

ISLAMIC RADICALISM AND GLOBAL JIHAD

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The reasons for Jihad . . . are these: to establish God's authority in the earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God; to abolish all the Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end the lordship of one man over others since all men are creatures of God and no one has the authority to make them his servants or to make arbitrary laws for them. These reasons are sufficient for proclaiming Jihad.

Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*

WIDESPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE of the martyrdom videos and terrorist operations of the jihadists has sparked growing interest in trying to understand the ideological roots of Islamic terrorism. The advent of twenty-four-hour news networks with correspondents and, more important, camera crews around the world has made people more aware of the devastation and pain caused by terrorist attacks and, in turn, more sensitive to real or perceived vulnerabilities to terrorism. It is not surprising that, in the age of globalized information, the agenda of the radical Islamists appears to be driven by an information strategy of maximizing attention to their cause. Moreover, their strategy seeks to convey images that weaken the resolve of their adversaries while signaling the inevitability of victory in a long war. This has forced leaders, the public, and scholars in the West to ask: Who are these extremists whose agenda previously was absent from Western concerns? Why are they steadfast in the pursuit of jihad and change in the name of God?

As the West struggles to come to grips with its newest enemy, efforts to understand the emergence of the global jihad have fostered awareness of an ideological battle that started over fifty years ago. Originally limited

to the urban and rural centers of the Middle East and Central Asia, the underlying philosophy and acts of violence associated with the jihadist movement have spread beyond the core of the Muslim world. Hence, to understand the rise of and trends in Islamic radicalism, we turn our attention to the historical origins and philosophical foundations of the global jihad. In the context of this study, Islamic radicalism is defined as a sometimes violent movement seeking to radically change local, national, and global social and political landscapes. Radical Islamists believe such actions are justified by the tenets of Islam, thereby making it God's will.

ORIGINS OF THE ISLAMIC RESURGENCE

While the charred rubble of the Twin Towers was still smoldering, the United States began to realize more fully the danger posed by radical Islamic groups. Although the term *jihad* has become linked to terrorism, it is important to note that it frequently has a nonviolent connotation as a religious obligation. This spiritual jihad, or *jihad bil-nafs*, is seen by most Muslims as the "greater jihad." On the other hand, there also is the concept of *jihad bil-sayf*, literally "jihad by the sword," or violent jihad, traditionally viewed as the "lesser jihad."

Violent jihad, whether by war, insurgency, or terrorism, has become an increasingly popular tool for extremist organizations that maintain that violent jihad is the greater or only jihad. The Qur'an, the holy text of Islam, provides a number of verses pertaining to jihad that are seen as particularly significant in the eyes of the Islamic extremists. John Esposito notes that these verses, "sometimes referred to as the 'sword verses' are quoted selectively to legitimate unconditional warfare against unbelievers and were used by jurists to justify great expansion."¹ The jihadists use those interpretations of violent jihad in the name of Islam.² Although relatively small in numbers in comparison to the overall population of the Muslim community, radical Islamists who endorse violence frequently cite the same ideologies and reasons for action, using the rhetoric of *jihad*, meaning "to strive" or "to struggle" in Arabic.

It is critical to recognize that the adherents of violent jihad are absolutely convinced that their cause is right, both politically and morally, since they believe it is divinely sanctioned. It should come as no surprise, therefore, to learn that Usama bin Laden believes that he has received divine sanction to use weapons of mass destruction in his jihad. Moreover,

they are extremely dedicated and, regardless of their savagery, are actually quite rational in the pursuit of their strategic goals. Examining the series of tasks listed in an al-Qa'ida jihad manual illustrates this point. Islamic militant organizations are instructed to remove those personalities who block the group's path to success. They are admonished to properly utilize an individual's unused capability while striving for precision in performing tasks and working collectively. The jihadists similarly are instructed to control work to prevent fragmentation or deviation. The manual differentiates between tasks tied to achieving long-term goals, such as establishing Islamic law, and tasks for achieving short-term goals, such as performing operations against individuals and the enemy sector. It also offers guidance on how to go about establishing conditions for possible confrontation with repressive regimes. Not surprisingly, since Islamic militant organizations often operate clandestinely, the manual addresses achieving discipline in secrecy and through performing tasks.

The participants in jihadist activities, like any other social movement, are also products of their own environments and have been influenced strongly by the "Islamic Resurgence," which emerged in the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century. The origins of this Arab-led resurgence can be seen in part as a reaction to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and to colonial rule by the British and French, starting in the nineteenth century and, subsequently, under League of Nations mandates following World War I.³ In addition, the establishment of Israel in 1948, encompassing part of the former Ottoman province of Palestine, and the support that Israel has enjoyed from Western nations, particularly the United States, is also a key ingredient. Thus, extremist Islam has become more prevalent in reaction to a series of external and internal events.

Secular regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq—and governmental corruption in many countries—led a number of hard-line Muslim extremists to feel frustrated by their inability to impact the social and political dynamics of their own countries in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Moreover, it has not been unusual for them to view their traditional norms and customs as being under assault by the ongoing modernization and secularization occurring in the urban areas of their countries. Some have attempted to lobby for change and traditional mores in a nonviolent manner, while others have opted to take the other path to change. In their eyes, Islam has been seen as losing the battle against the decadence of the West. Failed economies, repressive regimes, the catastrophic Arab loss of the 1967 war against Israel, overcrowding, high unemployment, the

breakdown of traditional religious and social values in the face of globalization,⁴ and revolution have all led to the Islamic resurgence. In the following sections, we examine in more detail the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian problem along with a number of the key developments in Egypt, Iran, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia that were crucial to the emergence and evolution of modern-day violent political Islam as embodied by groups like Hamas, Hizballah, and al-Qaeda.

Israel and Palestine

It would be naïve not to recognize the Israeli-Palestinian question, which is embedded in the wider Israeli-Arab conflict, as one of the key elements of the ongoing confrontation between the West and Islamic radicalism. On a symbolic as well as substantive level, when the Arab states rejected the 1947 UN General Assembly plan to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, the conflict became a struggle between two peoples seeking to define their national identities within the same territory. The 1948 creation of the state of Israel within the heart of the Muslim world and the accompanying flight of almost one million Palestinians, who were expelled from or left their homes in the last six months of the British Mandate or during the first Arab-Israeli war, clearly demonstrated the Arabs' military and political weaknesses.⁵ That refugee exodus (*al-Hijra al-Filasteeniya*), referred to by the Palestinians and other Arabs as the *Nakba* (Arabic meaning disaster, catastrophe, or cataclysm), has had the enduring legacy of shaping the collective narrative of the Palestinians as being an occupied people forced by colonizing Zionists to flee their ancestral homes. As such, it provides a highly emotionally charged rallying cry for both Fatah and Hamas to appeal for support within the Palestinian community. Israel's subsequent victories in the 1956, 1973, and 1982 wars, combined with massive U.S. aid, reinforced a sense that the Arabs have been thwarted by foreign forces and created a rationale for terrorism targeting the Israelis. Combined with the burgeoning Palestinian refugee problem, which resulted in entire generations living in camps, this series of Arab defeats provided fertile ground for radicalization, triggering an ongoing cycle of Palestinian terrorism and Israeli repression. The imagery of the refugee exodus is extremely powerful, and it resonates strongly with Muslims in general. As a result, the presence of permanent refugee camps has been used by Arab regimes to deflect discontent away

from their own shortcomings, while the rhetoric of jihadist groups points to the very existence of Israel—and of American support for Israel—as justification for their own actions.

Egyptian Brotherhood

Egypt is the largest traditional breeding ground for Muslim extremism. When Gamal Abd-al-Nasser assumed power after the 1952 coup that ousted King Farouk, his government imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 to promote Islam in the political arena during the monarchy, specifically against British colonialism and the monarchy. Although the Muslim Brotherhood previously backed Nasser and the Free Officers in their rise to power, its members quickly began to protest when they realized that the Brotherhood was being used to legitimize the new secular regime. Mass punishment of the Brotherhood followed their vocal attempts to mobilize Egyptian society against the Nasser regime's pursuit of a secular agenda. Under Nasser's Arab-nationalist agenda, Islam was pushed out of the public sphere. Instead, the state and its leaders were to be revered; Nasser hoped that Egypt would become a modern and secular nation.

On January 16, 1953, all political parties in Egypt were abolished by the government. However, the Muslim Brotherhood was exempted, since it officially was an association and not a political party. Despite the Brotherhood's exemption from the ban, it was the largest organized popular movement in Egypt, and thus the government began to suppress its agenda and slowly drain its capability for instigating reform. After a Brotherhood member tried to assassinate Nasser on October 26, 1954, the government stepped up its campaign against the Brotherhood by destroying its headquarters, arresting and torturing its leaders and members, and, through the use of propaganda, disgracing the Brotherhood in the eyes of the population. However, these actions taken by the government failed to end its problems with Islamist groups.⁶ Throughout the remainder of the century, Egypt's leaders would resort to mass arrests, torture, and execution in the battle against political Islam. Many of the men who were arrested and subjected to harsh treatment in prison camps would be released eventually in negotiations between the Egyptian government and the Islamists. Once released, many of them became the new voices of Islamic extremism, affecting successor generations both inside and outside Egypt.

Iranian Revolution

Unlike their Sunni counterparts in the Egyptian Brotherhood who failed to gain control in Egypt, the Shi'ite clerics and their followers who participated in the Iranian revolution of 1979 were successful. The secular, pro-Western regime of the Shah was overthrown and replaced with a radical Islamist regime led by senior Shi'ite clerics. Especially after the 444-day seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by supporters of the new regime, coupled with the Carter Administration's failed rescue attempt, the first successful Islamic revolution in modern times became an inspiration for radicals and invoked fear among Sunni rulers throughout the Muslim world. Suddenly, a group of believers were able to take the reins of their country, oust the secularized government, and build an Islamic state with the clerical class as the leadership. Although the new Iranian regime was Shi'ite, this demonstrated to the Sunni jihadists that a religiously based political leadership could gain power. The events in Iran simultaneously made the establishment of a Sunni-based Islamic power that would counter Shi'ite influence all the more urgent.

Algeria's Downward Spiral

Since 1991, Algeria has been plagued with jihadist-related violence of varying intensity. The experiences of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) have been studied by jihadist strategists worldwide as a case study that offers valuable lessons about what not to do.

After the secular Algerian government lost a majority of seats in the National Assembly to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the Algerian military canceled the second round of elections in 1991, which the FIS was certain to win, and banned religious political parties. The Islamist FIS responded with violence in an effort to force a return to elections, taking care to limit attacks to the Algerian government in order to avoid losing its broad popular support.⁷ The GIA began its campaign by advocating all-out war with the Algerian government, but eventually it began to attack French civilians in Algeria. The French government responded by cracking down on the large Algerian population inside France. This prompted the GIA to begin directly attacking France. The group hijacked an Air France airplane in 1994 and initiated a series of bombings in France in 1995.

As a coalition of various jihadist factions, the GIA suffered from serious infighting stemming from differences in ideology and personal rivalries.⁸ Additionally, the group had a number of leaders in the 1990s, each with different agendas and often with different methods. The inner-GIA tensions resulted in a number of changes in who they chose as targets, (such as government officials, civilians, and foreigners), and in group purges as the definition of loyalty shifted over time. The first amir of the GIA, Abd-al-Haq Layada, declared nonviolent elements of the FIS to be apostates. He also threatened journalists and the families of Algerian soldiers.⁹ The GIA then expanded its range of targets to include not only the Algerian government but anyone linked with it. A series of assassination attempts began in March 1993, resulting in the deaths of a number of people, many of whom had no connection to the Algerian government. In the same year, the GIA began targeting foreigners in Algeria, killing twenty-six in all. After Layada's death, Djafar al-Afghani became the new amir and intensified violence in the country. Upon his death, the third amir of the GIA, the 26-year old Sherif Gusmi, took over. Gusmi firmly established that the GIA's goal was not to force a return to elections or open a dialogue with the Algerian government. Instead, the goal was to rid the land of apostates and establish an Islamic state through jihad.¹⁰

Gusmi's successor, Djamel Zitouni, in addition to expanding the GIA's operations to France, also condemned all Islamist factions that did not support the GIA, although he did stop short of condemning society as a whole. Zitouni also oversaw the kidnapping of seven French monks, who were later beheaded. Upon Zitouni's death, Antar Zouabri took over, killing anyone who dared to question his authority. In 1997, Zouabri's chief theorist, Abu-Hamzah, published an article in the group's *al-Ansar* magazine, which set the course for events to come in Algeria.¹¹ Abu-Hamzah noted that Algerian society was not fertile ground for the jihad—that it was not ready to join the GIA in opposing Algeria's secular regime, which he characterized as being ruled by apostates. Abu-Hamzah portrayed Algerians as resisting the obligation of jihad, and that thereby they had "forsaken religion and renounced the battle against [their] enemies."¹² After the article's publication, Zouabri and Abu-Hamzah declared the whole of Algerian society to be apostate. Declarations of apostasy are commonly referred to as *takfir* (declaring an individual or group previously thought to be Muslim unbelievers). The GIA then proceeded to carry out a series of massacres of Algerian civilians, often murdering entire communities with knives and axes. The acceptability of indiscriminate

violence as part of its doctrine is illustrated by a GIA communiqué that stated: "There is no neutrality in the war we are waging. With the exception of those who are with us, all others are apostates and deserve to die."¹³ Not surprising, by adopting such an exclusionary, violent ideology and targeting agenda, the GIA rapidly lost its public support. This led to the rise of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which eclipsed the GIA in terms of public support, in great part due to its pledge to avoid civilian casualties.

Numerous statements by senior al-Qa'ida leaders point to lessons to be learned from the Algerian experience, which engendered caution among jihadists worldwide. For example, in a 2005 letter to Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Ayman al-Zawahiri reproached the al-Qa'ida in Iraq leader for his tactics and targeting agenda, which decreased popular support for both the mujahidin in Iraq and the overall jihad. In the conclusion of his letter, al-Zawahiri made a reference to the Algerian jihad, indicating his wariness of repeating the GIA's experience: "The subject of the Algerian brothers at our end, there are fears from the previous experiences, so if you're able to get in touch with them and notify us of the detail from them, we would be very grateful to you."¹⁴ This short excerpt is the only Algeria-related line in the letter and appears to be in response to a conversation between al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi. It is likely that the "Algerian brothers" are the GSPC or another Algerian jihadist faction. When considered along with a September 2006 video statement from al-Zawahiri, in which he announced that the GSPC has joined al-Qa'ida, it is possible that al-Zawahiri was speaking about a potential merger between the two groups and, therefore, of al-Qa'ida's caution in bringing in Algerian jihadists who may have been involved in the GIA's campaign.

In December 2005, a letter to al-Zarqawi from "Atiyah"—who counterterrorism officials believe to be Atiyah Abd-al-Rahman, a Libyan jihadist with connections to both bin Laden and al-Zarqawi—was made public.¹⁵ In the letter, Atiyah reproaches al-Zarqawi for taking unnecessary action in the name of al-Qa'ida, asserting that all operations should support al-Qa'ida's ultimate goals. Judging from his letter, Atiyah spent time in Algeria during the 1990s, and he uses the Algerian case as an example of excessive violence that does harm to the overall movement:

I had previously talked with you and with many of the brothers about what happened in Algeria, so do remember that. My brother, what use is it for us to delight in some operations and successful strikes when the

immediate repercussion is a defeat for us of our call, and a loss of the justice of our cause and its logic in the minds of the masses who make up the people of the Muslim nation, who are ignorant and simple, and upon whom the afflictions of stultification, misguidance, and corruption pile, and increased domination by the enemies, more oppression, more humiliation visited upon us, and more ills, troubles, loss in capabilities, and wasted opportunities?¹⁶

Atiyah also mentions Algeria later in the letter, this time pointing out how quickly a positive situation can be undermined through the alienation of the public:

Ask me whatever you like about Algeria between 1994 and 1995, when [the movement] was at the height of its power and capabilities, and was on the verge of taking over the government. The government was on the verge of a downfall at any moment. I lived through that myself, and I saw first hand; no one told me about it. However, they destroyed themselves with their own hands, with their lack of reason, delusions, their ignoring of people, their alienation of them through oppression, deviance, and severity, coupled with a lack of kindness, sympathy, and friendliness. Their enemy did not defeat them, but rather they defeated themselves, were consumed and fell.¹⁷

Atiyah and al-Zawahiri are not alone in their awareness of the experiences of the GIA in Algeria. In his 1,600-page book, *The Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, senior al-Qa'ida strategist Abu-Mus'ab al-Suri evaluated the collapse of the Algerian jihad.¹⁸ Al-Suri is the nom de guerre of Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, a Syrian who was a key figure involved with the London-based *al-Awsar* magazine, which functioned as the GIA's media cell. He attributed the Algerian jihad's failure to the escalation of violence by a deviant leadership that played into the hands of the Algerian intelligence service:

The issue of jihad in Algeria took many turns, which, after the martyrdom of its sincere, conscious leadership, led in the end to the devolution of the leadership of the GIA to a few deviant ignoramuses, who embraced ideas somewhere between *taḳfir* and delinquency that were in turn mixed with certain basic jihadist concepts. This went according to the intelligence service's exact plan, and led to the group's failure and dissolution at the beginning of 1996.¹⁹

As a result, insights garnered from the failure of the Algerian jihad are likely to have influenced substantially many of al-Suri's "recommendations and warnings" at the end of his book:

Beware not to wrongly accuse Muslims of faithlessness, and beware not to follow those who aid in the faithlessness of Muslims.

Beware and exercise vigorous caution not to shed the blood of Muslims in the course of the battle against the infidels and apostates.

Beware not to cause the resistance and the Mujahidin to lose the public opinion of Muslims.

Beware not to target neutral parties in this confrontation, even if they are infidels.²⁰

Saudi Arabia

During the 1970s and 1980s, the conservative Sunni monarchy in Saudi Arabia experienced the effects of a burgeoning influx of oil wealth and rapid population growth. The Saudi regime funded expanded social programs and spent lavishly on fundamentalist educational programs that stressed a strict Wahhabist interpretation of Islam. Saudis relied on foreigners to perform numerous jobs, while high birth and low infant mortality rates produced a large and growing population. This in turn created a generation of Saudi males, grounded in fundamentalism, who entered adulthood during the 1980s; many of these young men participated as mujahidin in the Soviet-Afghan war, inspired by an intensely puritanical view of how society should be structured. It also created a widespread sense of entitlement to generous social programs. Both factors led to discontent that could be mobilized by Islamists. For example, declining oil revenues in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coupled with a stagnant domestic economy, forced the Saudi monarchy to institute cuts in entitlements. When combined with awareness of how much of the oil revenue had actually gone into the pockets of the rulers to support lavish lifestyles, feelings of resentment deepened, with their heavily religious educations, these young men became easy targets for radicalization.²¹

The resentments of the most radical elements within the Saudi public grew when King Fahd asked the United States to station troops in the Kingdom to protect it against Iraq and Iran during the 1980s. Those resentments were exacerbated and spread more widely across Saudi society after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Many segments of the public

were furious that the Saudi government had approved a massive influx of U.S. and other Western troops in the face of threats to its oil fields in the north. There was open dissent among the people of the Kingdom in response to this move by their rulers. King Fahd needed religious sanctions for his initiative to put to rest the anger over letting infidel troops roam the land of the two Holy Cities (Mecca and Medina); thus, he persuaded Wahhabi clerics to give him the theological cover the king needed in exchange for allowing the establishment clerics to exercise even greater social control over the Kingdom.²²

In reaction to the establishment clerics' move, many young Wahhabis and Salafis who were influenced by Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb, including Usama bin Laden, began to split ideologically and socially from the traditional Wahhabi establishment. This split continues to cause a great sense of unrest in the Kingdom among the Wahhabi Ulama. The younger clerics, who are more numerous because of the Saudi baby-boom in the 1970s and 1980s, tend to oppose the Royal Family, which is supported by the older generation of clerics. The older generation of Wahhabi clerics, many of whom were essentially bought off by the Royal Family, supported the jihad in Afghanistan by supplying ideology and money to the religious schools that provided the ideological base for the anti-Soviet war. However, as soon as the USSR collapsed, the United States withdrew its active involvement in Afghanistan. The Saudis' influence also waned as Pakistani influence increased. Arguing that this was a mistake, the young Wahhabi clerics and their followers were vocal in expressing disapproval of the actions of the United States and Saudi Arabia.

INTELLECTUAL FATHERS

Having placed the origins of the modern global jihad in historical perspective, we now turn to the writings that inspired the Islamists. Examining the ideas underlying the rhetoric of the jihad is important in order to understand how this disheartened community has organized itself and adopted a radical interpretation of its religious beliefs to legitimize the systematic use of violence against a variety of targets.

A number of well-known earlier religious scholars and contemporary Muslim writers, some of whom are relatively obscure ideologues, have influenced modern Islamic extremism.²³ The earlier figures are religious scholars whose works were written prior to 1900. The writings of those

scholars, especially Ibn-Taymiyyah and Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab, allow the modern jihadist movement to assert that their beliefs are firmly grounded in the traditions of Islam and its Salafi interpretation. The contemporary authors come overwhelmingly from the ranks of the jihadists themselves. The majority of these have been laymen instead of clerics, and like Sayyid Qutb they have lacked formal training in Islamic scholarship. Others, such as Abdullah Azzam, have trained as Islamic scholars. It is worth noting that not all of these influential figures have been militants or terrorists; several have sought to emphasize Islamic values in society or to bring Islam into the political arena.

In this section we turn to an examination of a number of the more prominent and influential authors whose works provide the philosophical foundations for the global jihad.²⁴ In selecting key contributors to the jihadist canon, we have chosen authors whose arguments are generally accepted throughout the jihadist community as authoritative. Each of them is also commonly acknowledged to rank among the most influential thinkers. As a consequence, their writings are broadly representative of the established tenets underlying jihadist doctrine. Although no single individual is the intellectual father of the modern jihadist movement, its philosophical foundations are grounded in the writings of a number of key individuals: Ibn-Taymiyyah, Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab, Rashid Rida, Hasan al-Banna, Abu-ʿAla Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Shukri Mustafa, Abd-al-Salam al-Farag, and Abdullah Azzam. The importance of their concepts to establishing the philosophical foundations of the modern jihadist movement cannot be overstated. Reliance on the Qurʾan is a common thread that runs through the writings of all of the advocates of violent jihad. *Fatwas*, or Islamic rulings by a member of the religiously learned class called the *Ulema*, frequently cite different Qurʾanic verses involving jihad to legitimate violence. Such citation, however, is extremely selective and often focuses on a few excerpts commonly referred to as “sword verses.” We readily concede that other writers, not included here, also have influenced the movement, but their works are less prominent.

Ibn-Taymiyyah

Because al-Qaʿida has become the new face of Islamic extremism, it is important to recognize the great influence of Ibn-Taymiyyah over al-Qaʿida’s ideology. Ibn-Taymiyyah was born in 1269 in Syria and became a professor of Islamic law like his father. The majority of Ibn-Taymiyyah’s

writings focused on statecraft and good governance. He sought to redefine politics and believed that any further interpretation of the Qurʾan would be heretical. Refusing to accept the subjugation of religion under the state, he declared all rulers who did not enforce *Shariʿah* (Islamic law) to be apostates and, consequently, legitimate targets of rebellion and attack. Ibn-Taymiyyah was the first to issue a *fatwa* against Muslims when he declared that the Mongols, who were locked in a bitter struggle with the Muslim Mamluk rulers of Egypt, were apostates due to their failure to implement *Shariʿah* law.²⁵ Ibn-Taymiyyah’s labeling of the Mongols as apostates is still used by jihadist groups to draw an analogy to governments run by Muslims who similarly fail to implement *Shariʿah* law.

Ibn-Taymiyyah argued that the requirements for jihad were clearly indicated through the stories of the Prophet, and that they should be put on “the same level as the ‘five pillars’ of Islam: prayer, pilgrimage, alms, the declaration of faith (‘There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is his Prophet’), and the fast of Ramadan.”²⁶ Ibn-Taymiyyah also established a new basis for legitimizing jihad: “When the enemy has entered an Islamic land, there is no doubt that it is obligatory on those closest to the land to defend it, and then on those around them . . . for the entire Islamic land is like a single country.”²⁷ Similarly, in pursuing the jihad, violence against fellow Muslims was acceptable: “If with the Kuffar [unbelievers] there are pious people from the best of mankind and it is not possible to fight these Kuffar except by killing them, then they are to be killed as well.”²⁸

This argument has been adopted by groups like al-Qaʿida for a number of reasons: it sanctions taking their fight to the enemy, unites the Islamic world by Islam alone (and rejects worldly borders), and provides the theological groundwork for allowing the killing of Muslims as “collateral damage.” Ibn-Taymiyyah also prescribed that in jihad, one should deal with the greatest of the kuffar first; this has been one of the primary influences on al-Qaʿida’s campaign against the United States, especially in regard to the Middle East. The works of Ibn-Taymiyyah are often overlooked by Western analysts, but his comments on jihad have influenced generations and given sanction to those groups that seek to use violence to achieve their goals.

Muhammad Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab

As the father of arguably the most puritanical sect of Islam, Muhammad Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab (1703–91) was greatly influenced by Ibn-Taymiyyah. Commonly referred to as Wahhabis, and also as Salafis (from the

Arabic word *Salaf*, meaning ancestors and referring to Muhammad's companions), followers of al-Wahhab's teachings perceive themselves as practicing the purest form of Islam. He called for an Islam "that returned to its revealed sources,"²⁹ declared jihad against "bad" Muslims, named all non-Wahhabi Muslims to be infidels,³⁰ and called for an absolute monotheism that rejected idolatry completely. In his teachings, Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab rejected all Islamic practices after the third century of the Muslim Era (approximately 950 C.E.), rejecting them as *bid'ah*, or heretical innovations, and set his followers on a path to conquer all heretical sects of Islam. Like Ibn-Taymiyyah, Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab called for a literal interpretation of the Qur'an free of analogies and metaphors.

Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab was the first to reintroduce the Kharaji concept of *takfir*. Derived from the Arabic word for declaring someone to be a disbeliever, *takfir* is the process of declaring another Muslim to be an apostate and, in turn, saying that their murders are legitimate. The growing use of *takfir* to justify terrorist activities is a controversial idea.³¹ In large measure, this reflects the fact that scholars traditionally have been extremely reluctant to use *takfir* for fear that widespread application could be detrimental to the Islamic community.³²

To determine whether someone was *takfir*, al-Wahhab promulgated a system of "voiders" of Islam. If only one of the voiders is met, then that person is found to be an apostate and therefore eligible for execution. The voiders are (1) polytheism; (2) using mediators for God; (3) doubting that non-Muslims are disbelievers; (4) judging by non-Islamic laws and believing that these are superior to divine law; (5) hating anything the Prophet practiced; (6) mocking Islam or the Prophet; (7) using or supporting magic; (8) supporting or helping nonbelievers against Muslims; (9) believing that someone has the right to stop practicing Islam; (10) turning away from Islam by not studying or practicing it.³³ Abd-al-Wahhab also established a second principle that is often quoted in jihadist justifications: whoever does not declare *takfir* against the disbeliever is a disbeliever himself.

Al-Wahhab's forces set out to destroy shrines and other sacred objects. They even destroyed the sacred Shi'ite pilgrimage site in Karbala, Iraq, which housed the tomb of Hussein, one of the two grandsons of Muhammad and a central figure in Shi'ism. In helping the al-Sa'ud family take control of the Arabian Peninsula, al-Wahhab was able to shape the country's religious beliefs and provide key philosophical rationales for future generations to pursue the global jihad.

Rashid Rida

In Egypt, a Cairo intellectual named Rashid Rida (1866–1935) argued that "only a salafyah Islam, an Islam purged of impurities and Western influences, could save Muslims from subordination to the colonial powers."³⁴ Although his argument is similar to that of Wahhabism, Rida's writings take the novel step of employing the Qur'anic term *Jabiliyah* to characterize Muslim lands of his own time. *Jabiliyah* previously had referred to the pre-Islamic time on the Arabian Peninsula and literally means "godlessness" or "barbarity." Rida employed the term against his own time because of the widespread failure to implement Shari'ah law in Muslim lands. He also condemned secular government. His writings "cleared the way for future radicalism."³⁵

Hassan al-Banna

Egyptian schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna (1906–49), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, launched his organization as a way to respond to, not retreat from, modern society. Al-Banna's views need to be examined in terms of their historical context, including the colonial experience in Palestine during the British Mandate from 1918 to 1948, the creation of Israel, and the social and economic deficiencies he attributed to Arab nationalism. He felt that Arab weakness could only be reversed by returning to the path of true Islam. Moreover, because Muslim lands were occupied at the time, al-Banna argued that violent jihad was necessary, making it an obligation of all Muslims to repel the invaders and reject governments that were not Islamic.

Realizing that change would come slowly, al-Banna was more an anti-colonial Islamic revivalist than he was a revolutionary, focusing on training future generations according to the precepts of his Islamic system. Many social services, including schools, infirmaries, and classes and lectures on Islam, were established. Several widely read newspapers and magazines were published by the Brotherhood, which eventually began to establish factories and take control of trade unions. While denouncing colonialism and imperialism, al-Banna emphasized that to rebuild a community of the faithful, the primary goal must be to call Muslims to "return and reappropriate their faith in its fullness or totality of vision."³⁶ Along with advocating reforms, al-Banna and the Brothers began looking toward a military option. They sought members within the ranks of the

military and also organized their own paramilitary groups, commonly referred to as phalanges, as a step towards seizing power in the future.

After the execution of al-Banna at the hands of the Egyptian government, the Muslim Brotherhood continued to grow. Even as an underground group after the banning of their organization, the Brotherhood strengthened its resolve and hatred of the Egyptian leaders. Membership increased from approximately seventy thousand at the time of al-Banna's execution to hundreds of thousands only a decade later. In the intervening years, the Brotherhood has inspired groups all over the world to take up the same cause, under the aegis (to varying degrees) of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood has been particularly successful in appealing to students and is a presence on nearly every university campus in the Islamic world.

Abu-al-A'la Mawdudi

At the same time of al-Banna's mobilization of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abu-al-A'la Mawdudi, a journalist, began to write about the need to cleanse Muslim society of Western influence and corrupt, heretical traditions. Like al-Banna, Mawdudi was an Islamic revivalist very much concerned with reform. Mawdudi drew upon Wahhabism, the writings of Rashid Rida, and the Indian anti-imperialist Deobandi school of Islam in an attempt to organize a group to respond to society, much like al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood. The Deobandi label is derived from a school (Dar al-Uloom Deoband) in India and refers to a Sunni religious revivalist movement.

Mawdudi argued that it was important to develop science and technology within an Islamic context in order to avoid Westernization and the secularization of society. He also called for the implementation of Shari'ah. This is consistent with the viewpoints articulated by al-Banna, and their shared perspective has helped to shape jihadist ideology and to inspire future generations of jihadists. For example, Mawdudi established the Jamaa a-Islami group, which later became a central group in Pakistani politics following the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Like the Brotherhood, Mawdudi's Jamaa a-Islami organization focused on the indoctrination of future generations through the use of schools, mosques, publications, and social programs.³⁷

In his writings, Mawdudi portrayed jihad as a transcendental battle of absolutes between good and evil forces. He maintained that it is the duty

of believers to "wipe out oppression, wrongdoing, strife, immorality, arrogance and unlawful exploitation from the world by force of arms. It is their objective to shatter the myth of the divinity of 'demi-gods' and false deities and to reinstate good in the place of evil."³⁸ Writing on the subject of jihad, Mawdudi argued: "Jihad is as much of a primary duty of the Muslims concerned as are the daily prayers or fasting. One who shirks it is a sinner. His very claim to being a Muslim is doubtful. He is a hypocrite whose 'badah and prayers are a sham, a worthless, hollow show of devotion."³⁹

Although he addressed the question of jihad, Mawdudi's primary concern was working towards an Islamic state and the importance of Shari'ah. His writings on that topic still resonate powerfully with jihadist groups today. Like Ibn-Taymiyyah, he asserted that the moral high ground belongs to the jihadist. As such, his writings offer the jihadist movement another respected source to call out those Muslims who do not fight and to perhaps even bring violence against them as kuffar, or unbelievers.

Sayyid Qutb

Born in 1906 in Musha, Egypt, Sayyid Qutb became the leading Islamic thinker for the Muslim Brotherhood group, and his texts are still studied by current followers of jihadist movements around the world. Although Qutb was an author and not a *faqih* (doctor of Islamic law), virtually every jihadist group in the last forty years has used his philosophy—or at least parts of it—to propagate and protect Islam by violent means, whether by attacking Western interests or by fueling insurgency in the Muslim world. For example, given their objective to apply Islamic law, Egyptian jihadists used Qutb's arguments to legitimize attacks against the government. Islamists who accepted Qutb's views succeeded in assassinating Egyptian president Anwar Sadat on October 6, 1981.

As a child, Qutb became very politically aware thanks to his father's interests in anti-British nationalism. He also memorized the Qur'an by the age of ten. Following three years at Dar al-Ulem, a teacher-training institute, Qutb graduated and went on to work at the Ministry of Public Instruction, where he drafted many proposals for school reform in Egypt. Qutb began writing journals, essays, and novels, some of which were politically based primarily in support of the Wafd party. Qutb abandoned his party affiliation in 1945 out of frustration with Wafd due to its corruption and the softening of its anti-British-colonialism position. Politics

in Egypt during this time was pretty chaotic, and the people—not only Qutb—were losing faith in Wafd, which increasingly was seen as corrupt and unable to respond to the needs of the people. Until the end of World War II, Qutb wrote mostly literary criticism.

The seminal event for Qutb occurred in 1948, when he was sent for a three-year stay in the United States to study the American education system under the sponsorship of the Egyptian Ministry of Public Instruction. His American experience had exactly the opposite effect from the outcome his superiors desired. Qutb returned to Egypt in the summer of 1951 extremely disenchanted with American ideals and culture. While in the United States, Qutb rediscovered Islam, and he began praying five times a day and preaching to other Muslims. Qutb claimed his religious reawakening was in reaction to the rampant sexual promiscuity, drunken behavior, and capitalism he encountered in the United States.

Upon his return to Egypt, he was forced to resign from the Ministry of Public Instruction because of his bitter denunciations of American society. Jobless, Qutb began frequenting Brotherhood establishments and was recruited into the organization in 1951 by Salih 'Ashmawi. The next year, he was elected to the Brotherhood's leadership council and headed up the department for the propagation of Islam.

After a brief period of cooperation between the Free Officers and the Brotherhood, Nasser and his colleagues began to see the Islamists as threats to their government. Qutb was imprisoned in 1954 for three months and released. After a crackdown on the Brotherhood following a failed attempt to assassinate Nasser, Qutb again was arrested and tortured along with the majority of the Brotherhood's militants. After a sham trial in July 1955, he was sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor.⁴⁰

Imprisonment gave Qutb the time to write a series of Qur'anic commentaries, especially his most influential work, *Milestones*, a work that went beyond the Brotherhood's traditional focus on revivalism, taking a revolutionary perspective and providing the theological underpinnings for jihadist policies. The book was, in fact, so controversial at the time that the Brotherhood immediately denounced it. Qutb's ideas in the book were shaped by the writings of Ibn-Taymiyyah, Rida, and Mawdudi. According to Qutb, the West and other secularized societies were demonized and portrayed as legitimate targets for believers to attack since these societies were viewed as enemies of Islam:

The *jahili* society is any society other than the Muslim society; and if we want a more specific definition, we may say that any society is a *jahili*

society which does not dedicate itself to submission to God alone, in its beliefs and ideas, in its observances of worship, and in its legal regulations. . . . Lastly, all the existing so-called 'Muslim' societies are also *jahili* societies.⁴¹

Qutb emphasizes the importance of true belief in Islam, and thus he argues for bringing the Muslim world to believe sincerely that there is only one God and Muhammad is his messenger. Qutb also asserts that the basis for building the community must be grounded in religious beliefs instead of laws. Thus he argues:

Islam provides a legal basis for the relationship of the Muslim community with other groups. . . . This legal formulation is based on the principle that Islam—that is, submission to God—is a universal Message which the whole of mankind should accept or make peace with. No political system or material power should put hindrances in the way of preaching Islam. It should leave every individual free to accept or reject it, and if someone wants to accept it, it should not prevent him or fight against him. If someone does this, then it is the duty of Islam to fight him until either he is killed or until he declares his submission.⁴²

Like Ibn-Taymiyyah, Qutb felt disdain for the non-Muslim People of the Book (Christians and Jews), who, like Muslims, recognize the God of Abraham as the one and only god and practice faiths based on divine ordinances. He espoused the idea that Jews have conspired against Muslims at all times and that anyone who leads the community of Muslim believers away from its religion is quite obviously a "Jewish agent."⁴³ Seeking to reorganize the community of believers and to erase the competition, Qutb essentially deepened the Good vs. Evil divide portrayed by Ibn-Taymiyyah, al-Banna, and Mawdudi.

Qutb also clearly states the rationale for jihad: "to establish God's authority in the earth; to arrange human affairs according to the true guidance provided by God; to abolish all the Satanic forces and Satanic systems of life; to end the lordship of one man over others since all men are creatures of God and no one has the authority to make them his servants or to make arbitrary laws for them. These reasons are sufficient for proclaiming Jihad."⁴⁴ However, while Qutb very clearly articulates the reasons for jihad, he leaves questions about the means of jihad—and whether or not the jihad is spiritual or "by the sword"—to the reader's

interpretation: "one should always keep in mind that there is no compulsion in religion; that is, once the people are free from the lordship of men, the law governing civil affairs will be purely that of God, while no one will be forced to change his beliefs and accept Islam."⁴⁵ In his works, he continually stresses the need for total, unwavering belief in the *shahadah*, or declaration of faith, and he asserts that this is the core of Islamic theory. For Qutb, without total belief in the fact that "there is no god but God and Muhammad is his Prophet," there can be no homogeneity in the community, since everyone would be bound by different levels of faith. Qutb echoes the Qur'an by asserting that people must come to this belief of their own accord, and that people can only accept it if they want to—that forcing conversion is not the same as belief, and that therefore it is unnecessary. Still, the "assault" by the West and forces of impurity through globalization are very often seen as hostile actions towards Muslims, and therefore the groups that follow Qutb's ideology very much believe that they are fighting a defensive jihad and will continue to believe so until the enemy has been subjugated, or at least until the community of believers has risen to a position of authority above the enemy.

According to Qutb, the real reason for jihad is not to defend Muslim lands but to uphold Qur'anic law, so there should be no reason for Muslims to refrain from violent force to preserve and advance Islam in the world. In his works, Qutb asserted that Western societies and the Islamic world, especially Egypt, are in a state of Jahiliyah. As David Zeidan explains, "There is only one law, *Shari'ah*. All other law is mere human caprice. There is only one true system, Islam. All other systems are *jahiliyya*."⁴⁶

Throughout *Milestones* and other works, Qutb emphasizes the need for the return of a true community of believers to fight oppression, but the method of that return is left open to interpretation. That method could very easily be interpreted as violence due to his assertion that there is no reason not to use violence against the apostate regime. His legacies to future generations of extremists include the use of takfir, the theory that modern society is jahili, and the belief of a Christian-Jewish conspiracy against Islam. Since his philosophy is based on his interpretation of Islam, Qutb was, and still is, one of the best sources for understanding Islamic extremist thinking and how Muslim extremists legitimize attacks on foreign populations—and also on their own.

Shortly before publishing *Milestones*, Qutb was released from prison and became the central figure in the deeply shattered Muslim Brotherhood. Less than a year after Qutb's release, Nasser had him arrested

again, stating that Qutb was the ringleader in a new Brotherhood conspiracy. On August 29, 1966, Qutb was hanged along with two of his companions.

He died before being able to clarify his concept of worldwide Jahiliyah and its various implications. Because he never declared if his pronouncement was to be taken literally or allegorically, the concept has often been taken in the most literal form by today's jihadists. In this form, the most logical next step after declaring the world to be ignorant and un-Islamic would be to pronounce takfir against someone: Qutb stated in *Milestones* that Muslim societies are jahili "not because they believe in other deities beside God or because they worship anyone other than God, but because their way of life is not based on submission alone."⁴⁷ Therefore, such people are not to be seen as apostate, only ignorant. Many Egyptian militants, looking to assign guilt for worldwide Jahiliyah to an apostate entity, turned to the Egyptian leadership. Militants blamed Jahiliyah on secular governments, in this case the Egyptian government. They believed the government's policies, specifically the lack of Shari'ah, were keeping people in a state of Jahiliyah. They thought that, if the secular government were replaced by genuine Islamic leadership, the people would awaken and pull themselves out of Jahiliyah.

Shukri Mustafa

Shukri Mustafa, another of the Egyptian extremists released after he was tortured in prison camps for Islamic activists, believed modern society to be jahili and urged a withdrawal from it. However, unlike the spiritual withdrawal that many followers of Qutb, al-Banna, and Mawdudi pursued, Shukri advocated a physical separation from Jahiliyah. His group, known in the West as Takfir wa al-Hijra, withdrew from the "unbelieving" society and set up a new, more Islamic society. The reasoning was that, in a period of temporary weakness, the Prophet fled from Mecca to Medina, where he would gather strength and later return to conquer Mecca in the name of Islam.

Shukri spent six years in the Tura prison camp, where he became an adherent of Qutbist/Mawdudist ideology. The time that he and many of his contemporaries spent in these camps points to how the camps served as incubators for increased radicalization; essentially the camps served as tools for networking with other militants, indoctrination, and even training in clandestine activity. The torture of militants may have added to

Shukri's withdrawal from society. John Conroy explains that a defense mechanism of some torture survivors is to retreat from the world around them.⁴⁸

Shukri believed that the four traditional schools of Islamic law and interpretation were unnecessary, and he stated that all that was needed to understand the Qur'an and its meaning was a good dictionary. Essentially, he was against any interpretation and believed that the words of the Qur'an should be taken at face value. Shukri's interpretation was much like the viewpoint articulated by Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab.

Shukri and his group rejected state education and state-run mosques, believing that education through Islam is the only real education and that piety and prayer are individual obligations that should not be run by the government, especially by an apostate government such as that in Egypt. His new community welcomed women into its membership, something that most Islamist groups did not do, provided housing for members, and arranged marriages between them. Diplomas from universities were meaningless in Shukri's society, and the community was supported financially through farming, peddling, and money sent to the community from Shukri's supporters in the Gulf.⁴⁹

The ultimate objectives of Shukri's group were to reconstitute the caliphate as it was during the four "Rightly-Guided" caliphs (he believed that every ruler after the last of the four caliphs to be jahili); to restore the Golden Age of Islam; and to establish Islamic rule worldwide. Shukri's leadership was absolute: he was seen as the Mahdi, or a Muslim who is destined to fulfill God's original mandate of spreading Islam and to bring about God's final reign on earth. Certain of his apocalyptic role, and quite possibly believing himself to be infallible, Shukri declared the action of breaking with his group equivalent to apostasy and punishable by death. This led to disillusioned members, many of whom cooperated with the Egyptian secret police.

In 1976, Shukri reacted violently to the splintering of his group and to other groups recruiting Takfir wa al-Hijra members by attempting to kill two rivals. Egyptian authorities, in a crackdown on Islamist groups throughout the country—and partially in reaction to violence by Shukri's group—pursued Shukri and arrested a number of Takfir members. After Takfir wa al-Hijra kidnapped and executed a high-ranking state cleric, Shukri was brought to trial, where he mocked the ulema for insisting that jihad is an internal battle to overcome the impurities of a person. His attacks upon the ulema led to a broad takfir of those who followed the

clerics. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon explain: "As far as Shukri was concerned, the clerics were simply protecting their prerogatives and concealing their intellectual cowardice. Even worse, he argued, this practice set the great commentators up as idols, competing with God and the Prophet. Those who relied upon these jurists were denying the oneness of Allah and deserved death."⁵⁰

Shukri's trial (1977) badly discredited the ulema in the eyes of the Egyptian people and further fueled radicalization within the region. Shukri was executed along with four other members of Takfir wa al-Hijra the following year.

Abd-al-Salam al-Farag

Contrary to the expectations of the Egyptian government, the prisons that housed members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood served as schools for the indoctrination and even clandestine training of many future leaders of the global jihad. Similarly, the repressive tendencies of the Egyptian government also fostered increased radicalization, particularly within Egypt's student population. For instance, Abd-al-Salam al-Farag (1952–1982) was the leader of the al-Jihad group that came out of the radicalization of Egyptian universities in the 1970s. The group had two specific grievances: the peace treaty with Israel, and the enactment of a new secular law that governed family affairs.

Al-Jihad was unlike previous Islamist organizations in Egypt because it was first and foremost a committed revolutionary group. Farag was the intellectual leader of the group; he in turn had been inspired by Shaykh Umar Abd-al-Rahman, commonly referred to as the "Blind Shaykh." Abd-al-Rahman was involved in the assassination of Egyptian president Sadat and in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York. Armed robberies, especially against businesses owned by Coptic Christians, helped fund the activities of the organization.

In his book *The Neglected Duty*, Farag followed Ibn-Taymiyyah's assertion that jihad should be the sixth pillar of Islam, insisting that "abandoning Jihad is the cause of the humiliation and division in which the Muslims live today."⁵¹ Farag described jihad as "the forgotten" or "neglected" duty, and he insisted that all Muslims are obligated to spread the word of Islam to the entire world before the end of time and the coming of the *Mahdi*, a messianic figure in Islam who will establish a

perfect Islamic society on earth.⁵² He also insisted that the traditional belief that jihad could not be issued without an *amir*, or leader, of the community was false—jihad was obligatory even when leaderless and fragmented. This idea is clearly applicable to jihadists of the present day who conduct jihad in furtherance of an idea as much as in support of a leader.

While Shukri Mustafa argued that much of the Egyptian public was apostate, Farag argued that only the regime was apostate, saying that "what they carry of Islam is nothing but names, even if they pray, fast and claim to be Muslims."⁵³ Farag, by shifting the focus back to the regime, also argued that "it is obligatory upon the Muslims to raise their swords against the rulers who are hiding the truth and manifesting falsehood, otherwise the truth will never reach the hearts of the people."⁵⁴ As a result, Farag's major contribution to religious-nationalists in Egypt and elsewhere in articulating a strategic vision may have been his ability to provide a coherent rationale for the belief that fighting the Near Enemy takes precedence. He paraphrases this concept by stating that "fighting the enemy that is near to us comes before fighting that which is far."⁵⁵ Farag explains his vision:

Verily the main reason behind the existence of Imperialism in the Muslim lands is these rulers. Therefore to begin with destroying the Imperialists is not a useful action and is a waste of time. We have to concentrate on our Islamic issue, which is to establish the laws of Allah in our land first and make the word of Allah the highest. This is because there is no doubt that the prime field of Jihad is to remove these leaderships and replace them with the complete Islamic system, and from here we start.⁵⁶

Farag believed that the people could only be judged by God. Because Farag did not condemn Egyptian society, al-Jihad was able to increase its "technical competence as a clandestine group" by recruiting government workers, soldiers, journalists, and intelligence operatives.⁵⁷ The group posed a large threat to the Egyptian government because most of the recruiting took place at private mosques after observation of recruits, and because of the nearly tribal structure of al-Jihad, in which family and friends were entrusted with the most sensitive positions.

In the jihadist movement, takfiri ideology plays a central role in defining a legitimate set of targets (especially when the target is Muslim) and

in justifying violent jihad. For example, in *The Neglected Duty* Farag argued that both the Qur'an and the Hadith (compilations of sayings by the Prophet) were fundamentally about war. Faraj called upon Muslims to take up jihad—Al-Faridah al-Gha'ibah (the "absent obligation" or "neglected duty" depending on translation)—against apostate regimes in the Middle East, particularly Egypt. Farag's call for the deaths of apostate Muslims is greatly influenced by Ibn-Taymiyyah, the medieval Islamic scholar, whom he quotes extensively in his own book.⁵⁸ Saudi jihadist scholar Shaykh Ali bin Khudayr al-Khudayr further expanded the concept of takfir by declaring that all Muslims who know the principles of takfir have the right to do takfir, regardless of whether or not they are scholars or religious leaders.⁵⁹

Hoping that the Egyptian population would rise up against the regime after a catalytic event, Farag's group carried out the assassination of Sadat in 1981, along with a failed attempt to create an armed revolt in Cairo. Farag argued, "It is obligatory upon the Muslims to raise their swords against the rulers who are hiding the truth and manifesting falsehood, otherwise the truth will never reach the hearts of the people."⁶⁰ The population, however, did not launch a popular revolution following Sadat's murder. After the aborted uprising was quelled by the security services, Farag and many others involved in the assassination were tried and executed. Abd-al-Rahman, on the other hand, was acquitted in a show of leniency by the Egyptian government.

Abdullah Azzam

The preceding writers, intellectuals, and theologians are among the most important influences on modern groups like al-Qa'ida; but the most direct influence on such groups has been Abdullah Azzam, a former Brotherhood member. Azzam, unlike many of the other ideologues discussed thus far, studied theology and held a doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).⁶¹ Azzam was born in 1941 in Palestine. He became the major Arab advocate of the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan when he founded the Office of Services (MAK), which "disseminated propaganda, raised funds and recruited new members through a network of offices in thirty-five countries."⁶² Many of these jihadist recruits were from Arab countries. His partner and protégé in this endeavor was Usama bin Laden.

The MAK enacted Azzam's four phases of the organization: (1) *hijra*—emigration or withdrawal from other influences; (2) *tarbiyyah*—

recruitment and training of believers for the cause; (3) *qital*—fighting the enemies of Allah; and (4) *shari'ah*—implementing Islamic law and creating an Islamic state. Once completed, according to Azzam, the organization would move on to the next jihad and repeat the cycle. In fact, the transnational foundation for funding and training mujahidin was adapted by al-Qa'ida, itself a transnational organization that funded and trained insurgencies and, later, terrorist operations as part of the global jihad.

Because he provided the initial intellectual and spiritual inspiration for al-Qa'ida, Azzam's importance must not be understated, and his works should not be ignored. Azzam's *Defense of the Muslim Lands: The First Obligation after Faith* frequently quotes and borrows extensively from Ibn Taymiyyah. Azzam asserts that neglecting jihad is as bad as neglecting prayer or fasting, and that jihad is obligatory if the mujahidin are in need. Like Farag, Azzam asserts that jihad must be pursued even without an amir. In his writings, Azzam lays out the conditions for defensive jihad and also reiterates Ibn Taymiyyah's call for the continuation of violence against the infidel even when Muslims are being used as shields. He also says that the obligation to jihad outranks obedience to parents and spouses, and that young men and women should work to expel the enemy without parental permission. The wealthy are also required to give money to the mujahidin if they are in need of it.⁶³

Azzam, in his influential tract *Join the Caravan*, wrote that one of the reasons for jihad was to establish control through combat over some territory (or "piece of land") that could serve as a homeland:

Establishment of the Muslim community on an area of land is a necessity, as vital as water and air. This homeland will not come about without an organized Islamic movement which perseveres consciously and realistically upon Jihad, and which regards fighting as a decisive factor and as a protective cover.

The Islamic movement will not be able to establish the Islamic community except through a common, people's Jihad which has the Islamic movement as its beating heart and deliberating mind.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most relevant of Azzam's assertions concerns the legality of receiving help from one group of infidels while fighting against another. Azzam states that for this to be permissible, the following conditions must be met:

(1) The rule of Islam must have the upper hand, that is to say, the Muslims must be stronger than the combined group of the *Mushrikun*

[unbelievers, infidels, idolaters, etc.] from whom they are seeking help as well as the *Mushrikun* they are fighting. In case of the collaboration of the *Kuffar* against the Muslims.

(2) The *Kuffar* must have a good opinion of the Muslims, and the Muslims must feel safe from their treachery and this is estimated from their behavior.

(3) The Muslims must be in need of the *Kuffar* or the *Kuffar* they ask help from.⁶⁵

The above criteria were allegedly met when the mujahidin were receiving aid from the United States and its allies to fight against the Soviet Union.

Azzam's legacy, however, lies especially in his having redefined jihad, departing from the traditional view that jihad was to be a collective duty—*fard kifayah*—carried out by the community, and not mandatory for individuals as long as the community sends a sufficient number of mujahidin. After Azzam, jihad was held by jihadists to be *fard 'ayn*—an individual duty—to be carried out by every Muslim as a requirement of Islam, along with daily prayer and pilgrimage to Mecca. The idea of jihad as an individual duty is a major item of belief shared by most modern jihadists.

Azzam was assassinated by a car bomb in Peshawar, Pakistan, in 1989. After his death, nobody came forward to claim credit for having killed him. However, because of the rivalry between Azzam and al-Zawahiri for influence within the jihadist movement, many suggest that al-Zawahiri and his Egyptian jihadists were behind the attack. There are also questions about whether bin Laden was personally involved, including whether he ordered the assassination due to his disagreements with Azzam over a set of training camps that would be converted for terrorist use against noncombatants, a practice that Azzam repudiated. Miriam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy maintain that "the militants who went to Afghanistan were far from being entirely hotheads. Indeed, the assassination of Abdullah Azzam took place when he was preparing to transfer his allegiance to the most moderate of the mujahidin," guerrilla leader Ahmad Shah Massoud.⁶⁶ Even if he was not involved, Usama clearly failed to condemn the action or show outrage over it. After Azzam's death, the MAK and al-Qa'ida were firmly aligned with the militant elements and under bin Laden's control.

Ayman al-Zawahiri

Regarded by many as al-Qa'ida's leading ideologue and strategist, Ayman al-Zawahiri instigated one of the most important changes in jihadist ideology by arguing that the primary targeting emphasis should shift from regimes in the Middle East (Near Enemy) to Western governments, especially the United States (Far Enemy). Al-Zawahiri believes, along with most of the jihadist movement, that the basic problem is the domination of corrupt regimes in the Arab and Islamic world. These regimes do not govern by Islamic law, and they open up the land to foreign enemies; opposition to the latter policy is most often displayed through continued jihadist outcries against the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. These corrupt regimes, and the foreigners who support them, make up what al-Zawahiri terms the "Alliance of Evil," perhaps a subtle dig at President George W. Bush's "Axis of Evil" terminology.⁶⁷ According to his theory, focusing attacks on the West will result in the removal of Western support and cause the local regimes to fall.

In a July 2007 video, al-Zawahiri offered viewers near- and long-term plans for resisting what he called the "Zionist Crusade" against Islam:

The near-term plan consists of targeting Crusader-Jewish interests, as everyone who attacks the Muslim Ummah must pay the price, in our country and theirs, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Somalia, and everywhere we are able to strike their interests. . . . And the long-term plan is divided into two halves: The first half consists of earnest, diligent work, to change these corrupt and corruptive regimes.

Al-Zawahiri conceded that, because the circumstances in every country are different, he was unable to "offer a single prescription for change to every country." He did, however, offer five general characteristics that he thought are applicable to all countries: (1) the mujahidin must be patient; (2) the mujahidin must strive to garner popular support; (3) change must be forced, whether by military coup, mass popular uprising and disobedience, guerrilla warfare, or armed political resistance, noting that "whatever its form, method and means, force remains a necessary element for bringing about change . . . after all paths to peaceful change have been blocked"; (4) the Ummah must "get used to challenging falsehood, and declaring the truth in its face, even if that leads to sacrifice of wealth and self"; and (5) an organization and leadership cadre must be "leading the

change, guiding progress, and taking advantage of the opportunities which present themselves."

The second half of al-Zawahiri's long-term plan for resisting the "Zionist Crusade" focused on exhorting Muslims to take personal action. He argued in the same video that they needed to meet his call to arms "by hurrying to the fields of jihad like Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, for jihad preparation and training. Thus, it is a must to hurry to the fields of jihad for two reasons: The first is to defeat the enemies of the Ummah and repel the Zionist Crusade, and the second is for jihadi preparation and training to prepare for the next stage of the jihad."⁶⁸

Because al-Zawahiri constantly argues that violence is the only language Americans understand, his strategic thinking places a premium on martyrdom and mass-casualty operations. He argues that those types of attacks are easy to carry out, that they are psychologically distressing to the enemy, and that they erode public support in the West for continued engagement in the Middle East.

Throughout his statements and correspondence, al-Zawahiri declares that the mujahidin need to march under a clear, identifiable banner and conduct a successful public relations campaign in an effort to unite not only the mujahidin but all Muslims in general.⁶⁹ Al-Zawahiri argues that al-Qa'ida must assert its leadership of the Islamic nation in order to bring about a direct confrontation that is clear-cut jihad, or to force the West to make policy changes in the Islamic world:

The masters in Washington and Tel Aviv are using the regimes to protect their interests and to fight the battle against the Muslims on their behalf. If the shrapnel from the battle reach their homes and bodies, they will trade accusations with their agents about who is responsible for this. In that case, they will face one of two bitter choices: Either personally wage the battle against the Muslims, which means that the battle will turn into clear-cut jihad against infidels, or they reconsider their plans after acknowledging the failure of the brute and violent confrontation against Muslims.⁷⁰

Like all jihadists, al-Zawahiri has emphasized the need to control territory from which the mujahidin can wage war as essential to restoring caliphate. Al-Zawahiri explains:

The jihad movement must adopt its plan on the basis of controlling a piece of land in the heart of the Islamic world on which it could establish

and protect the state of Islam and launch its battle to restore the rational caliphate based on the traditions of the prophet. . . . Armies achieve victory only when the infantry takes hold of land. Likewise, the Mujahid Islamic movement will not triumph against the world coalition unless it possesses a fundamentalist base in the heart of the Islamic world.⁷¹

There is some disagreement, however, among jihadists over where the "center" of the caliphate should be located. From this letter, it is apparent that al-Zawahiri believes that the Islamic state would be centered in the Levant and Egypt.⁷² Iraq and Afghanistan, from his perspective, will be established as Islamic Emirates and serve as bases from which jihad can be launched in an effort to expand the caliphate. Not surprisingly, however, al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) advocates the position that Baghdad should be the capital. AQI bases its claim on the historical fact that Baghdad was the capital of the Abbassid caliphate before it was sacked by the Mongols, allegedly with the help of the Shi'ite minister Ibn-al-Alqami, who is a major figure in AQI's examples of a Shi'ite conspiracy against Sunnis.⁷³ Bin Laden's idea about where to locate the capital of the Islamic state was unclear until July 2006, when he addressed the mujahidin in "Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate."⁷⁴ This is the first public statement by the leader addressing the issue of the caliphate's center, although in earlier statements bin Laden alluded to the caliphate being based in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.

Al-Zawahiri's 2005 letter to al-Zarqawi, released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence,⁷⁵ offers insights into al-Zawahiri's strategic thinking. Listing goals for the mujahidin in Iraq, al-Zawahiri offers a multiphased approach to establishing and maintaining an Islamic state until the "Hour of Resurrection." Although it is clear that the short-term goal has to be expelling the Americans, he expresses concern that some of the mujahidin in Iraq will lay down their weapons and stop engaging in jihad when U.S. forces leave that country. Al-Zawahiri thinks that, if this happens, the jihadists will lose the initiative and Iraq will be ruled by secularists and traitors. As a result, he outlines a series of stages. The first stage in al-Zawahiri's plan involves expelling the Americans from Iraq. Second, he hopes to establish and maintain an Islamic Emirate. Third, operating out of this base, he anticipates extending the "wave of jihad" to secular countries neighboring Iraq. Fourth, al-Zawahiri wants a direct confrontation with Israel. Iraq, in particular, is important to al-Zawahiri because of its proximity to Jordan, which shares a long common border

with Israel. Al-Zawahiri hopes that the mujahidin will be able to penetrate Jordan and launch attacks on Israel.⁷⁶ As noted in a U.S. Military Academy study, the strategy al-Zawahiri advocates in this letter mirrors past al-Qa'ida strategic programs dating back to a mid-1990s al-Qa'ida statement. In that document, the anonymous author proposes a five-point plan to unite Somali forces and create an Islamic national front:

1. expulsion of the foreign international presence;
2. rebuilding of state institutions;
3. establishment of domestic security;
4. comprehensive national reconciliation; and
5. economic reform and combating famine.⁷⁷

In his 2005 letter to al-Zarqawi, al-Zawahiri asserts that the "strongest weapon" that could be possessed by the mujahidin is the support of the Muslim masses in Iraq and in surrounding Muslim countries. He warns that the mujahidin should avoid any action that the masses do not understand or approve. Without the active support of the masses, al-Zawahiri says, the Islamic mujahidin movement would be crushed. To avoid this outcome, he argues that the mujahidin must work to involve the masses in the battle. Al-Zawahiri then, very subtly, begins to address al-Zarqawi's war on Shi'ites and his beheading of hostages. Al-Zawahiri states that the reason for the popular support of the mujahidin in Iraq is more because of the occupation by a foreign enemy, especially one that is seen as Jewish and American, than because of religious sectarianism.

In a future Islamic state in Iraq, al-Zawahiri says, Muslims will elect individuals with expertise in Islamic law to represent them. Because of this plan, al-Zawahiri urges al-Zarqawi and his colleagues to begin the necessary "fieldwork" to gather the support not only of the masses, but also of its tribes, elders, scientists, merchants, and otherwise distinguished persons. The mujahidin will be "a nucleus around which" these people will gather.

The overriding theme of al-Zawahiri's strategic thought is the necessity of popular support.⁷⁸ Without it, al-Zawahiri recognizes, the jihad against the West is doomed to failure, just as the jihad against Egypt failed. In his 2001 autobiography, al-Zawahiri details an attack on the Prime Minister of Egypt in the 1990s; in this particular attack, a twelve-year-old girl named Shayma was killed. The Egyptian government responded through

a media campaign portraying the death as anything but an accident, saying that Shayma was the target. This devastated the Egyptian jihadist groups' popular support and caused some of the Egyptian jihadist leadership to leave the jihad. The event obviously affected al-Zawahiri greatly and is likely the cause of his emphasis on popular support in jihadist strategy. A 1997 attack on tourists in Luxor, Egypt, by the Islamic Group similarly inflicted severe damage to the popular support for militant Islamists in Egypt, throwing the movement into disarray.

As a result of their own bitter personal experiences, jihadist veterans are well aware of the power of popular support; this is especially true of those who were active in Egypt from the 1970s through the 1990s. In the eyes of many former Egyptian militants, they were "naïve, arrogant, and immature, fired up by the spirit of youth." With a combination of all of these factors, many of the Egyptian groups tested, and indeed exceeded, the limits of violence that the public was willing to accept.⁷⁹

Drawing lessons from this experience, al-Zawahiri warns that participation in governance must not be limited to the mujahidin. He points out that the Taliban similarly failed to mobilize widespread support when it limited participation in Afghanistan to their students. Al-Zawahiri concludes by repeating that the mujahidin must "direct political action equally with the military action, by the alliance, cooperation and gathering of all leaders of opinion and influence in the Iraqi arena." He adds that al-Zarqawi's disparagement of the Ulema, or Islamic scholars—an attitude that had long been characteristic of the now-deceased al-Zarqawi—is counterproductive, since these people are "a symbol of Islam and its emblem. Their disparagement may lead to the general public deeming religion and its adherents as being unimportant."⁸⁰

Abu-Muhammad al-Maqqadi

The writing of al-Zarqawi's former mentor, Abu-Muhammad al-Maqqadi, is also important to takfiri ideology, especially in the case of the insurgents in Iraq. He asserts that democracy is equivalent to a religion because it puts power in the hands of the people rather than in those of God. Following this line of reasoning, anyone who takes part in the democratic process could be considered a polytheist. This concept, which was laid out in al-Maqqadi's book, *Democracy Is a Religion*, was further expanded upon by al-Zarqawi's Legal Committee in January 2005 in a

short statement outlining seven grievances against democracy, all firmly rooted in al-Maqqadi's writings.⁸¹ Al-Zarqawi's Legal Committee's grievances with democracy are as follows:

1. the people are the source of authority, not God;
2. because of freedom of religion, people are able to renounce religion;
3. people are the sole arbiters in disputes, not God;
4. freedom of expression allows people to criticize and curse God and Islam;
5. the separation of religion from the state;
6. political parties are protected, regardless of their beliefs, ideas, and morals;
7. democracy upholds the stand of the majority, even if the majority approves evil.⁸²

Although al-Maqqadi's concepts greatly influenced al-Zarqawi and his targeting in Iraq, the two disagreed about al-Zarqawi's application of takfiri targeting. In July 2004 al-Maqqadi published an open letter to al-Zarqawi entitled "Advice and Support" that criticized al-Zarqawi's tactics in Iraq. This schism received more publicity upon al-Maqqadi's 2005 release from Jordanian prison. He granted a series of interviews to a number of media outlets in which he appeared to make significant revisions and clarifications to his previously espoused tenets concerning takfir, and even criticized al-Zarqawi and his jihadist brethren for an overreliance on suicide bombing, attacks on the Shi'ites, and the killing of both civilian and allegedly "apostate" Muslims. For al-Maqqadi, the battle is with the occupiers of Iraq, not the Shi'ites, and the continued targeting of Shi'ites should be stopped, "regardless of their history and animosity."⁸³ Al-Maqqadi went even further by asserting that al-Zarqawi should not excommunicate people in general, perhaps suggesting that takfir should only be decided on the personal level, not en masse.⁸⁴

The disagreement between al-Maqqadi and al-Zarqawi underscores the fact that jihadists vary in the intensity of their beliefs about takfir. Although bin Laden and al-Zawahiri are takfiris, they are much less intense than was al-Zarqawi, who frequently targeted Muslims—many of whom were Shi'ites—who he claimed had cooperated with the Coalition in Iraq or the new Iraqi government in attacking Sunnis. Such cooperation, for al-Zarqawi, was a mortal sin. Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri's use of takfiri ideology is much less broad and specifically targets "apostate"

regimes, such as those in Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, by encouraging the masses to topple these governments.

Al-Maqqadi's writings also furthered the important though often overlooked jihadist concept of *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'*—allegiance and disavowal. According to this concept, good Muslims should not only separate themselves from jahili societies. They should live and associate only with other devout Muslims, to whom they must remain loyal, while also showing open hatred toward infidels. In an influential text on the concept, Muhammad Sa'id al-Qahtani quotes jihadist-favorite Ibn Taymiyyah as urging Muslims to love what God loves and hate what God hates. Al-Qahtani goes so far as to say that Muslims are required to oppose disbelievers "even if they are your closest kin."⁸⁵

A number of Qur'anic verses viewed through the standard Salafi lens—literal interpretation—provide the foundation for the concept. Frequently cited verses include 3:28: "Let not the believers take the unbelievers for friends rather than believers; and whoever does this; he shall have nothing of (the guardianship of) Allah, but you should guard yourselves against them, guarding carefully; and Allah makes you cautious of (retribution from) Himself; and to Allah is the eventual coming"; 4:89: "They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; therefore take not from among them friends until they fly (their homes) in Allah's way; but if they turn back, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them a friend or a helper"; and 5:51: "O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."

Al-Wala' wa al-Bara' is extremely important for the jihadist use of takfir. David Cook explains: "*Al-Wala' wa al-Bara'* enables radical Muslims to assert control over the definitions of who is and who is not a Muslim and it forces those who would wish to challenge that control into silence or into being characterized as 'non-Muslims.'"⁸⁶ There are exceptions to *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'*: Al-Maqqadi wrote that open enmity toward infidels is not necessary in cases where secrecy is imperative to serve Islam—a principle that is obviously applicable to clandestine jihad operations.⁸⁷ Abd-al-Qadir Ibn Abd-al-Aziz, an influential Egyptian jihadist, wrote in his important book, *The Key Guide to Preparations*, that it is permissible to lie to the enemy in times of war. Ibn Abd-al-Aziz, also known as Dr. Fadl, was the original leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, later

turning over leadership of the movement to al-Zawahiri. Ibn Abd-al-Aziz argued that unlike in *da'wah*—calling others to Islam—secrecy is a basic principle in military operations.⁸⁸

The concepts of *taqiyyah* and *kitman* also provide theological justification for deception. *Taqiyyah*—most often used in Shi'ite history—allows a Muslim to conceal one's true religious or ideological beliefs if the expression of those beliefs could result in harm. In a 2006 article, for example, al-Qa'ida member Abu-Yahya al-Libi called *taqiyyah* Shi'ite "hypocrisy," which has allowed them to penetrate other countries and "carry out the most shameful and indecent acts while safe from suspicion and accusation."⁸⁹ Similarly, *kitman* allows one to conceal something that is in process until it is complete. One Islamic website gives the example of Muhammad and the earliest Muslim community in the early days of Islam: because the community of Muslims was small, there was a requirement for secrecy in preaching [da'wah] so as to protect the community from enemies; *kitman* was also practiced when Muhammad fled the city of Mecca for Medina—known as the *hijra*—which only two individuals other than the Prophet knew about. More applicable to al-Qa'ida and other jihadists, *kitman* can also be used during times of war when concealing malevolent intentions or as a way to compartmentalize information.⁹⁰

COMMON GOALS, COMMON ENEMIES

Several shared themes emerge from the writings summarized above. The various authors concentrate on identifying a set of common goals for the ummah. They also focus on a common set of enemies who, they claim, aim to make it impossible for Muslims to attain those goals. Here we explore those common goals and common enemies.

A careful reading of the jihadist movement's literature reveals a set of shared pan-Islamic goals. The first—liberating all of Palestine from Zionist control—has been a rallying cry for Islamists since the founding of Israel in 1948. Restoring Jerusalem to Muslim rule is a goal that, no matter how unattainable under present circumstances, is impossible to abandon. It is one of the paramount symbolic issues for Arabs, and indeed for Muslims everywhere, as Jerusalem is the third holiest site in Islam. Hence, to abandon this cause would be political suicide for the radical organizations espousing violent jihad.

The establishment of an Islamic state based on Shari'ah is the second core goal shared by both the intellectual founders and adherents of the jihadist movement. Afghanistan under the Taliban and the Islamic regime in Iran offer examples of both Sunni and Shi'ite Islamic states respectively. With the fall of the Taliban, Iran moved even more aggressively to assert its position as a source of inspiration for radical Islamists. Shi'ite groups like Hizballah were encouraged to strengthen their political role in Lebanon. At the same time—and ironically for Sunnis—the Iranian regime was an example to Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, and al-Qa'idā that secular regimes could be toppled, even if the victorious forces were led (as in Iran) by Shi'ite clerics.

The removal of Western influence or foreign presence from Muslim territory is the third major goal. Reflecting the influence of Sayyid Qutb and Abu-al-A'la Mawdudi, the world is reduced to a collection of good and evil societies, with the former being only true Islamic societies following Shari'ah. Removing Western influence from the territory occupied by Muslims—ideally, an entire nation—is especially important. Even when the territory in question is not an Islamic state, this goal has been pursued by many Islamist groups. Similarly, when Iran formed its Islamic government after the 1979 revolution, there were crackdowns on secularism. New laws were instituted to limit what was seen as the decadent influence of Western society. Successfully ending Jahiliyah is extremely important to the contemporary Islamist movement.

Spreading the message beyond the borders of the Islamic state or territory is also very important. Many times, efforts to spread the Islamist message are coupled with measures designed to achieve the fifth goal, namely, of supporting the Muslim brethren on a worldwide basis. Much of Hizballah's support came from Iran, including money, arms, training, and security in the form of Iranian *Pasadran* guards. The spread of the message and support of Muslims is also carried out through large systems of social programs and activism on behalf of communities. Hamas and Hizballah have long been known for their public works projects, in which they provide welfare, housing, schools, social programs, summer camps for children, and other forms of support. Such social activism generates tremendous respect for Islamist groups within the general public. This increases their support base and gives the general population a rationale for not speaking out against violence.

Furthermore, there are a number of common enemies throughout the literature of the Islamists, especially Jews and Christians, who are intertwined in the minds of militants. Proximity to the refugees of Palestine

and the way in which Israel handles its terrorism problem are major reasons why Jews are seen in a negative way by many Muslims in the Middle East. The brutality of the Crusades, which has faded from the minds of most Westerners, is still fresh in the minds of Muslims, and their heroes of that era, especially Salah ad-Din, are as admired today as ever. Present-day, nonviolent crusades in the form of evangelical efforts to convert people to Christianity are seen as actions designed to cause doubt, to cause confusion, and to discredit Islam. Islamist publications in Egypt have referred to "all Jews" as evil and to "most Christians" as evil.⁹¹

Secularism also is denounced as anathema, whether it is adopted by regimes in the Middle East or imposed by foreigners. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its policy of imposing atheism within the Muslim republics of the USSR were viewed as heretical by Muslims worldwide. The influence of Western-inspired secularism similarly has been a source of major grievance for Islamists in countries like Algeria, Egypt, and Turkey. Indeed, as the internal conflict within the Palestinian community demonstrates, secular-based organizations like Fatah have been heavily criticized by Islamist groups like Hamas for neglecting the spiritual dimensions of the conflict.

These common enemies are frequently mentioned, and they have become major rallying points for Islamist organizations. The use of Crusader imagery also reminds history-conscious Muslims of the brutality of the Crusades against Muslims, makes the enemies of Islam look inhuman and dangerous, and focuses the Muslim world on one large target. The substantial involvement of the United States in the Middle East has fostered a series of Islamist grievances. First, opposition to U.S. support for Israel resonates not only with those who support al-Qa'idā, but within the whole of the Muslim world regardless of sectarian lines. Second, the mere presence of U.S. forces in Muslim lands is offensive to many Islamists. Third, they object to the use of U.S. power to thwart their efforts to replace existing regimes. Thus, after decades of fighting the near enemy (home-grown, foreign-influenced regimes), the fight is being brought to the far enemy (countries that support the regimes that keep Muslims disabled and prevent the destruction of Jahiliyah).

CONCLUSIONS

The philosophical foundations for the global jihad draw heavily on interpretations of the history and origins of Islam as grounded in takfiri ideology. Jihadist groups like al-Qa'idā depict themselves as a righteous

vanguard seeking justice and retribution for past wrongs on behalf of Islam. Qutb and others popularized the theme of an Islamic vanguard, saying that "it is necessary that there should be a vanguard which sets out with this determination and then keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of *Jahiliyah* which has encompassed the entire world."⁹² The idea of a revolutionary vanguard—frequently seen in the writings of many jihadist ideologues and Islamists—parallels that called for in Marxist-Leninist literature. As Miriam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy note, "True internationalism therefore relates to circles which are already globalised, which are in search of roots or new identities, and which mobilise around the issues of *jihad* and the *umma*."⁹³

Jihadists paint a picture of Islam under attack by the modern world and call for action. One commonly articulated theme essentially splits the world into good versus evil, creating a desperate spiritual struggle. Qur'anic verses are quoted out of context to support action against infidels, unbelievers, and pagans. This allows jihadists to portray their actions as a defensive jihad—one that offers religious legitimacy to a perceived obligation to defend the faith. To reinforce the sense that jihad is necessary, many radical Islamist writers proclaim that abstaining from the jihad is just as bad as, if not worse than, abstaining from prayer and fasting—two of the most basic religious obligations for Muslims.⁹⁴

The argument that jihad must be waged is typically buttressed by assertions that only the violent manifestation of jihad is acceptable and virtuous, since the West is characterized as being implacably hostile to Islam. Portraying the struggle as a defensive one against an aggressive foe is a way to evoke religious sanction, appeal to the masses, and make violence morally acceptable. Using the rhetoric of defensive action also avoids criticism from those Islamic scholars who might object to an offensive jihad, since the Qur'an states, "There is no compulsion in religion."⁹⁵ When action is taken against Muslims, Ibn-Taymiyyah is frequently referenced, since his fatwa effectively enables jihadists to excommunicate fellow Muslims as apostates, which in turn justifies attacking them.⁹⁶ In essence, by stipulating that the goal is to defend Islam, violence is both moral and necessary to defend "true" Muslims.

Parallels to the founding era of Islam also are frequently evoked. The jihadists deliberately portray themselves as the modern equivalents of Muhammad's companions. For many jihadists, bin Laden's flights to Sudan and, later, to Afghanistan parallel the movements of Muhammad when he fled from Mecca to Medina. The jihadists see themselves as

fighting a similar battle against incredible odds on behalf of Allah and using modest weapons. For example, a set of instructions for the September 11 hijackers found in Muhammad Atta's delayed luggage afterwards illustrates the hijackers' belief that the path of the current jihadist movement parallels the path of Muhammad's fight against *Jahiliyah*. Symbolically, everyday occurrences such as getting dressed, bathing, or packing a suitcase have intense spiritual meaning as a way for al-Qa'ida to represent itself as the "most faithful heir to the Prophet and his original followers, and the implacable enemy of savage non-believers."⁹⁷ As a result, their adversaries are compared to the tribal enemies of the Prophet. For example, bin Laden stated in December 2004 that "the Iraqi who joins this renegade [Iraqi] government to fight against the mujahideen who resist occupation, is considered a renegade and one of the infidels, even if he were an Arab from Rabi'ah or Mudar tribes."⁹⁸

Similar historically based comparisons are present in statements by a number of jihadist leaders, when they refer to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as "new Crusades." Coalition personnel in Iraq are also frequently referred to as Crusaders in jihadist propaganda. The United States has been equated as the modern day Ad, an Arabian tribe destroyed by God, which, as Fawaz Gerges points out, is the Qur'anic equivalent of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁹⁹

Jihadist ideology uses religious commonalities to emphasize the need not only for brotherhood in the face of a moral collapse of society, but also for action on behalf of Islam. This approach is illustrated in the writing of Abu-Mus'ab al-Suri, a Syrian al-Qa'ida strategist.¹⁰⁰ Al-Suri offers a number of justifications for jihad: to keep infidelity from prevailing; to make up for the lack of men ready to fight; the fear of Hell; to perform a duty and answer the divine call; to follow the worthy Salaf;¹⁰¹ to establish a foundation as a starting point for an Islamic revival (usually, a state governed by Islamic law); to protect the weak; and to become a martyr.¹⁰² These goals are not inherently violent. In fact, many are shared by a large number of nonviolent Islamist groups that believe that preaching is the way to reach a truly moral and Islamic society. However, for the intellectual fathers as well as for leaders and followers of the jihadist movement, violent action consistently forms the basis for defining and legitimizing the struggle.¹⁰³

The ideology of the modern jihadist movement is a product of the merging of people and ideas in Afghanistan with Islamist political activists in Egypt and Salafis from the Arabian Peninsula, who have been

profoundly influenced by Wahhabi notions of apostasy. Modern ideologues, many of whom were not Islamic scholars but rather teachers and journalists, set precedents for the "laymanization" of Islamic thought, opening the way for a new generation of jihadist activists to position themselves as voices of the new Islamic vanguard.

The philosophical foundations of the jihadist movement provide an ideological framework, grounded in shared beliefs, that fosters cohesion within groups and across the entire jihadist social movement. Its relative generality, especially concerning *Jahiliyah*, allows jihadists to tailor it to fit a wide range of military and civilian targets. Moreover, because the enemy is perceived as inherently evil, it readily supports justifications for attacks, since *Jahiliyah* is, in its most aggressive form, the embodiment of evil. According to Islamist ideology, the fight against *Jahiliyah* is a righteous and desperate struggle; therefore, extreme acts of terrorism are defensible. Viewed from this perspective, the ensuing violence can be seen as a product of political vision, specific conditions, and circumstances sanctioned by religious belief.¹⁰⁴