi also lukewarmly criminalizes 'Uteibi for the sacrilegious act of carrying arms in the Ka'aba mosque and for fighting during the month of Muharrem, but qualifies that by saying that the Saudi government was the aggressor.

18 Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, *Al-Zarqawi: munaseha wa munasera* (Al-Zarqawi: Advice and Support), Jumada Athani, 1425 AH (July 2004 AD), written in the Qafqafa prison.

19 Al-Hayat (London), "Al-Zarqa anbetet Al-Khalayleh...(Zarqa produced Khalayleh and Maqdisi and was swarmed by returnees from Kuwait)", December 15, 2004. See also a book by Fuad Hussein, *Zarqawi: jeel al-Qaeda al-thani* (Zarqawi: the Second Generation of Al-Qaeda), serialized in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (London), Vol. 17, Issue no. 4964-4978, May 12-29, 2005

20 According to the account given by Muhammed Abul-Muntasir, an early recruit of Tawhid wel Jihad and who later spent time in prison with Maqdisi and parted ways with him over Maqdisi ruling that suicide missions against Israeli targets were illegitimate because of their suicidal nature, see Fuad Hussein, *Zarqawi: jeel al-Qaeda al-thani*.

21 Nida' Al-'Islam Magazine, "Hiwar ma'a al-Sheikh..." In the Aljazeera interview, Maqdisi identifies the leader of the group as Abdel-Hadi Deghles (Abu 'Ubeida), who was arrested on an unrelated issue and revealed to the Jordanian authorities the source of the grenades. Deghles was later killed in Northern Iraq during the American-led attack on Ansar Al-'Islam in March 2003.

22 Nida' Al-'Islam Magazine, "Hiwar ma'a al-Sheikh..."

23 From www.tawhed.ws, undated.

24 See Fuad Hussein, *Zarqawi: Jeel al-Qaeda al-Thani*.

25 Al-Jazeera TV program transcript, "Interview with Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...Salafi Jihadism". See also Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, *kash al-litham 'amen wussifou bi tandheem Baya'at Al-Imam* (Revealing the Facts About Those Who Were Described as the Movement of Baya'at Al-Imam), Suwaqa prison, Shawwal 1416 AH (February 1996 AD).

26 Fuad Hussein met Maqdisi and Zarqawi in Suwaqa where he himself was a prisoner at the time for violating journalistic laws, see Fuad Hussein, *Zarqawi: jeel al-Qaeda al-thani*.

27 Maqdisi claims that he remained overall emir for about a year, but then gave up the mantle to Zarqawi in order to pursue scholarly work. He puts the number of individuals in this group between 15 to 30 men during various times. There is a hint of resentment, echoed by Muhammed Abul-Muntasir's account, that most of the group recognized more pronounced leadership abilities in Zarqawi, see Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, *Al-Zarqawi: munaseha wa munasera*.

28 Al-Jazeera TV program transcript, "Interview with Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi...Salafi Jihadism".

29 Maqdisi identifies this group as "those who call for Khilafa" in reference to Hizbul Tahrir, see Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, *Millet Ibrahim*. The leader of Hizbul Tahrir in the Suwaqa prison was 'Atta Abu Rishteh, the official spokesman of the group, see Fuad Hussein, *Zarqawi: Jeel al-Qaeda al-Thani*.

30 From www.tawhed.ws, dated 1420 AH (1999 AD). Maqdisi claims in the introduction to have started work on this book in 1407 AH (1986 AD) and a wider version had come out in 1412 AH (1991 AD).

31 Anonymous, *Hay'et 'Ulama' al-Muslimeen fi mizan al-Tawheed wel Jihad* (The Muslim Clerics Association on the scales of Monotheism and Jihad), undated, from www.tawhed.ws. Dr. Abu Mariah Al-Qureshi, *Ar-red 'ala manhaj al-Hizb al-'Islami* (Retort to the Platform of the Islamic Party), undated, 'Occupied Baghdad'.

32 Al-Hawali is one of the most influential Saudi sheikhs of what is called the *sahweh*, or "age of awakening" that tried to imbue the Wahhabi establishment with a more activist spirit. Sa-far bin Abdel-Rahman Al-Hawali, *Dhahiret Al-'Irja' fil fikr al-'Islami* (The Specter of 'Irja' in

Islamic Thought), PhD dissertation, Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia, 1406 AH (1985 AD), supervised by Dr. Muhammed Qutub (Seyyid Qutub's brother), from www.tawhed.ws. The theologically dense topic of the Marji'eh as the differentiation between neo-Salafists and neo-Wahhabis versus traditional Salafism and Wahhabism should be further explored by scholars of radical Islam.

33 Fuad Hussein, Zarqawi: jeel al-Qaeda al-thani.

34 Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, Al-Zarqawi: munaseha wa munasera

35 Account provided by Muhammed Mekkawi (Saif Al-Adel), former Egyptian special forces officer with rank of Major who was a leading Al-Qaeda operative, in a letter to Fuad Hussein concerning Zarqawi's beginnings, see Fuad Hussein, Zarqawi: jeel al-Qaeda al-thani.

36 Maqdisi was not surprised that Zarqawi had chosen this name for his organization in reference to Maqdisi's website, but he claims that it was not done with any coordination between the two and hopes that the name is not sullied by wrongful actions. Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, Al-Zarqawi: munaseha wa munasera

37 From www.tawhed.ws

38 Abu Anes As-Shami was the nom de guerre for Omar Yousif Juma'a, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin (his family was from Tulkarem) born in 1969. As-Shami was the head of a religious foundation in Amman and left to join Zarqawi in Baghdad during the summer of 2003, later becoming the shari'a mufti for the Tawhid wel Jihad group. He was killed in a confrontation with US forces in September 2004, see Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Meqtel Abu Anes As-Shami dharbah...(The Death of Abu Anes As-Shami is a major blow to Zarqawi's organization)", Issue no. 9423, September 24, 2004.

39 Abu Musa'ab Al-Zarqawi, Bayan wa tawdheeh lima atharehu Al-Sheikh Al-Maqdisi fir liqa'ih me'a qanat Aljazeera (Clarification Over What Sheikh Maqdisi Raised in his Interview With Al-jazeera Channel), undated, began circulating over several websites around July 8, 2005.

40 Al-Hayat (London), "Al-Urden: tabri'et Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi... (Jordan: Exonerating Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, the Spiritual Father of Zarqawi)", December 28, 2004

41 Article by Yasser Abu Hilaleh in Al-Ghad (Amman), "Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi", July 14, 2005

42 From www.tawhed.ws, dated Ramadhan 1419 AH (December 1998 AD), written in Al-Jafr prison.

43 Maqdisi supported and was "gladdened" by the 9/11 attacks, and had called Bin Laden "the imam of the mujaheddin in this age", see Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi, "Hiwar ma'a mejellet... (Interview with al-'Asr internet magazine)", 1423 AH (2002 AD), from www.tawhed.ws. Maqdisi's official website features tens of anti-Shia polemics, poems and fatwas, and he has consistently referred to Shias as rafidha, or reprobates, in his writings.

44 Traditional Salafists loathe the concept of qiyas, even though Hanbalite doctrine does not categorically reject it, see Vincenzo Oliveti, *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences*, p. 29, Amadeus Books, 2002, Birmingham.

45 Posted on several websites in the early part of May, 2005. For infighting among radicals, see Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Kitabat fi mawaqi' usuliyyeh... (Writing in Fundamentalist Websites Attack the 'tatarus' of Zarqawi)", Issue no. 9670, May 20, 2005

46 Influential 13th century Islamic scholar, see Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam*, pp. 94-107

47 Abu Musa'ab Al-Zarqawi, Bayan wa tawdheeh lima atharehu Al-Sheikh Al-Maqdisi fir liqa'ih me'a qanat Aljazeera.

48 Al-Hayat (London), "Sibaq fi al-'Urdun bayn...(A race in Jordan between a government calling for moderate Islam...and a society that is becoming more impressed with radicalism)", August 1, 2005

49 Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Al-Maqdisi 'u'aed 'itiqaluhu...(Maqdisi was re-arrested after a conversation he had with Zarqawi)", Issue 9718, July 7, 2005. According to sources close to him, Maqdisi intends to write four new books, see Asharq Al-Awsat (London), "Itiqal Abu Muhammed... (Abu Muhammed Al-Maqdisi's arrest was demanded by several Arab states)", Issue 9719, July 8, 2005.

Global Jihad and WMD: Between Martyrdom and Mass Destruction

REUVEN PAZ

THE LEAD-UP TO THE WAR IN IRAQ put the issue of the potential acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by terrorist groups at the top of the list of Western priorities. More than two years after the American and British occupation of Iraq began, however, no evidence for the existence of such weapons on Iraqi soil has been found, nor is there any real proof of operational cooperation between the Saddam regime and any Islamist terrorist groups in field of WMD. Moreover, there are also no real signs that *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or affiliated Islamist groups plan to use WMD in the near future.

In a confidential, January 2004 report written for the United Nations, a panel of experts led by Mr. Michael Chandler, concluded: “The al-Qaeda terror network is determined to use chemical and biological weapons and is restrained only by the technical difficulties of doing so.” The experts added, “The risk of al-Qaeda acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction also continues to grow... Undoubtedly al-Qaeda is still considering the use of chemical or bio-weapons to perpetrate its terrorist actions...” However, what al-Qaeda lacks still today “is the technical complexity to operate (WMD) properly and effectively.” “They want to (acquire and use WMD), but have difficulties in dealing with it.”

This paper is meant to review the threat of terrorist-acquisition and use of WMD from the point of view of the terrorists themselves. It focuses in particular on the perspective of *Qa`idat al-Jihad* and its affiliates, and on recent developments in the larger discussion of WMD within what should be broadly called the “culture of Global Jihad.”

The Present Phase of *Qa`idat al-Jihad*

Today—over two years after the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the military campaign against al-Qaeda elements there, and more than two years after the toppling of the *Ba`ath* regime in Iraq—*Qa`idat*

al-Jihad is still alive and well, threatening the Western world and Western targets across the globe. In recent months, they have not only improved their abilities in Iraq, but have also carried out their first suicide bombing operations in Europe, on British soil, and a triple suicide operation in one of the most popular tourist resorts in Egypt—Sharm al-Sheikh.

While *Qa'idat al-Jihad* may not necessarily act as a cohesive and organized group, the actions undertaken in its name or linked to the movement are driven and fueled by a coherent “ideological and doctrinal umbrella.” Furthermore, through the use of the Internet—the “open university of global Jihad”—al-Qaeda has successfully enabled millions of Muslim youngsters to create a new sense of identity—as members of the worldwide Islamic Nation—the *Ummah*. One of the products of the new virtual Ummah in the past years was the emergence of a robust vision and desire for the apocalypse. These visions, which are based on early Islamic sources, derive in part from the desperate desire, shared by many Islamists, for radical change. The belief is that al-Qaeda will spearhead the advent and interpretation of the “new world order.”

Franz Fanon, one of the most popular ideologues of anti-colonialism and modern political violence, wrote in the 1960s that violence is a “cleansing force” that frees oppressed youth from “inferiority complexes,” “despair,” and “inaction,” “making them fearless and restoring their self-respect.” Although Fanon, who inspired revolutionary groups in Algeria and South-East Asia, as well as organizations such as the PLO, had secular and nationalist agendas in mind, his words fit well with the beliefs of the contemporary Islamist groups. The motivation that drives Islamist supporters toward Global Jihad can be expressed in one key word—namely, humiliation. It is for this reason that *Qa'idat al-Jihad's* message of violence resonates so well among Muslim youth, while the “new American colonialism” provides additional encouragement for radical actions.

The sense of humiliation is not simply a consequence of military occupation, such as in Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, or Kashmir. Rather, it is primarily the feeling of American-Western cultural domination. Jihadist anti-colonialism, it is argued, should be waged not just by military or terrorist means, but also by ideological means through culture and education. Since this is an asymmetric war symbolized, in the jihadi's mind, as the struggle between David and Goliath, the key words in the terminology of the culture of global Jihad are “heroism” against “cowardice”; the search for the Hereafter against the search for peaceful life in this world; and “self-sacrifice” or martyrdom in the face of powerful and well-organized armies.

Practically speaking, Global Jihad's strategy to recruit its followers is sim-

ple: it wishes to expose the United States and its allies as the total antithesis of the Islamists. Global Jihad divides the world into two fighting regions, as a reflection of the traditional “House of Islam” (*Dar al-Islam*) and “House of War/Infidels” (*Dar al-Harb*). The United States, on the other hand, divides the world into the “House of Democracy” and “House of War.” By doing so, it secures the long-term strategy of al-Qaeda and its supporting groups, and the continuation of the war between the two sides. The permanent war is also meant to recruit as many Islamist supporters as possible, and to create, as Dr. Abdallah Azzam, the spiritual father of al-Qaeda, once put it, “the solid base (*al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah*) for new generations of proud Islamists.”

From the Islamist vantage point, this war is imbalanced, and is going to remain so for a long time. Consequently, the military or terrorist efforts by the Islamists do not have to be equal or similar to those used and possessed by the United States or its allies. Rather, the Islamists seek only to deliver frequent and increasingly more sophisticated blows in order to best enable the Islamists to undermine the West’s morale and sense of security.

One of the most popular exponents of this universal struggle today is the Saudi scholar Fares Ahmad al-Shuwayl al-Zahrani, who is more famous by his nickname Abu Jandal al-Azdi. In 2003, al-Azdi succeeded the Saudi Shaykh Yousef al-Ayiri, the leading ideologue of al-Qaeda in Arabia who was killed on May 31, 2003 by Saudi security forces. Al-Azdi, who was imprisoned by the Saudi authorities in November 2004, published on March 27, 2004 an article titled “The Al-Qaeda Organization and the Asymmetric War.”¹ The article was supposed to be the first in a series of publications. In it, Al-Azdi described several characteristics and tactics used by al-Qaeda, including a description of how the organization took and will take advantage of the American psychology and nature to be easily provoked. Hence, the United States reacts in a manner of a cowboy’s revenge, instead of taking the time to study the problem before retaliation. Al-Qaeda managed following the bombings in Kenya and Tanzania to make the huge American machinery serve it as a company for public relations. As well as following the September 11 attacks, it managed to make the United States look like it was waging a global war against Islam, and hence it managed to recruit the Islamic world against America.

In the article, Al-Azdi also favorably cited at length a report by General Henry Shilton of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff describing asymmetric warfare. The report, it would seem, describes al-Qaeda’s own strategy as well: “Asymmetry means the use by the enemy of psychological war and its implications, in order to take the lead and enjoy freedom of activity and will. It does it by

using innovated means, untraditional tactics, and weapons and technologies it acquired by thinking about the unexpected... by non-logic imagination and abilities we cannot imagine.” “This kind of war,” Al-Azdi continues to quote, “combines the material and the moral, what serves the enemy the best way.”

If these quotations are accurate, the American administration is facing the most unexpected rival in world history. The question is thus whether WMD are part of the unconventional way of thinking that characterizes the Islamist mind.

Qa`idat al-Jihad and WMD

In recent years, Qa`idat al-Jihad and affiliated groups have issued only a few pronouncements in which they threatened the use of WMD. The first direct reference appeared on December 26, 2002. Abu Shihab al-Kandahari, the then moderator of the Islamist Internet forum al-mojahedoon.net, published a short article titled “Nuclear War is the Solution for the Destruction of the United States.”

The article could be viewed as a simple threat, exploiting a number of rumors from various sources. It might have also been deliberate disinformation regarding al-Qaeda’s possession of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Or, it could be a case of propaganda aimed at encouraging Islamists. Regardless of its ultimate aim, al-Kandahari’s article marked the first time that such a threat had been publicly issued by supporters of al-Qaeda, or at least by a figure known to have been close to the propaganda apparatus of Global Jihad.

The article was short and lacked the sweeping theoretical elements typical of the writings of Islamist scholars of jihad against the United States or the West. Yet, even though this could be a false alarm, it did seem to embody another stage in the escalation of the tone of al-Qaeda’s propaganda. As such, it could raise the expectations of Islamists for an apocalyptic “mega-operation” using WMD against the United States or Russia.²

Thus far, the main *modus operandi* of Qa`idat al-Jihad has been suicide or martyrdom operations. Martyrdom attacks are not only a tactical tool of terrorism; they have also played a central role in the indoctrination of al-Qaeda recruits. Over the past four years, the propaganda machinery of Qa`idat al-Jihad has kept asking the question posed by one of their adherents in an article titled “Has the Global Crusader Alliance Learned the Lessons of the Mujahideen?” The author wrote: “We are really puzzled to see the Americans and their followers in the Western world think that they are able to confront people who wish to die more than they [the Americans] want to live.” This idea of self-sacrifice has since been reinforced as the phenomenon of suicide

operations has spread across many parts of the world, not to mention by the worldwide increase of support of Muslim publics for the suicide attacks against civilians in Israel.

It is significant to note that this method, which was once controversial among Islamic clerics and scholars, enjoys growing support within religious and political communities alike. Thus far, in fact, it seems that radical Islam's focus has been not on mass-killings, but primarily on self-sacrifice and on the proliferation of its attacks to different regions and places across the globe. The focus on personal martyrdom and suicide attacks among the groups that adhere to the culture of Global Jihad—including Qa`idat al-Jihad, as well as groups with more local and national aspirations, such as the Chechen Islamists and the Arab volunteers there, Kashmiri groups, the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam, or the Palestinian Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—might explain why these groups have so far refrained from any large-scale use of WMD. Very rarely do the clerics, scholars, or Islamist intellectuals who supply the ideological and doctrinal support for the culture of Global Jihad mention the issue of WMD. Given the central role played by this ideological network, the relative absence of a discussion over WMD in the past is significant.

Shaykh Naser al-Fahd's Fatwa on WMD

Some recent Islamist pronouncements indicate that this past emphasis on personal sacrifice and martyrdom operations may be changing to include increased demand to acquire and use WMD. On May 21, 2003, the Saudi Shaykh Naser bin Hamad al-Fahd published the first fatwa on the use of WMD.³ The author is 40 years old, and among the younger leading clerics of the Saudi Islamist opposition that support the culture of Global Jihad, Qa`idat al-Jihad, and the militant struggle against the West. To date, Shaykh al-Fahd has published dozens of militant books and articles, some of which are viewed by the followers of Global Jihad as religious rulings that legitimate the fight against the United States.

Because of his preaching against the Saudi monarchy, Shaykh al-Fahd was arrested in June 2003 by the Saudi authorities and is still imprisoned without trial. Later on he was forced, along with two of his colleagues, to publicly renounce several of his rulings against the Saudi government. In January 2005 he rescinded from prison his former renunciation through his supporters over Islamist Internet forums.

Shaykh al-Fahd has been at the forefront of a new effort to rethink the strategy of asymmetric warfare shared by many Islamists. For example, on September 21, 2002 al-Fahd published an article titled "The Divine Verses

about the September Attack” in which he praised the execution of the 9/11 attacks, especially for its technical sophistication and use of planes.⁴ One of his arguments was that the 9/11 attacks were an air battle or “dogfight” of sorts. “If the American are using F-15 or Tornados [and they are allowed], then if the Mujahideen used Boeing or Air Bus are they not allowed?”

Shaykh al-Fahd has repeatedly used such analogy with the West to provide Islamic legal justification for terrorist tactics in his other writings. When asked, for example, by an anonymous person whether the use of WMD is allowed, his answer was straightforward: ‘yes,’ it is allowed:

If the Muslims could defeat the infidels only by using these kinds of weapons, it is allowed to use them even if they kill them all, and destroy their crops and cattle.

Following the answer, Shaykh al-Fahd wrote a long and detailed memorandum on the relevant Islamic sources that he used as the basis for his ruling. First, he disqualified any terms of international law used by the West, since they are not part of the Islamic divine law. Second, he claimed that those countries that lead the campaign against the use of WMD—the United States and the United Kingdom—have already used WMD in the past against their enemies, not to mention that they, plus “the Jews,” possess these weapons.

Third, he based his arguments on the saying of the Prophet in the Hadith: “Allah has ordered you to do everything perfectly. Hence, if you kill, do it perfectly, and if you slaughter, do it perfectly. Everyone should sharpen his blade and ease his slaughter.” He also relied on another saying of the Prophet: “If you are ordered to do something—do it according to your best ability.” In al-Fahd’s view, this principle is essential: The Muslims should act according to their abilities. If there is no other way the Mujahideen can defeat the enemy, then they should kill them, all of them, by every means possible. This principle is valid even if they have to kill women and children, or even Muslims.

In al-Fahd’s eyes, the principles of using WMD are divided into two categories. The first category concerns the general acceptance of their use in the case of Jihad. The second category concerns the legitimacy of the use of WMD in a certain period against a certain enemy—an enemy which, in al-Fahd’s eyes, clearly means the Goliath the United States.

One controversial issue among Saudi scholars following the attacks against “infidels” in Riyadh in May and November 2003, and the attacks in Istanbul in November 2003—not to mention the murderous ongoing attacks in Iraq—has been the fact that innocent Muslims are also being killed by these attacks. The case is also controversial with regard to suicide operations.

Al-Fahd unambiguously believes, however, that if the killing of Muslims is necessary and there is no other choice, then it is permissible.⁵ In his view, which is based on previous rulings of Islamic scholars such as the fourteenth century theologian Ibn Taymiyyah, there are no limits at all to using WMD against the Western “infidels.”

The ruling of Shaykh Naser al-Fahd set a precedent in the Islamist debate on the use of WMD. Since this was an answer to a question by an anonymous person, we cannot know if the question was a real one, or whether it was implanted by the Shaykh or any other element linked to *Qa`idat al-Jihad*. Yet, the clear acceptance of the use of WMD is very significant.

It is interesting to look also at the timing of the ruling by Shaykh Naser al-Fahd. Taken together with the declarations issued by Ayman Zawahiri, the ruling might constitute a campaign of threats or disinformation. Such a link, if it indeed constitutes a carefully planned campaign, does not necessarily mean that *Qa`idat al-Jihad* is already planning such an attack by using WMD, or that it has already acquired such weapons. Were *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or any affiliated Islamist group planning to use WMD, however, they have now received the necessary endorsement to do so from an Islamic point of view.

The Islamist Reaction to Shaykh al-Fahd

Shaykh al-Fahd’s ruling was not accompanied by any dispute or discussion. In fact, those who follow the many radical Jihadi websites, forums, and chat rooms—the main arena of the discourse for radical Islamists—may well have been surprised by the absence of any coherent debate on WMD of any kind among Islamists. In some cases, Islamists expressed their hopes and desires that al-Qaeda use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons (CBRN) against the West. These expressions, however, are more reminiscent of the apocalyptic visions aroused by Bin Laden, the fall of Saddam Hussein, the occupation of Iraq, and the Islamist insurgency there. Some Islamists described WMD as “Doomsday” weapons that would accompany the end of the world. Moreover, to date neither Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, nor any other leading figure of al-Qaeda has mentioned such WMD threats—even though these individuals can publicize their worldviews and doctrines with virtually no limits, given that their first audience is not the West, but the Islamic world.

Since the ruling of Shaykh al-Fahd in May 2003, al-Qaeda and affiliated groups carried out major terrorist operations in various places. These include attacks in Riyadh, Istanbul, Casablanca, Madrid, and most recently in London and twice in Egypt/Sinai, in addition to numerous attacks against the Ameri-

can and allied troops in Iraq, and against the Iraqi Shi'is and Iraqi officials of the new elected regime. Most of these operations were suicide attacks, with the sole exception of the Madrid bombings, where remote controlled devices were used. Millions of Islamist supporters, as well as Western security and intelligence services, anticipated a "Mega Attack" on Christmas and New Year 2003. Still, the Islamist discourse on the topic has failed to mention even in one word the use of WMD against the United States or the West.

The strongest evidence of the relatively low regard for WMD within Islamist radical discourse are the military manuals that are distributed on the Internet by various global Jihadist groups. In the Arabic-language manuals or directories written by Islamists, or in those translated from other languages to Arabic, only a handful of references indicate planning for the use of such weapons.

In the instances where the manuals do refer to WMD, the emphasis is on the use of chemical weapons, which at any rate are easy to obtain and can be handled with relative ease, even in home laboratories. Indeed, Islamist websites contain a rather large number of instructions on how to make homemade bombs using chemicals.⁶ Yet, we should ask ourselves whether such chemical bombs, as dangerous as they may be, fall under the category of WMD. Ultimately, the ability of Islamist terrorist groups to kill hundreds of people by conventional means through martyrdom operations might be more attractive to them, as they are able to demonstrate their heroism.

One military-related Islamist web site, which was shut down in February 2004, contained information on how to develop weapons and ammunition (*Mawqi' al-asliyah wal-dhakhaer*).⁷ Even on this web site, however, references to WMD were rare.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and "The Call for Islamist Global Resistance"

In December 2004, a new attitude about asymmetric warfare has emerged in the Islamist discourse, one that challenges the Global Jihad's emphasis on "heroism" and its relative lack of emphasis on acquiring and using WMD.

Mustafa Sit-Maryam—aka Omar Abd al-Hakim, but better known as Abu Mus'ab al-Suri—a former leading trainer and scholar of al-Qaeda, published two significant documents calling for a new organization of Global Jihad: "The Islamist Global Resistance." One was a 9-page letter published in December 2004, and the other was a huge book totaling 1600 pages about the strategy of Global Jihad.^{8 9}

The 9-page letter, which was published on Al-Suri's new website, was a

response to the accusations made against him by the U.S. State Department, which recently listed Al-Suri as an international terrorist, and allocated \$5 million for information that would lead to his arrest. The American move was a result of suspicions by Spanish authorities that Al-Suri was linked to both the 9/11 attacks and the Madrid bombings on March 11, 2004.

Al-Suri's followers posted the huge book on his website in January 2005. In both documents, Al-Suri explained that following the collapse of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, he retired and dedicated three years to the study of the lessons of the history and strategy of the jihad movement from the 1960s to date. Al-Suri's analysis and conclusions made up the core of the new book, which has no precedence in the Jihad literature.

In many ways, Al-Suri elaborated on the familiar lines of Islamist criticism of al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups, primarily in the Iraqi arena. Al-Suri in fact returns to the original jihadi doctrines of Abdallah Azzam, the spiritual mentor of *Qa'idat al-Jihad*, and challenges some of the strategies that have been adopted by the new generation of jihadists, saying that they prefer to "jump" into holy war without first completing the long stage of ideological indoctrination (*Tarbiyyah*). Al-Suri also uses the same term that Azzam did—"the solid base"—to define the model of the jihadi group and, like Azzam, he emphasizes the quality of the mujahideen, not their quantity.

In his open letter to the State Department, Al-Suri talks at length about the importance of using WMD against the United States as the only means to fight it from a point of equality. He even criticizes Osama bin Laden for not using WMD in the September 11 attacks: "If I were consulted in the case of that operation I would advise the use of planes in flights from outside the U.S. that would carry WMD. Hitting the U.S. with WMD was and is still very complicated. Yet, it is possible after all, with Allah's help, and more important than being possible—it is vital." Al-Suri states that "the Muslim resistance elements [must] seriously consider this difficult yet vital direction."

Al-Suri also surprises his readers by sending requests to North Korea and Iran to continue developing their nuclear projects. It is most unlikely for a Jihadi-Salafi scholar to hint at possible cooperation with countries like Shi'ite Iran or Stalinist North Korea, both of which are generally regarded as infidel regimes. However, Al-Suri seems to advise that Jihadi Sunni readers should cooperate with the devil to defeat the "bigger devil."

To justify the use of nuclear bombs, he offers the example of President Harry S. Truman who said that America's use of such bombs against Japan both shortened the world war, and was also fitting retaliation for the barbaric behavior of the Japanese. According to Al-Suri, the U.S. today is no different from

Japan in World War II, and therefore deserves the use of WMD against her.

Al-Suri does not see much benefit from the guerrilla warfare waged against the U.S. by al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia. Hence, “the ultimate choice is the destruction of the United States by operations of strategic symmetry through weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear, chemical, or biological means, if the mujahideen can achieve it with the help of those who possess them or through buying them.” One other option, he says, is by “the production of basic nuclear bombs, known as “dirty bombs.”

The focus on the use of WMD as the “ultimate choice” of the mujahideen is a significant feature in Al-Suri’s book, too. In about 100 pages of the book, Al-Suri sketches his jihadi military strategy, which according to him is the core of the book. One of his most significant recommendations is the need to divide the mujahideen into four different kinds of groups: Squads of popular resistance (*al-Muqawamah al-Sha`biyyah*) with limited training and facilities, military squads (*al-Saraya al-`Askariyyah al-`Ammah*) with limited training in light weapons, and squads of quality resistance (*al-Muqawamah al-Naw`iyyah*) which are well-trained for both terrorist operations and guerrilla warfare.

The fourth type of squad is for strategic operations (*al-`Amaliyyat al-Is-tratijiyyah*). These elite squads should be commanded by members who fully understand the strategic goals of the resistance. They should have plenty of financial support and good knowledge of using WMD “when there is a need to counter attack or to achieve strategic symmetry with the United States.”

Abu Mus’ab al-Suri’s pronouncement on WMD marks a new phase in the overall development of the Islamist discourse on the issue. The whereabouts of Al-Suri are still unknown, as is an answer to the question of whether his book is intended merely as a platform for better-organized global Jihad, or if there is already an organization or group behind him. Yet, his focus on well-planned, strategic operations should be noted. His best example is the Madrid bombings in March 11 2004, in which one operation by a small squad of operatives created a larger strategic effect across Europe.

Conclusion

The question that we should ask ourselves is “why are there so few references to WMD within the Islamist discourse of *Qa`idat al-Jihad* or related groups?” Although there is no single, satisfying explanation, several assessments can be made:

- WMD did receive some attention prior to October-November 2001,

when Afghanistan, under the Taliban, served as a greenhouse and safe haven for al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups. Until that time, al-Qaeda maintained better relations with regimes and scientists involved in developing WMD such as Pakistan, Sudan, the Islamic republics of Central Asia, and perhaps with Iraq. After November 2001, however, most of the al-Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan were destroyed or seized by the United States or Pakistan under President Musharraf, and the Islamist forces were pushed into certain areas in East Afghanistan. It is possible that the culture of Global Jihad embraced “heroism” and the tactics of martyrdom operations as a result of these setbacks.

- When they had a base in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda’s attempt to acquire CBRN facilities was handled in secret by a small group of operatives, the vast majority of which did not possess the capabilities of dealing with CBRN, except for crude homemade bombs. Due to the loss of their Afghan safe haven, and due to the difficulties of handling such weapons in occupied Iraq, only one arena remains where such weapons can be handled—namely, among Muslim communities in the West, especially in Europe. A hint to the possible use of such weapons in Europe is found in the fact that most of the jihadis who were arrested after being suspected of activity in this area were Algerians. The most radical among the Algerian groups are not an integral part of the al-Qaeda network, and instead adopt different doctrines in certain fields. For example, they advocate *Takfir* (refutation) of any and all secular Muslim societies. Indeed, the Algerian groups were used to carry out mass killings of innocent Muslims in Algeria, and are known to be ruthless.
- In many of the Islamist writings, the term “WMD” refers to a broad array of social diseases associated with the West, such as AIDS, cigarette smoking and drug use. It is not presented as part of the Islamist struggle, but rather as a term denoting the destructive diseases that will eventually ruin the Western societies from inside.

Following the above analysis, we should ask ourselves whether or not the threat posed by Islamist terrorist groups acquiring and using CBRN or WMD is real. Before the War in Iraq, much information about attempts by Qa` idat al-Jihad to develop such an ability was disseminated. The American insistence that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was developing such weapons, and the linkage between Iraq and al-Qaeda that the administration claimed existed helped to inflate the image of an active threat.

In the past year, meanwhile, some terrorism experts have become more

skeptical about the extent to which a CBRN threat emanates from these groups. They cite four main factors:

- The occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq prevented the continuance of earlier attempts by Islamist groups to develop or acquire such weapons.
- Islamist scholars, clerics, intellectuals, and even most ordinary Islamist extremists seem to refrain from supporting the use of WMD by Islamist groups, fearing the consequences of such use for the entire Muslim world.
- Qa'idat al-Jihad and affiliated groups, as well as Islamist scholars, tend to focus their ideology and doctrines on self-sacrifice and technical sophistication, and hence they adopt terrorist tactics like suicide operations. So far, the world has no answer to the threat of martyrdom operations.
- Martyrdom operations need no technical training at all and perfectly suit the relative lack of technical infrastructure available to the Islamists in the post-9/11 era. Islamists also use the idea of martyrdom for the purpose of indoctrinating their ranks and creating the mythology in the minds of Muslim youngsters that the battle against America is a glorious and heroic one, similar to David's fight against Goliath.

If our main source of assessment would be the mind of the present generation of Islamists, modeled by al-Qaeda, the threat of an immediate use of WMD is of low feasibility. Yet, we should bear in mind two other factors:

- Al-Qaeda is mutating on the background of the Iraqi scene, and we might face a new generation of Islamists, who are not part of "the Afghan Alumni" but are "Iraqi Alumni." The war and continuing insurgency in Iraq have possibly improved the abilities of al-Qaeda, as well as of other groups such as the Algerians, or the Jordan-influenced Tawhid groups, to recruit a new generation of operatives from among Muslim communities in Europe. This new generation of recruits is not necessarily under the control of Saudi clerics or scholars, and might reveal itself to possess fewer reservations about the acquisition and use of CBRN or WMD. Based on the Madrid bombings, perhaps this new generation will also be less willing to carry out martyrdom operations.
- A new generation of Islamists or Islamist groups might be more willing to cooperate with non-Islamic groups on one hand, or with Iran and Shi'ite groups such as Hizballah, on the other hand. Abu Mus'ab al-Suri

hints to such a possibility in his book, and even points to North Korea as a possible strategic partner. Additionally, a new generation of Islamist scholars might follow the fatwa of Shaykh Naser al-Fahd or the book of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, and encourage the use of such weapons if and when the mujahideen find they have no other alternative.

These developments could accelerate attempts made by Islamist groups to acquire and use WMD, although it is unclear how feasible this will be in the immediate term. We should, therefore, bear in mind that the will might be there, but the facilities and abilities, so far, are not.

NOTES

1 Abu Jandal al-Azdi, *Tanzim al-Qaeda wal-harb ghayr al-mutawaziyah*, 27 March 2004. See on-line in: <https://www.al-ansar.biz/vb/showthread.php?threadid=7176> The article was circulated by the "News Agency" of al-Qaeda – Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF).

2 See the translation of the article and commentary – Reuven Paz, "The First Islamist nuclear threat against the United States," January 10th 2003, at www.ict.org.il

3 Naser al-Fahd, *Risalah fi hukm istikhdam aslihat al-damar al-shamel didh al-kuffar*, Rabi` Awwal 1424H (May 2003). See online at: <http://www.al-fhd.com/rsayl/doc/rsayl.damar.doc> .

The ruling was also circulated in May 23rd by The Global Islamic Media Center. See on-line in: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/abubanan2/message/221>

For an analysis of the fatwa see: [YES to WMD: The first Islamist Fatwa on the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction](http://www.e-prism.org) on PRISM website, www.e-prism.org

4 *Ayat al-Rahman fi ghazwat* sebtember, 14 Rajab 1423. See on-line in: <http://www.al-fhd.com/mqalat/mqal.ayat.htm>

5 The justification for killing of innocent Muslims during suicide operations is based mainly upon the same writings.

6 See an example in Supplement no. 1

7 http://ad.itep.co.ae/a_alzubidi/ closed since the end of February 2004.

8 <http://www.deluxesuperhost.com/~morshid/tophacker/index.php?subject=1&rec=29>

9 <http://www.deluxesuperhost.com/~morshid/tophacker/index.php?subject=4&rec=7>

Sunnis and Shiites—Between Rapprochement and Conflict

SHMUEL BAR

THE FALL OF THE BA'ATH REGIME IN IRAQ ignited a bloody conflict between Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites. The conflict is exemplified, inter alia, in the attacks by Sunnis on Shiites (including on mosques), Sunni allegations of murder of Sunni 'ulama by the Shiite Badr Forces, and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's statement on May 19, 2004 branding the Shiites as "hypocrites" (*munafiqun*) whose "only objective is to please their masters among the apostates and the Crusaders." These trends may represent a new stage in the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Iraq with potential spillover into other countries.

The conflict between Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis may be viewed as a local conflagration in which a political elite which ruled the country since the end of the World War I struggles to maintain its predominance against a new elite which has taken over the country with the aid of an outside power and by virtue of its majority. Alternatively, it may be viewed as an ethnic conflict between a Sunni Arab minority and a Shiite ethnic majority which threatens to overthrow the social primacy of the former. A more optimistic analysis may see the conflict as one element or symptom in the syndrome of breakdown of law and order in a country hitherto ruled by an iron fist, which will disappear once the rule of law is reinstated.

All these explanations have their merits. However, the conflict in Iraq must also be viewed as a local reflection—both a result and a cause—of a much wider phenomenon of Sunni-Shiite animosity.¹ In many cases, the animosity between Sunnis and Shiites is clearly rooted in ethnic differences which are given religious justification by the religious leaders of the two sides. This is the case both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the former, the Deobandi Sunni *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan* (Army of the Companions) is infamous for vicious terrorist attacks against the Shiites (particularly in Karachi), including attacks against Shiite mosques, and its branding of the Shiites as heretics. In Afghanistan, the conflicts between Sunni Pashtuns and Shiite Hazaris reached their acme in the massacre of Hazaris by the Taliban and the murder of the Hazari leader Ustadh

Abdul Ali Mazari. There too, the acts against the Hazaris were justified by the Taliban by the need to expunge the Shiite heresy of the former (it is noteworthy that the Taliban did not act in such a manner towards Sunni non-Pashtuns). Similarly, the Shiites of Bahrain are, for the most part, of Iranian extraction and, as such, are suspect as a Persian fifth column. In other cases, however, it seems that the religious sources of the animosity are predominant. In Malaysia, the moderate—albeit virulently anti-Western—Islamic regime of Mohammad Mahathir was also implacably anti-Shiite and in the late 1990's waged a campaign against Shiite heresies. Closer to the center of the Middle East, the Ikhwan rebellion against Ibn Saud demanded that the Shiites in the eastern region accept Sunni Islam or be put to death.

The significance of all of these conflicts is not so much the fact that Muslims have waged war against other Muslims, but the religious justification that has been accorded to these acts. In modern times, relations between Shiite and Sunni Islam have revolved around two poles. The first pole is *taqarub* or rapprochement (and even initiatives for unification). The second pole is conflict or even *takfir*—the excommunication or “heretication” of the other side.

This axis, however, is by no means symmetric. While Sunni Islam accepts a certain degree of internal pluralism, embodied in the existence of four schools of jurisprudence, few Sunni scholars have allowed themselves to accord the Shiites the same legitimacy of the other schools of Sunni jurisprudence. They have often been defined as *rafida* (rejectionists, pl. *rawafid*) who have “misled” Muslims, though only rarely have they been branded as total heretics or apostates (*kufir* or *murtaddun*). Likewise, Shiites, while they have branded their Sunni detractors as *Nawasib* (sing. *Nasibi*—enemies of ‘Ali), tend to suffice with differentiating between the Shiite “believers” (*mu'minun*) or “distinguished” (*khassa*) and the plebeian (*'amma*) “Muslims” (*muslimun*), but do not reject the Islamic legitimacy of the latter. It may be argued that the trauma of the inter-Muslim discord (*fitna*) which gave birth to the Sunni-Shiite split remained throughout most of Islamic history a barrier against total “heretication” (*takfir*) of each side by the other.

The Trend Toward Rapprochement

Occasional attempts to bridge the Shiite-Sunni schism took place even before the modern age. In 1743, the Iranian Nader Shah made an attempt for rapprochement through a convention of Shiite (mainly Iranian) and Sunni (mainly Hanafi) scholars, resulting in a document in which the former agreed to forego the custom of cursing the first three Caliphs and the latter agreed to recognize Twelver Shiism as a fifth orthodox madhhab, or school of Islamic thought.² In the early 20th century (1911-36) the Lebanese Shiite mujtahid

‘Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din maintained a correspondence in the same spirit with the rector of the Azhar Salim al-Bishri.³ Rashid Ridda, editor of the Sunni revivalist *al-Manar* met at the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in December 1931, with the Iraqi Shiite jurist Muhammad al-Husayn Al Kashif al-Ghita’ and expressed his support of rapprochement. Another initiative was taken by the Egyptian Shaykh Mustafa al-Maraghi in the late 1930’s.

The Islamic revival and quest for Islamic unity of the 20th century gave impetus to a quest for Sunni-Shiite rapprochement. The cause of rapprochement was taken up in the formation in Cairo (1946 and until 1972) of Jama’at al-taqrib (“The Group of Rapprochement”) under the Iranian Shiite scholar Muhammad Taqi Qummi. The professed goal of the group was the unification of the various schools and legitimizing the Shi’ah as a separate *ja’afari* school (based on the sixth Imam Ja’afar al-Sadeq who is credited with the codification of the Shiite legal code). This institution came under attack by many Sunni fundamentalists as a tool for Shiite propaganda among the Sunnis.⁴ On 6th July 1959, Mahmud Shaltut, then Head of Al-Azhar who had been involved in *jama’at al-taqrib*, issued a historic fatwa recognizing the Ja’fari or “al-Shi’a al-Imamiyyah al-Ithna ‘Ashariyyah” (i.e., The Twelver Imami Shiites) as a *madhhab* that is religiously correct to follow in worship as are other Sunni schools of thought.⁵

The concept of taqarub is an issue of contention within the modern Saudi religious and political establishment. Support of *taqarub* with other monotheistic faiths in general and with Shiites in particular is generally identified with the policies of the new King Abdullah. His willingness to accept the petition of the leaders of the Saudi Shiites, which included demands for religious equality seemed to indicate that he was willing to consider a change in the traditional attitude of the Wahhabi state towards the Shiites. There are grounds for the argument that Abdullah’s relatively new-found ecumenism is the result of the trauma of 9/11 and the growing view of the Wahhabism as an anti-Christian and anti-American ideology in the eyes of the American public. Be that as it may, such nascent indications of taqarub in Saudi Arabia remain outside of the Wahhabi mainstream. The treatment of the ex-radical journalist, Mansur al-Nuqaydan, for supporting *taqarub* (prevented from working as a journalist within the Kingdom or from traveling abroad) is just one case in point.⁶ In the eyes of most hard-line Wahhabis, taqarub represents no less than compromise with paganism—shirk—the very evil that the founders of the Kingdom set out to eradicate.

While Sunni enthusiasm about rapprochement diminished significantly after the Iranian revolution of 1979, the banner of *taqrib* was taken up almost

immediately by the founders of the Shiite revolution in Iran. Shortly after the Islamic Revolution the regime formed organizations for promoting the idea of unity of all Islamic “schools” and legitimizing the Shi’ah as the Ja’fari school within a generic Islam that was neither Sunni nor Shiite. However, the *raison d’etat* behind these efforts was clear: A Sunni Muslim may accept the authority of any Sunni Shaykh, whatever the school he and the Shaykh follow, and if the Ja’fari (Shiite) school is just another school, any Sunni Muslim may follow the authority of a Shiite scholar without having to cross the lines and become a Shiite. The two main organizations operating under the Iranian regime in this spirit are *Majm’-e jahani-ye ahl-e beit (Ahlu Beit)*, headed until 1999 by Hoj. ‘Ali al-Taskhiri, then by ‘Ali Akbar Velayati, and since October 2002 by Shaykh Mohammad Mahdi Assefi, and the *Majma’-e jahani baraye taqrib-e bein-e mazaheb-e eslami* (Society for Reconciliation Between the Schools) under Hoj. Mohammad Va’ez-Zadeh Khorasani.⁷ Both organizations convene conferences, ostensibly for rapprochement between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and organize programs for Sunni Muslims to study Islam in the madrasas of Qom. Most of the Sunni Muslims who become involved in these organizations are non-Arab Muslims, particularly from South-East Asia. In a number of cases, Sunni students who studied in these programs were recruited by Iranian intelligence, including for terrorist activity. It seems, therefore, that these programs serve two roles: they show the willingness of the Iranian religious establishment to promote rapprochement, and they provide the Iranian intelligence with a reservoir for non-Iranian and non-Shiite recruits.⁸

In general, it may be said that the cause of rapprochement seems not to have struck much of a chord in the hearts of the Sunni majority of the Muslim world. The wider support of the idea among Shiites may be easily attributed to political interests, such as the Iranian quest for levers inside the Sunni world, or the need of minority (and oppressed) Shiites for legitimization. The predominant tone in Sunni–Shiite relations has remained one of mutual recriminations ranging from historic charges of treason and heresy to accusations of mass murder, treachery and collaboration with the enemies of Muslims.

Sunni Accusations against the Shi’ah

Classic Sunni religious literature is replete with assertions regarding the heterodox or even heretical nature of the Shi’ah. Some of the more common claims against the Shiites are:

1. The Shiite belief in Ali accords him divine status, thus contradicting the primary tenet of Islam—the uniqueness of Allah. This alone is tantamount to “polytheism” (*shirk*) and, hence, heresy. The Shiites add to the shahadah

(“There is no God but Allah”) the phrase “Ashhadu anna ‘Aliyyan waliyyullah” (“I am witness that Ali is the agent of Allah”). Some Sunni polemist even claim that Shiites attribute Mohammad’s mission to “mistaken identity” by the angel Jibreel, who was supposed to have given the mission to Ali.⁹

2. The Shiite doctrine of the infallibility (*ismah*) of the Imams positions them as Prophets along side or, as critics of the Shi’ah claim, even above the Prophet Mohammad. Moreover, Shiite beliefs in the ability of the Imams to intercede (*shifah*) are seen as a clear contradiction of the finality of Muhammad as the “seal of the Prophets.”

3. The Shiites have a Qur’an that includes verses (*Surat al-wilaya, surat al-nurayn*) which are not in the Sunni Qur’an and that were forged in order to justify Ali’s right to succession. In doing so, the Shiites distort the Qur’an (*tahrif*). It is also claimed that the Shiites have forged hadiths in order to justify their doctrines.¹⁰

4. The Shiites revile the first Caliphs and the Companions of the Prophet who in their eyes usurped the Caliphate that rightfully belonged at that stage to Ali.¹¹

5. The Shiites are debauchees who allow *mut’ah* (pleasure) marriages for pre-determined periods.

6. The Shiites practice *taqiyya* (dissimulation) and therefore cannot be trusted even when they propose rapprochement.

The rise of modern Islamic fundamentalist movements (and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular) called for purification of Islam from all “innovations” (*bid’ah*), such as “pagan” customs of asking for intercession at graves, or performing pilgrimages (*ziyarat* as opposed to *hajj*) to “holy places” other than Mecca. While the criticism of these movements was mainly directed toward their own Sunni constituency, they could not ignore the fact that many of the customs they were endeavoring to purge were widely accepted in Shiite Islam. The various Sunni fundamentalist movements seemed to feel the need to define their attitude toward the Shiite creed. This is evident in the attitudes of the Muslim Brotherhood of the Arab world to the *Jamaat ‘Ulema* in Pakistan.

It seems though that the pan-Islamic goals of the Muslim Brotherhood served to mitigate the more virulent anti-Shiite tendencies. This was not the case, however, of the Wahhabi movement and its attitude toward the Shiites. The official negative attitude towards the Shiites in Saudi Arabia is evident in the various restrictions on Shiite practices in the Kingdom and in the plethora of anti-Shiite literature coming out of official religious circles in Mecca. Since the majority of Islamic radicals—including the militants of the al-Qa-

eda movement—draw their ideological inspiration from the Wahhabi creed, it is these positions which are of particular interest. The Wahhabi scholars tend to subscribe to all the traditional criticism of the Shiites as listed above, updating them with political content. The Shiites are accused not only of religious deviation and heresy, but of treachery against Arab Muslims. This is not, however, a recent case of treason alone but also a historic one; the Shiites are accused of acting throughout history as a “fifth column” within Islam, scheming to destroy the Ummah from inside. The main motifs of these claims are:¹²

1. Shi'ism is an invention of the Jews (and/or the Zoroastrians); Wahhabi detractors of Shi'ah find similarities between Shiite and Jewish or Zoroastrian customs and beliefs. It is said that it was Abdullah bin Saba, a Jew who, pretending to be a Muslim, coined and propagated the divine right of Ali Bin Abi Talib to the Caliphate as the successor to the prophet Muhammad. In reality, the Shiite doctrine of the Mahdi is the Jewish messianic doctrine.¹³

2. The Shiites are “agents of influence” of non-Arab revolutionary Iran inside the Arab world.

3. Shiite doctrine permits killing a Sunni (*nasibi*).¹⁴

4. The Shiites are “hypocrites” (*munafiqun*)—a derisive designation of a “fifth column” within Islam whose members the Prophet condemned to the lowest rank of Hell. This is supported by highlighting the Shiite doctrine of Taqiya.

5. The Shiites are acting in accord with a long-range plan to topple Sunni Islam and to take over the Holy Places in the Hijaz. This claim is strongly reminiscent of classic anti-Semitic literature such as the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”¹⁵

The above motifs are well expressed in the following recent anti-Shiite text from the pro-al-Qaeda website, al-Nida':

...The threat posed by the Shi'a to the [Islamic] nation is equal to the threat posed by the Jews and the Christians. They harbor the same ill will against the nation, which needs to protect itself from them and from being deceived by them... They pose a danger not only to Iraq, but to the whole region. If the Shi'a have influence over Iraq, or if they obtain some kind of autonomy in southern Iraq, they will be so much closer to extending their influence. After all, they exist in considerable numbers in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain. If these Shi'a get organized and if their initiatives get support from countries that sponsor them—Iran, Syria, and Lebanon—it will mean that they have reached advanced stages in their 50-year plan...We also cau-

tion against those who advocate befriending the Shi'a. Such [an] approach can only cause further harm to the nation. To get close to the Shi'a is more dangerous than getting close to the Jews, because the animosity of the Jews is well known, while the Shi'a pretend [to be friendly] and deceive the nation..."¹⁶

While the above text is taken from an al-Qaeda website, the anti-Shiite ideas it expresses are equally reflected in many "establishment" Saudi statements. The Saudi Sheikh and Professor at the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University Abd al-Rahman al-Barrak went as far as to issue a fatwa permitting jihad against Shiites in an Islamic state if they insist on practicing their religion openly. Another respected cleric, Nassir al-'Umar, who has tacit support from the all-powerful Minister of Interior Prince Nayef, has been calling for cracking down on the Shiites in the Kingdom for over a decade.¹⁷

Shiite Attitudes towards Sunnis and Wahhabis

The Shiite writings regarding the Shiite-Sunni conflict are largely defensive.¹⁸ True, traditional Shiite beliefs also contain a number of severe charges against the Sunni majority in Islam. These include accusations of Sunni treachery against the fourth Caliph, the Imam 'Ali, customs such as the burning of effigies of the Caliph Omar, and in Iran, deeply rooted feelings of cultural superiority toward the Arabs.

These beliefs permeate Shiite texts and popular imagery. Nevertheless, traditional Shiite doctrines (Khomeini's revolutionary teachings notwithstanding) implicitly accept the Shiite status as a minority within Islam and refrain from positions that would strain the Sunni-Shiite relationship to a point of no return, where the two would irrevocably separate into two religions. A salient example of this restraint is the Shiite claim that two verses that were originally sent down to the Prophet and prove his choice of Ali as his successor (*Surat al-wilaya*, *surat al-nurayn*) were deleted from the canonical text of the Qur'an. Despite the claim, and despite the claim that the actual text of those verses is known, no Shiite sect has re-inserted them into its version of the Qur'an. It would seem that both Shiites and Sunnis are aware that such an act would create two separate scriptures and even lead to a final separation between two "Islams". It also may be interpreted as following the lead of Shiite tradition of submission to the stronger party until the return of the hidden Imam as the Mahdi and the vindication of his believers. One may claim that this in the eyes of traditional Shiite Islam is the example of the Imam 'Ali who accepted, for the sake of unity, the first three Caliphs

despite the fact that he knew that he had been the Prophet's choice, and of his son Hassan who abdicated his claim to the Caliphate for the same reasons.

Hence historically, Shiite animosity towards the Sunni majority of the Muslim world has been much less vehement and widespread than its Sunni correlate and for the most part it has been defensive, aimed at refuting the Sunni charges and defending the Shi'ah against Wahhabi attacks. Some of the main motifs of the Shiite attacks on the Wahhabis are:¹⁹

1. Comparing the Wahhabis to the *Khawarij*—the sect which, in the eyes of both Sunni and Shiite Islam “exceeded the limits” and caused dreaded internal strife (*fitna*) among the early Muslims. Some Shiite polemicists even find the Wahhabis worse than the *Khawarij* in that the former represents “corruption” (*fasad*) and internal strife (*fitna*). In their actions they “exceed the limits” (*ghuluw*)—an act forbidden by the Qur'an.

2. Implications that the Saudi Wahhabis are uncultured nomads, “eaters of lizards,” who after accepting Islam returned from the civilization of al-Medina to the backward ignorance (*jahili*) of desert life.²⁰

3. Asserting that the Wahhabis are the agents of western imperialism. The Saudi State serves the interests of the Americans and the British (and, of course, Israel) in the Muslim world. The Wahhabis (Saudis) even agreed to hand Palestine to the Jews. This is, in essence, the Shiite version of the Sunni accusation mentioned above regarding Jewish influences over the Shi'ah. It too finds references in the early days of Islam, claiming that the Jewish Rabbi, Ka'b Ibn Mati' Al-Himyari (Abu Ishaq/ Ka'b al-Ahbar) ingratiated himself into the service of the Caliphs Omar and Uthman and tricked them (and was even involved in the assassination of Omar).²¹

Conclusions

The above short description of Sunni-Shiite relations seems to indicate that the trend toward conflict is on the rise. This may be attributed to the situation in Iraq, however, this in itself is not enough. The Sunni-Shiite impasse in Iraq is but a reflection of a wider phenomenon, fanned by the traditional Wahhabi view of the Shi'ah as an apostasy. The ascendancy of the Shiites in Iraq in place of a Sunni —albeit evil and Ba'thist— regime only serves to reinforce the above view; the heterodox, even heretical Shiites, the natural allies of Shiite Iran, came to power in Arab Iraq on the points of American bayonets and through an alliance with the secular and non-Arab Kurds, ostensibly in a democratic process, but actually in order to promote the American plan for a Greater Middle East in which the Arabs will be diluted in the non-Arab components (Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Israel) and Islam will lose its

status. This development is viewed not only from the most radical wings of the Sunni world, but even in traditional Wahhabi circles in Saudi Arabia, as a strategic challenge not only to the predominance of the Sunnis in Iraq, but to their supremacy in the Muslim world in general.

It would be imprudent to assume that the traditional Shiite tendency towards passive defense will continue under these circumstances. A case in point for such a change is the Khomeinist revolution itself, on the ideological plane. Khomeini himself enunciated this difference in saying the he is “a Husseini, not a Hassani”, i.e. unlike the Imam Hassan, who abdicated his right, he would take arms against his opponents, even to the price of martyrdom. As the Iranian Revolution gave rise to a new Shiite self-confidence and willingness of various Shiite communities to assert themselves (the obvious case being Lebanon, but also in Shiite communities in Central Asia), the new Shiite predominance in Iraq may have a similar effect. This effect need not be the result of active Shiite “export” of revolution, as was the case with Iran. Such a development would probably add fuel to the fire of the anti-Shiite tendencies in the Sunni Gulf and among Wahhabi-type Islamist movements.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Prof. Isaac Hasson of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for his insights and references on the subject, upon which many of the comments here are based.

2 Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled—The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 1–2.

3 The correspondance was published in *Abdul Husayn Sharaf al-din*, al-Murajaat, (Beirut: Dar al-Bayan al-Arabi, 1989)

4 See: Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century. The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden-Boston 2004; Dr. Nasir ‘Abdullah al-Qafari, *Masalat al-Taqrīb bayna al-Sunnah wa-al-Shi‘ah*, ND.

5 See: Muhammad Jawad Chirri, *Inquiries about Islam*, (Detroit, 1986).

6 Michael Scott Doran, “The Saudi Paradox”, *Foreign Affairs*, February 2004, p. 3.

7 Wilfrid Buchta, “Teheran Ecumenical Society (Majma‘ al-taqrub): a veritable ecumenical revival or a Trojan horse of Iran?”, in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds.), *The Twelver Shi‘a in Modern Times, Religious, Culture and Political History*, Brill, Leiden 2001, 349. The use of the concept ahl al-Bayt (the household of the Prophet) derives from the hadith al-Thaqalayn in which the Prophet is said to have told the believers that he leaves them two precious things: the Qur’an and his household. <http://rafed.net/aalulbayt/>

8 Shmuel Bar, *Iranian Defense Doctrine and Decision Making*, (Herzliya: Institute for Policy and Strategy, October 2004), pp. 29, 55.

9 See Hason, Isaac Hasson, *Les sdites vis par les néo-Wahhabites*, forthcoming in *Arabica* (unpublished paper) Also see Internet chat. Remarks by Muhammad Tayyib Ramadanani, Feb. 6, 2000, 3:00 AM.

10 In fact, the Shiite Qur'an is identical to the Sunni book. However, the Shiites do claim that these two verses were deleted from the text.

11 For example, there is a popular Iranian holiday of bonfires (similar to the English Guy Fawkes Day) in which effigies of the Caliph Omar are burnt.

12 Isaac Hasson, *Les sdites vis par les néo-Wahhabites*, forthcoming in *Arabica*. I would like to thank Prof. Hasson for his invaluable help with the material for this article. See also anti-Shiite polemic from the Taliban website (now defunct) www.taleban.org, August 14 "The Shiites are the followers of Ibn Saba, the Jew, and of Abu Lu'l'ah, the majusi (Zoroastrian)".

13 Ibid, p. 19.

14 Abdallah ibn Mohammad al-Salafi, Some of the Shiite Creed

15 Ibid, p. 26. Prof. Hasson cites the Wahhabi publication "brotokolat ayat Qumm hawla al-haramayn al-muqaddasayn" ("The Protocols of the Ayatollahs of Qom Regarding the Two Holy Cities")—a clear allusion to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion".

16 Al-Nidaa' website: <http://www.bkufus.com/images/img/?subject=2&rec=1049> (April 25, 2003)

17 Doran, p. 7.

18 See: Shaykh Muhammad Jawad Chirri, *The Shiites Under Attack* (Detroit: The Islamic Center of America) in: <http://al-islam.org/underattack/>; Dr. Mohammed Al-Tijani Al-Samawi Thumma Ahtadayt (Then I was Guided), digital form on: <http://al-islam.org/guided/>

19 Isaac Hasson, hawahhabim b-'eini Ha-Shiiim ha-post Khomeinim (The Wahhabis in the eyes of the Post-Khomeinist Shiites). Unpublished paper.

20 The Iranian poet Ferdousi expressed astonishment that "Drinkers of camel-milk and eaters of lizards, the Arabs came to dare aspire to the throne of the Kings of Kian [an ancient Persian dynasty] and they spit upon you, Oh wheel of Fate—they spit upon you!" quoted in: Zeev Maghen, "The New Shu'ubiya, Iranian Dissidents Resurrect an Ancient Polemic," *Ha-Mizrah He-Hadash* (Hebrew), 42, (2001): 185-208. Modern Iranian history books depict the Arabs as violent tribal idol-worshipping tent-dwellers who practiced the live burial of infant girls, as opposed to the Iranian civilization, which included athletics (before the Greeks), a developed ethical religion (Zoroastrianism, based on "good thought, good speech and good behavior"). See Aloni, pp. 28-31.

21 <http://al-islam.org/underattack/>

Islamic Education in Southeast Asia

ANGEL RABASA

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA reflects the diversity of Islam in that part of the world and of course plays a central role in shaping and transmitting the region's religious traditions. Therefore, before discussing the structure of Islamic education in Southeast Asia, it might be worth outlining the politico-religious and ideological context in which Islamic educational institutions are embedded.

One of the most striking characteristics of Southeast Asian Islam as a whole is the relative absence, until the latter part of the twentieth century, of extremist Salafi or Wahhabi variants of the religion. Moreover, Southeast Asian Islam remains extraordinarily diverse—a reflection of the fact that the majority of Muslims throughout the region incorporate local cultural, ethnic, and linguistic traditions into their practice of Islam. This tendency—which is referred to as “traditionalism” in Indonesia—is quite removed in spirit and practice from Wahhabi severity and intolerance, and is especially strong on the Indonesian island of Java, particularly East Java.

For the most part, traditionalist Muslims in Southeast Asia adhere to the *Syafi'i* (in Arabic, *Shafi'i*) *mazhab* (school of jurisprudence). Indonesian traditionalists are represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama (Awakening of the Ulama—NU), the largest social welfare organization in the Muslim world with a claimed membership of over 40 million. The organization was founded in 1926 by a group of *kiai* (traditional Islamic teachers), who were alarmed by the inroads made by modernists. NU seeks to conserve the Javanese tradition in the organization's religious beliefs and practices—for instance, the practice of *ziarah kubur* (the visiting of graves), in which contact is established with the spirit of the deceased.¹

NU's original constitution committed it to a range of religious, social and economic activities, but first and foremost was the promotion of religious education. The authority of the *ulama* and the strength of the organization are rooted in thousands of NU-affiliated *pesantren* (religious boarding schools).

Although representing traditionalist Islam, the NU leadership has endeavored to adapt to modern conditions. Under the chairmanship of Abdurrahman Wahid in the 1980s and 1990s, the curriculum in the NU *pesantren* was reformed significantly, and secular subjects were taught in conjunction with traditional religious subjects. The NU leadership also worked through associated foundations and research institutes to promote a democratic civil society and to reconcile Islam with Indonesian nationalism and democracy.²

The second important tendency within Southeast Asian Islam is modernism. In Indonesia, modernism is part of a movement that began at the turn of the 20th century. It was influenced by the ideas of such thinkers as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh and aimed to purify Indonesian Islam of what was considered to be heterodox practices. The founders of Muhammadiyah, established in 1912 as the institutional expression of the Indonesian modernist movement, wanted to banish the “superstition” associated with some of the practices of traditionalist Indonesian Islam, and also to counterbalance the development of Catholic and Protestant missions. Today, Muhammadiyah is heavily involved in education, health care, orphanages, and other social services with Islam as its ideological and moral basis.

Unlike conservative Salafis, Indonesian modernists believe in adjusting *syariat* law (in Arabic, *sharia*) to the contemporary world. In the view of Muhammadiyah chairman Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Islamic law needs to be reformed, since in many cases it is no longer contextual to modern conditions.³ In recent years there has been a convergence, at least at the level of the elites, of NU and Muhammadiyah attitudes and religious practices. Some NU members who studied in Middle Eastern universities have become more receptive to the principle of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), which is central to modernist Islam. The new discourse on gender equality has also gained greater acceptance within NU, and rejection of polygamy is now very strong among the younger generation. The Muhammadiyah, too, has undergone some significant transformation. In the past, it was opposed to Sufi practices. Today, however, increasing numbers of Muhammadiyah members practice Sufism.

Despite this convergence, important differences between the two groups remain, especially between their respective modes of political engagement: The Muhammadiyah focuses on promoting religious renewal through education and social services, while Nahdlatul Ulama is focused more on traditional education and practices.⁴

This convergence of the two pillars of moderate and progressive Islam in Indonesia is juxtaposed against a trend toward radicalism in other sectors

of Indonesian Islam. These radical interpretations are associated with what moderate Islamic activist Ulil Abshar-Abdalla calls the “New Islamic Movement,” which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the worldwide wave of Islamization.⁵ These groups include Hizb ut-Tahrir and Jamaah Tarbiyah, which both support the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate, the Jamaah al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Brotherhood), and other extremist groups that emerged in the immediate post-Suharto period.

As in the rest of Southeast Asia, the influx of Saudi money and ideology in Indonesia has been an important engine of this radicalization. The Saudi religious affairs office in Jakarta finances the translation from Arabic to Bahasa Indonesia of about one million books a year. It also offers scholarships to Indonesian students for study in Saudi universities.⁶ Arab influences are also exerted through the Hadrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia.

Islamic extremism in Indonesia is often associated with clerics of Arabic origin. For example, Ja’afar Umar Thalib, leader of the now disbanded Laskar Jihad; Abu Bakar Ba’asyir and the late Abdullah Sungkar, founders of Jemaah Islamiyah; Islam Defenders’ Front head Muhammad Habib Rizieq, and others. Some Islamic scholars attribute the moderate character of Indonesian Islam to their perception that Indonesia is the least “Arabized” of the major Muslim countries.⁷

Islam in Malaysia has also been deeply influenced by traditionalist practices and beliefs. However, in modern times, Islam in Malaysia has become more homogeneous and orthodox than in Indonesia. This is largely the result of the centralization of religious authority under the sultanate system and the role that government has played in defining religious orthodoxy. The development of a centralized religious authority to oversee Islamic affairs in the Malay States began under the British administration. Religious officials were engaged as government functionaries at the state level. After independence, the constitution established the country’s nine sultans as the final arbiters in matters relating to religion.⁸ The result was enforced Sunni orthodoxy. Heterodox religious movements, largely tolerated in Indonesia, were suppressed in Malaysia as “cults.” In 1994, for instance, the government accused Darul Arqam, a major Islamic movement, of spreading heterodox teachings, and subsequently banned them.

Like other Southeast Asian Muslims, the Muslims of the Philippines, who are collectively known as “Moros” or the “Bangsamoro” (literally, the “Moro Nation”), have retained many pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals. Historically, much of the knowledge about Islam among the Moros was handed down from mouth to mouth and was connected with folk beliefs. According to the

sociologist Peter Gowing, there was general ignorance of the Qur'an and even of the rudimentary teachings of Islam in the Philippines.⁹ After the Second World War, however, the Muslim areas of the Philippines experienced an Islamic resurgence. This resurgence was influenced by the religious revival in neighboring Muslim countries, in particular by the *dakwah* (or in Arabic, *Dawa*) movement in Malaysia, and by the return of Philippine Muslim scholars from al-Azhar University and other centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East.¹⁰

The Structure of Religious Education in Southeast Asia

The public education systems in the Muslim majority countries of Southeast Asia include religious education. In Indonesia, religious education in state-run schools is multi-religious. Every student who belongs to any of the five recognized religions (Islam, Catholic Christianity, Protestant Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism) is entitled to religious instruction in his or her religion (although a minimum number of students is required before instruction in a particular religion is provided). If no religious instruction is available in accordance with the student's faith, the student has the right to be excused from religious instruction. Instruction in Confucianism can also be offered as an option in state schools, although Confucianism is not a recognized religion. The religious curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with representatives of the different religious communities. Textbooks are produced by autonomous publishers, but screened by the Ministry. In order to enhance the teachers' knowledge of other religions, the general competence aims for the other religions are cited in the introduction to the curricula for every religion.¹¹

In Malaysia, unlike Indonesia, Islam is the official religion of the state, and the only religious instruction provided in public schools is in Islam. It is, however, not mandatory for non-Muslim students to study Islam. In the Philippines there is no state religion and the Constitution provides for the separation of Church and State. The government, however, makes public schools available to church groups to teach moral values during school hours.

Aside from religious instruction in state schools, Islamic education is also provided throughout Southeast Asia at the primary and secondary levels through boarding schools. In Malaysia and southern Thailand these schools are known as "pondok"; in Indonesia, such boarding schools are known as "pesantren." Indonesia also has Islamic day schools known as "madrasas" (confusingly for Westerners, who associate the term madrasa with the boarding schools of the Middle East and South Asia).

The majority of the Indonesia's pesantren are affiliated with the traditionalist NU organization, as shown in the table below. A smaller number adhere to the modernist doctrines of the Muhammadiyah and Persis organizations, and only a very small minority teaches extremist interpretations of Islam.¹²

PARENT ORGANIZATIONS OF INDONESIAN PESANTREN (2000)

Organization	Number	Percentage
Nahdlatul Ulama	7,306	64.59
Muhammadiyah	184	1.63
Persis	49	0.43
Al-Jami'iyah al Wasliyah	118	1.04
Islamic Community Party	46	0.41
Mathlaul Anwar	33	0.29
Al-Khairat	50	0.44
Nahdlatul Wathan	97	0.86
DDII	51	0.45
Perti	137	1.21
GUPPI	43	0.38
LDII	10	0.09
Independent	2,616	23.13
Others	572	5.06

Source: *Tempo* (Jakarta), February 24-March 1, 2004.

In Indonesia, most pesantren and madrasas include instruction in secular subjects in their curricula. Nevertheless, these institutions have a religious purpose to teach Islam through the reading and rote memorization of the Qur'an. Successful students are those who are able to recite passages from the Qur'an in Arabic without mistakes, even though many of these students do not fully understand in Arabic.

Senior students at these institutions are taught more complicated Islamic doctrines—for example, Islamic theology, law, and ethics. Since textbooks are largely only available in Arabic, learning the Arabic language and how to translate those textbooks into the local dialect constitutes a major part of the teaching process and is carried out by the teacher with every student individually. In the Indonesian pesantren, students do not have a time limit for completing their education, and they can leave a school when they feel their knowledge of Islam is sufficient.¹³

Indonesia's pesantren are run and often owned by an individual religious teacher. The students are bound in a personal relationship with their headmaster or teacher, who may promote a particular ideology or interpretation

of Islam. Many contemporary pesantren are now providing both traditional Islamic education and modern national education. In addition to the general curriculum, many *kiai* have found it useful to offer extra courses—(English and computer science are the most popular)—as well as vocational training in skills such as driving, automobile repair, sewing, small business management, and welding. In part, this is in response to government programs designed to encourage the improvement of human resources. In part, it is a reflection of the fact that skills-training is a time-honored part of pesantren education. Traditionally, students did not pay for their education or lodging but worked for the *kiai* in exchange for their expenses.

Even with the addition of secular and technical subjects, the main purpose of the pesantren education, as noted above, is to spread Islam. Pesantren values define a modernity quite different from that practiced in the West. The values of Islamic brotherhood and selflessness are seen as safeguards against heartless Western capitalism, and “self-sufficiency” is taught as the ground of individual and the nation continued independence. For individuals, this means that a person should exercise the entrepreneurship that development requires, but controlled by Islamic values.¹⁴ These values are by no means inconsistent with democracy. Over the past decade, more than 1,000 pesantren have participated in programs aimed at promoting the values of pluralism and tolerance, and at bolstering civil society. In one such program, the pesantren students are taught to run issue-based political campaigns, to conduct elections for student leadership, and to represent their constituency both with pesantren leaders and the local community.¹⁵

In the rest of Southeast Asia, the structure and curriculum of private religious education is quite different than it is Indonesia. In Malaysia, for example, the Islamist party PAS exercises a strong influence in private Islamic schools. Although the level of militancy in the Malaysian Islamic educational system has never approached that of Pakistan, it has nevertheless worked to sustain the fundamentalist politico-religious movement. In the pondoks of southern Thailand, the national curriculum is taught in addition to Islamic subjects. While in the past the Thai pondoks helped to preserve the local Malay dialect in southern Thailand, instruction is now in Thai, as well as in Arabic, which is needed for the study of the Qur’an. Nevertheless, as discussed in the next section, pondoks in Southern Thailand reportedly serve as recruitment centers for a violent separatist campaign. In the Philippines, the Islamic schools within the formal education system—that is, those accredited by the state—are generally moderate, but there are a few unaccredited radical madrassas, some of which are funded by the Saudis.¹⁶

Radical Schools in Southeast Asia

In Indonesia and Malaysia, a small number of radical Islamic schools have served as incubators for the violent fringe of the Islamist movement in Southeast Asia, including the regional terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah and its political front, the Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). Other schools, such as the Yala Islamic College in southern Thailand, have been conduits for Wahhabi influence.

According to Southeast Asia terrorism expert Zachary Abuza, the Indonesian security services believe that presently 60-100 pesantren serve as centers of JI recruitment and ideological indoctrination. In this category of terrorist incubators are the Pondok al-Mukmin in Ngruki, Sukoharjo in Solo (Surakarta), Mutaqin in Jabarah, Dar us-Syahadah in Boyolali, all in Central Java; al-Islam in Lamongan, East Java; and the Hidayatullah network in East Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Jaafar Umar Thalib, the leader of the now disbanded Laskar Jihad, administers another pesantren, Ihya as-Sunnah in Yogyakarta.¹⁷ Although their number is relatively small in a universe with thousands of schools, these radical pesantren have had a disproportionate influence in shaping and propagating radical Islam in Southeast Asia.

The most notorious of these institutions is Pondok al-Mukmin, an educational institution that some have referred to as “the school of terrorists.” Pondok Al-Mukmin was established in 1971 by two radical Indonesian figures, Abu Bakar Ba’asyir and Abdullah Sungkar. In 1973 the pesantren moved to its current location in Ngruki, Central Java. From 1978 to 1982, Ba’asyir and Sungkar were imprisoned by the Suharto government on charges of subversion. After their release, the two fled to Malaysia to escape re-arrest. (According to a study done by the International Crisis Group, Ba’asyir and Sungkar portrayed their flight to Malaysia as a religiously inspired emigration to escape the enemies of Islam, in emulation of the Prophet Muhammad’s hijra from Mecca).

In Malaysia, Ba’asyir and Sungkar, together with Abu Jibril (alias Fikiruddin, alias Mohamed Iqbal), an Indonesian veteran of the Afghan jihad, established the Tarbiyah Luqmanul Hakiem school in Ulu Tiram, Johor state, modeled on Al-Mukmin. During this Malaysian period, Ba’asyir and Sungkar joined forces with another Indonesian Afghan war veteran and former Ngruki student who was also a member of the al-Qaeda shura, Riduan Isamuddin, alias Hambali, to found the terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).¹⁸

Ba’asyir, Sungkar and several other exiles returned to Indonesia in 2000, after the downfall of Suharto and his government. Sungkar died soon thereafter of natural causes and Ba’asyir became the emir or spiritual leader of JI,

as well as emir of the governing council of the JI's political front, the MMI, which was formally launched in Yogyakarta in 2000. Ba'asyir was arrested following the Bali bombing of October 2002 and charged with treason. He was, however, convicted of lesser charges and sentenced to three years in prison—a sentence that the Supreme Court later reduced to eighteen months (amounting to time already served) in March 2004. Upon his release, Ba'asyir was re-arrested, tried and convicted in March 2005 of conspiracy charges—a crime that carries a maximum term of five years—and sentenced to two and a half years in prison.¹⁹

Pondok al-Mukmin's reputation as a seedbed of terrorism is well deserved. The school produced dozens of convicted terrorists linked to three major bombings in Indonesia and at least two dozen smaller terrorist attacks. Noor Huda Ismail, a graduate of the school, reported that the school taught nothing but an extremist form of Islam. The only music blasting from the speakers was an Arab song about jihad. Printed Arabic calligraphy covered the dormitory walls. One of them read: "Die as a noble man or die as a martyr." Inside the school's walls, he says, anti-Semitism was rampant. In Thursday night public speaking classes, the most popular subject was the threats facing Islam. Speakers often quoted the verse in the Qur'an that reads: "the infidels and Jews will never stop fighting us until we follow their religion." Ismail reported that days before his graduation the school's faith teacher, Aburrohim (alias Abu Husna), invited him and five other students to join JI. Those who agreed to join received military training in Afghanistan (before the downfall of the Taliban) and at Camp Hudaibiyah in Mindanao.²⁰

An important component of the broader jihadist network in Indonesia is centered on the island of Sulawesi. This is the Makassar-based organization Komite Pengerak Syariat Islam (Committee for Upholding Islamic Law—KPSI), previously known as the Preparatory Committee for the Upholding of Islamic Law (KPPSI). The armed wing of the KPSI, the Laskar Jundullah, is responsible for a great deal of sectarian violence in the Moluccas and Sulawesi. The KPSI is linked to the MMI and JI through Agus Dwikarna, the head of the Laskar Jundullah and a member of the MMI executive committee. (Dwikarna was arrested at the Manila airport in March 2002 and charged with carrying explosive materials.) According to the International Crisis Group, the head of the KPSI, Abdul Aziz Qahhar Muzzakar, also runs a pesantren in Makassar that serves as the local branch of the so-called "Hiyadatullah network," named after the militant Islamic magazine *Hiyadatullah*.²¹

In Thailand, the Yala Islamic College, with about 800 students, teaches hard-core Wahhabi beliefs. The college is headed by Dr. Ismail Lufti, a gradu-

ate of Riyadh's Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, and reportedly receives funding from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait.²² The Thai government believes that a number of Islamic boarding schools in the southern provinces serve as breeding grounds and recruitment centers for militants who are carrying out terrorist attacks in the southern provinces. A number of the Muslim separatists killed in attacks on police and security forces posts on April 28, 2004 were teachers at local Islamic schools.²³

The reaction of regional governments to these terrorist schools has been somewhat uneven. The Malaysians have shut down the Tarbiyah Luqmanul Hakiem school, as well as another radical school, the Sekolah Menengah Arab Darul Anuar in Kota Baru. In Indonesia, however, Pondok Mukmin and other radical pesantren continue to operate. Until the Bali bombing, many radical and violent groups enjoyed the support of mainstream politicians, such as the former Vice President Hamza Haz, who visited Ba'asyir at his headquarters in the Al-Mukmin pesantren. After the Bali bombing in October 2002, the leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah mounted a joint campaign against terrorism—a welcome change from the passivity of moderates toward the threat of radicalism and violence in the name of Islam. In Thailand, after the incidents of April 28, 2004, which involved multiple attacks by hundreds of militants on police stations and security posts throughout the southern provinces, and culminated in the storming of the Kru Se mosque in Pattani by the army, causing the deaths of 110 militants who had taken refuge in the mosque, the Bangkok government proposed a large-scale closing of Islamic schools and arrests of teachers accused of advocating violence against the state.²⁴

Islamic Universities

The most extensive and sophisticated system of university-level Islamic education in Southeast Asia—and perhaps in the entire world—is in Indonesia. The Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic University, formerly the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) or State Institute for Islamic Studies, is comprised of 47 colleges and universities with over 100,000 students. The IAIN system draws many of its students from the *pesantren* since, until recently, a *pesantren* education did not provide access to other universities.²⁵

The university's overarching aim is to produce tolerant graduates with a modern, "rational Islam" outlook.²⁶ The university has nine faculties, including a Faculty of Theology (Fakultas Ushuluddin), which includes a Department of Comparative Religion, a Faculty of Sharia (Fakultas Syari'ah) and a Center for Women's Studies. Perspectives of comparative religion have been

included in Islamic studies at IAIN, together with interfaith, human rights and gender issues. The IAIN also publishes two noteworthy academic journals, *Studia Islamika* and *Kultur*, which publish articles by Indonesian and Western Islamic scholars. According to Amin Abdullah, the rector of IAIN in Yogyakarta, IAIN has long been at the forefront of issues such as interfaith dialogue and at improving overall relations between Islam and the West (“we must explain to the Saudis that they misunderstand the West”).

Another major system of Islamic university education is associated with the Muhammadiyah. The Muhammadiyah model of university education is based on the Dutch system, and includes the teaching of religious subjects that reflect, naturally, Muhammadiyah’s modernist beliefs and principles. A third Islamic university is the Islamic University of Indonesia. Both the IAIN and Muhammadiyah universities subscribe to democratic and pluralistic values. After the downfall of President Suharto’s government in 1998, IAIN developed a civic education course to replace the previously mandatory state ideology courses with a new curriculum designed to teach democracy in an Islamic context. This course has been made mandatory for all students in the IAIN system and has proven so successful that the Muhammadiyah network also developed its own mandatory democratic civic education course.²⁷

In Malaysia, the system of Islamic university education has gone a different route. As part of its Islamization program, the Mahathir government established the International Islamic University (IIU) near Kuala Lumpur. As the university’s name indicates, its approach to Islamic studies reflects a universalistic interpretation of Islam that is closer to that of religious institutions in the Arab world.

In the Philippines, there are some Islamic colleges, but no Islamic university. The Mindanao State University, a secular institution with nine campuses, has a majority Muslim student body. The main campus of the university and its three branches are within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) at Marawi City, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Tawi Tawi and Sulu, respectively. There is an Institute of Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines that conducts research, but in order to receive the education in Islamic studies required of an *alim*, a Filipino student must go abroad.

Thailand plans to establish its first Islamic university in 2005. The university will be a branch of Egypt’s al-Azhar University. The Thai government will provide most of the funding for the project, but the university will seek financial assistance from outside sources, including from Muslim countries.²⁸ This development should be watched, as it is likely to impact the overall political and intellectual dynamic of Islam in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

In conclusion, Southeast Asia has an extraordinarily large and well-developed structure of Islamic education that can be a resource of critical importance in the ongoing war of ideas within Islam. These institutions can be expected to keep the Muslim communities in Southeast Asia rooted in their moderate and tolerant values, despite the apparent onslaught of extremist ideology from the Middle East. At a global level, they could serve as the building blocs of a moderate or liberal Muslim international movement to counter the influence of radical Salafi networks.

NOTES

1 For instance, at the *khaul* (anniversary of death) of an important *kiai* (religious teacher) in East Java in 2001, thousands of religious students jointly performed two million recitations of the chapter Al-Ikhlas and several hundred of the entire Qur'an, generating a great amount of merit that added to the spiritual power that the deceased was able to exert from the grave. Martin van Bruinessen, "Back to Situbondo? Nahdlatul Ulama's attitudes toward Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency and his fall,"

2 Douglas E. Ramage, "Social Organizations: Nahdlatul Ulama and Pembangunan," in Richard Baker, et. al., eds., *Indonesia: The Challenge of Change*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1999, provides an excellent overview of the Nahdlatul Ulama.

3 "Ideology is dead' in politics." *Jakarta Post*, May 29, 2002.

4 Discussions with Dr. Azyumardi Azra and Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Jakarta, June 2003.

5 Discussion with Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Jakarta, June 2003.

6 "Saudis Quietly Promote Strict Islam in Indonesia," *New York Times*, July 5, 2003.

7 Discussion with Dr. Azra, June 2002.

8 Hussin Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?*, Singapore University Press, Singapore, 1993, pp. 20-26.

9 Peter Gowing, "How Muslim are the Muslim Filipinos," cited in Jacqueline Siapno, "Balkik-Islam (Islamic Resurgence) in Muslim Mindanao," *Maganda*, Fall 1991, in <http://www.magan-damagazine.org>

10 "Islamic resurgence as an international movement," in Siapno, "Balkik-Islam."

11 The Oslo Coalition of Freedom of Religion or Belief, Report from a delegation visit to Indonesia by the Oslo Coalition of Freedom of Religion or Belief, July 29-August 11, 2002, at http://www.oslocoalition.org/html/project_indonesia/indonesia_project_report.html

12 "In Search of a new Islamic Identity in Indonesia," Lily Munir presentation, USINDO Conference, Washington, D.C., November 11, 2003.

13 Atho Mudzhar, "Islamic Education in Indonesia: Modernization for Survival," The G.E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, Working Paper No. 18 (1992).

14 Ibid.

15 The Asia Foundation, "Education Reform and Islam in Indonesia," 2005.

16 Conversation with Amina Rasul, Washington, D.C., April 2005.

17 Zachary Abuza, "Uncivil Islam," p. 31; Sharif Shuha, "Gauging Jemaah Islamiyah's Threat in Southeast Asia," The Jamestown Foundation, *Terrorism Monitor*, April 21, 2005.

18 The most detailed analysis of the role of the Ngruki network in the genesis and development of Jemaah Islamiyah is Sidney Jones's International Crisis Group report, "Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the 'Ngruki Network' in Indonesia," Jakarta/Brussels, August 8, 2002.

19 Ba'asyir's second arrest was on retroactive terrorism charges. Indonesia's Constitutional Court declared the use of the anti-terrorism law retroactively unconstitutional in July 2004, but made an exception for the Bali bombing.

20 "Ngruki: It is a terrorist school?" Parts 1 and 2, *Jakarta Post*, March 14-15, 2005.

21 ICG, "Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia," p. 17.

22 "Waking Up to the Terror Threat in Southern Thailand," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), May 27, 2004; for a history of relations between the Thai Malays and the Bangkok government, see Saroja Dorairajoo, "From Mecca to Yala: Negotiating Islam in Present-Day Thailand," Paper presented at the Symposium "Islam in Southeast Asia and China: Regional Faithlines and Faultlines in the Global Ummah, Hong Kong, November 28-December 1, 2002, at <http://www.islam.org.hk/pdf/09Dorairajoo.pdf>

23 PSA Asia, "Thailand Report," September 9, 2004. According to security experts in Bangkok, the violence in the south is being carried out not by the established separatist organizations, but by small, shadowy groups with ties to religious schools, without central leadership and operating independently of each other.

24 PSA Asia, "Thailand Bi-Weekly Report," August 11, 2004.

25 Johan Meuleman, "The Institut Agama Islam Negeri at the crossroads," in Meuleman, op.cit., pp. 283-288. There are over 100,000 students enrolled in the IAIN system.

26 Oslo Coalition of Freedom of Religion or Belief, op.cit.

27 The Asia Foundation, "Education Reform and Islam in Indonesia," 2005.

28 "Al Azhar to Offer Courses in Thailand," *The Nation* (Bangkok), September 23, 2004.

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